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LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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Abstract
This is an article about leadership in general, classroom leadership and leadership challenges in music education. The method that we have used is literature studies. One classical question is if leadership comes naturally or if it can be learned? Many authors mean that it is both. Lahdenpäre (2008) says that leadership is a social construction. It is not a quality in a person but how we can relate to other people. We have used “The Leadership Diamond” by Koestenbaum (1991) that consists of four levels (professional, social, psychological and philosophical) and on every level there are four strategies (vision, reality, ethics and courage). One of the great issues in leadership is the balance between chaos and order, structure and creativity, planning and spontaneity. Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) compare being a leader with dancers and musicians and emphasize the importance of having theoretical knowledge connected with practise and the ability of improvisation. Another important aspect is what we call “time to muse”, that is time to reflect. A study from 1994 showed that teachers focus on the content but less on the students’ perspectives in the learning process. We have compared our model of the three feet that every school subject stands on (theoretical, skills and artistic) with necessary qualities in classroom leadership and we wish that the artistic feet will have more attention in the future.

Key words: leadership, classroom leadership, leadership challenges, music education.

Introduction
Why do we want to write this article? First of all we think there are few books and articles of theoretical knowledge with focus on leadership in aesthetical subjects. Second we can see that, for example, music teachers have very good knowledge in music as a subject but less knowledge in leadership especially in the classroom. In this article we will discuss some aspects when it comes to classroom leadership in music education. We will first give a small introduction to leadership in general. Then we
will continue with some lines about leadership in the classroom and at last some leadership challenges in music education. The method that we have used is literature studies. We have used literature about leadership, classroom management and aesthetical learning processes.

I, Margaretha, have a degree from Royal University College of Music and a PhD in Education. I have worked as a music teacher for 25 years and as a leader for 11 years. My experience as a music teacher includes children from the age of 6 up to students in the teacher training education and my experience as a leader includes the Head of Department of Art, Craft and Design and the Head of Dean’s Office at Educational Faculty at Linköping University.

I, Christel Öfverström, have a Master degree in Swedish language and literature, history and religion. I have worked as an upper secondary teacher in Swedish language and literature, Swedish as a second language, history, religion and drama. In the end of 1980 I started to work at the Teacher Training Department at Linköping University. Today, Drama Communication has been developed in different areas with focus on communication, intercultural communication and leadership.

**Leadership in General**

Leadership is a complex word strongly connected with communication. It is about intra- and interpersonal relations and social interactions. There are a lot of models of leadership and to be a well-prepared leader you have to use them together with your own experiences and knowledge of leadership.

One classical question is if leadership comes naturally to a person or if it can be learned? Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) mean that it is both. Some skills seem to come naturally but others have to be developed.

Engquist (1992) says if an attitude will be integrated inside a person and be genuine so must models of leadership together with experiences of your own knowledge and creativity be a part of your own model of leadership or philosophy. He also emphasizes the meaning to involve your staff about your leadership.

Burton & Dimbleby (1995) describe a function of several variables. They refer to research by Lewin et al. from 1939 about leadership styles classified as: authoritarian, democratic or laissez-faire. Lewin found in his research that democratic leadership produced higher morale in the group and greatest friendliness and co-operation. Burton & Dimbleby go on and say that an effective leader “will be able both to contribute towards the completion of the task and maintain the social relationships of the group” (Burton & Dimbleby, 1995, 218). They also focus on the communication skills to get other people to work for the group goals. The effective leader has to be a facilitator for the group task and be aware of the social dynamic of the group.

Lahdenpää (2008) says that leadership is not a quality in a person. It is how you can relate to other people. Leadership is a social construction. She talks about four theories of leadership:

- The leader as an individual and person, which focuses on personality, skills and abilities;
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- The leadership and organisation;
- The leadership and the interaction with the employees. It is about communication, transformative leadership;
- The leadership is focussed on the context, which focuses on ethnicity as national culture.

Lahdenperä (2008) also talks about three perspectives on leadership:

- the leaders understanding of multicultural questions;
- intentions and activities in the leadership;
- the quality and competence of the leader related to multicultural questions.

She means that without this knowledge you cannot create changes in the organisation. The multicultural point of view is a resource for the organisation. An intercultural leadership stimulates the learning process that is related to communication between people and culture.

Burton & Dimbleby (1995) also emphasize that leadership has a cultural dimension, which means being aware that nations have different views of leadership.

Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) remind us that leadership is not only about what we do but also who we are. Åkerblom says: “Everything starts with you, the one that’s responsible. You are responsible for yourself, your family, and your professional life” (Åkerblom, 1997, 15). He goes on and emphasizes the importance of developing both yourself and the process in the changing of world.

Leader Characteristics

Koestenbaum (1991) has four levels and four strategies for greatness in leadership and he calls his theory “The Leadership Diamond”. The four strategies are:

1) the professional level that represents the skill of the job;
2) the social level that represents the social skills in a larger way;
3) the psychological level that represents experiences in the heart and mind and is often related to the roots of childhood;
4) the philosophical level that represents the structure of human being. Here we can also find roots in the theology.

On every level you have four strategies and without them he means that you cannot have any success. Vision is one of the strategies that he says is not what you think but how you think. It is to think big and new. There are always perspectives beyond. He emphasizes the meaning of creativity where new ideas, new insight, new intuition comes up. Schratz (2008) points out the importance not to get caught in the vision but continue to action.

Reality, the second one, means to be connected to external realities such as culture, other people, and economy. He says it is important to be aware of society’s cultures and their differences. But it is also about being conscious of how people perceive you. The fundamental realities are how others see you and how others limit you. The internal realities are about ideals, feelings and attitudes. You have to be in touch with the “real world” (Koestenbaum, 1991, 87).
Ethics is another dimension, and he means that morality and integrity are important for you: “Ethics means that you can be and are interested in seeing the world from another person’s point of view” (Koestenbaum, 1991, 89). You understand others as well as yourself: “Ethics requires respect for the study of human feelings and relationships you find in literature, the arts, and all other sensitive descriptions that plumb the profound mysteries of the human heart” (Koestenbaum, 1991, 89).

According to Koestenbaum, ethics means

- teamwork, that is to get a group to work well together;
- meaning in your work you create for others – interesting work;
- love – mentoring, seeing the world from others’ point of view - making others successful;
- integrity, morality and to understand socratic ethical message: “that the moral person is motivated by what is right, and not by what feels good” (Koestenbaum, 1991, 91).

The last dimension he mentions is courage. It means to act with sustained initiative. Leadership is how to use power. Power is used for the benefit of others not for you. The reality of power, he says, must be integrated for the need of teamwork.

Engquist (1992) talks about being integrated as a leader and the meaning of that. To be safe in you, in a philosophy or an attitude to life that is a synthesis of knowledge and experiences. He says that philosophy means acceptance of other people and their attitudes, even though it is not the same as your own attitude. The leader who wants to be credible must therefore formulate his/her philosophy. Author continues with the importance of credibility and says that persons who say they know everything are not credible and not even professional.

“Good leadership, like art, touches us. It stimulates not just our minds, but also our emotions, and makes us come alive” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006, 8). A good leader gives us courage through his/her way to stimulate, activate, encourage and inspire you. He/She also helps us to change and see a new vision that involves human values. One issue with leadership is that you never have complete information.

One of the difficulties with leadership is that “we know what we know”, “we know what we do not know”, “we do not know what we know” and “we do not know what we do not know”. Schratz also talks about the difficulty leaving our well-known and secure pattern. Author calls that a “learning dilemma”. The problem is that it always is about things you do not know how it will be. He means that we need to create a mind-set for sustainable change (Schratz, 2008).

Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) compare being a leader with dancers and musicians. To succeed as a dancer or musician (and a leader) you have to work very hard. Practise hour after hour, day after day, and month after month but when you “perform” you use your skills and just “let it happen”. They also make this comparison when it comes to how you learn to be a dancer/ musician/leader. Through reading books about dancing/music/leadership, studying good dancers/musicians/leaders and so on? No, not only that! You also learn by practice!
Chaos and Order

One of the great issues in leadership is the balance between chaos and order, structure and creativity, planning and spontaneity. Leaders improvise as well as different kind of artists. The only difference is that leaders often are not aware that they are improvising. To improvise as a leader can be, for example, "to think on your feet, to respond quickly and correctly to questions that come up, and, generally, to act creatively and spontaneously in the moment" (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006, 108). Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) emphasize the importance of improvisation in the process of leadership. They point out that this is a skill that you can develop and improve, but you have to have knowledge about your subject/organisation to be safe enough to dare to try.

Johnstone (1989) says that we all are born with creativity and have the ability to improvise. He (like Denhardt & Denhardt) also says that the ability to improvise can be trained through experiences, competence and knowledge. So that means to improvise is not that simple and it demands self-confidence and competence to trust yourself and people around you to manage this art of improvisation. Related to this he means that how we react to the world is not about how effective we are it is about how we are and how people react to you. From that theory the author relates to how leaders can reduce their ability to leadership if they only react and use methods by routine and that is not effective leadership. Even Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) agree with that and mean that improvisation is to use our abilities at the same time – the analytical, emotional, spatial, by experience and physical. That means to use things that you cannot create from the intellect. They go so far that they mean that we have to learn how to be creative and improvisatory and that improvisation is necessary for the leadership process.

Both Johnstone and Denhardt & Denhardt emphasize that you must have knowledge about the subject and the context when you use improvisation and get new perspectives on things. Denhardt & Denhardt (2008) are not against theoretical knowledge about leadership but they mean that you also have to practise your leadership. You have to use trial and error to see if it works or otherwise you have to use other methods. Further you have to have courage and dare to take risks (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006). Birgerstam (2000) informs us that it is only when you try something new that you can fail, but you have to have courage to try new things to succeed.

We will use a quotation from Wahlström (2005) to summarize this apart: “The greatest freedom is within strict frames” (Wahlström, 2005, 50).

Leadership in the Classroom

Leader Characteristics

The aspects in the above chapter are also valid for classroom leadership but there is a special circumstance in classroom leadership compared to leadership in general and it is that there is a certain role division. The students are there to learn and the leader/teacher to teach. Here we have a rather new situation today with a student who is not anxious to say what he/she thinks and to question the teachers (Kupferberg, 2009).
What characterizes a good leader/teacher? He/She considers what knowledge is, reflects upon what he/she is doing, is aware of how every student learns and considers the didactic questions (Lagerberg, 2007).

Kullberg (2004) talks about three qualities that are needed in classroom leadership. They are awareness of theory, method and imagination.

Stensmo (1997) also has three qualities needed for good leadership in a classroom. That is competence in your subjects, didactic competence and leader competence.

Lagerberg (2007) interviewed a teacher and asked her what makes a good teacher, and she answered that knowledge and reflection belonged to each other and that the teacher is aware of how the students learn and also think about the didactic questions.

A good teacher knows how to reflect and plan at the same time he/she teaches (Stensmo, 1997). He means that the theory shows how to teach and how it changes during the teaching process. Reflection increases the theoretical awareness in the interaction teacher-student. Stensmo calls that reflection-in-action and that unites theory and practice (Stensmo, 1997, 48f).

A teacher must remember that it is the students that shall shine, not him/herself (Kullberg, 2004).

**Chaos and Order**

The contradictions in leadership that we have mentioned earlier (chaos and order, structure and creativity, planning and spontaneity) are very obvious in classroom leadership (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008). Many teachers are worried that learning format and way of working in the art subjects can mean chaos and disorder in the classroom. So many teachers look for activities where they feel that they can keep everything in order (Bamford, 2008). Even curriculum, test requirement and a wish for peace and quiet in the classroom are a demand for all teachers (Hannaford, 1997, 2001). Discipline means in a positive way planning and good behaviour (Stensmo, 1997).

Wahlström (2005) says that obvious frames create security and that is important both for you and the organisation. It is also about freedom. As a headmaster you have to know where to go and formulate the aim so that the teachers can work for it.

Wagner (1993) is professor at National-Louis University, USA and describes Heathcote’s educational method. Heathcote emphasizes the meaning of planning and she talks about three important steps: before the teaching, between and during the learning process. She means that there are four goals in planning: you must engage the students, you must give time for making decisions, you must get information about their earlier knowledge through questions and you must give time for reflection. Heathcote talks about “realistic planning” and means that teacher is always open for the needs and knowledge of the students. When he/she is planning he/she gives the students his/her strategies and then chooses the one which is most related to his/her class and their ability. Author calls it a flexible planning. Öfverström (2006) means that a flexible learning and a developing education with a didactic attitude is to see the world from different points of view that will train the student to learn.
Heathcote talks about the teachers’ qualifications and suggests to them analyzing their own qualifications. She talks about levels of tolerance: to make decision means how much of the decisions and responsibility he/she can leave to the students, sound level means in relation to the class room and the environment, distance means how close you physically and emotionally will keep the distance to the student, size of the group means to work with the class in group of the size that feels convenient for the teacher, education attitudes means different kinds of attitudes the teacher can use in the classroom and at last authority which means the level of being motivated as a teacher and for Heathcote that means that students like to work with him/her. Author stresses that every teacher must know who they are and what their competences are (see Wagner, 1993).

**Time to Muse**

First we want to explain the headline “Time to Muse”. The word *muse* refers to the ancient nine Greek Muses. They were offered to us to provide opportunities for rest and recreation in daily life. For most people the muses are associated with the fine arts and it is probably less well known that they should also be linked to scholarship and intellectual activities. This latter link is obvious in the meaning of the English word *muse*, which is equal to reflecting on and considering something very carefully and for a long time. The ancient Greeks realised that artistic and intellectual activities are mutually dependent on each other. A further function of the muses, to care for the collective, social memory, seems also to have been forgotten in our time. Nowadays, when we can store our experiences and knowledge in books, we do not need rhymes, songs, dances, and pictures, etc, to support our own memories. Hence, the fine arts seem to have gradually lost their importance as intellectual tools (Grahn, 2005).

Teachers often forget the above-mentioned aspects. Especially time to reflect. To develop as a human being it is important that we get time to reflect over what we experience and our thoughts and feelings. One way to do this in the classroom is to give the students the opportunity to use different aesthetical expressions to try and reconsider what they learn (Alexandersson, 1998).

Heathcote says that if you cannot develop people’s ability to reflect, you can stop teaching, because reflection is the only thing that can make people change. It is reflection that makes what happens manageable and helps us to assimilate it and use it in the future (see Wagner, 1993). Reflection transforms feelings to insight.

**Interaction/Communication**

Marton & Booth (2000) refer to Alexandersson’s study 1994, about what teachers were focused on when they were teaching. He found that their awareness of the learning process was focussed on general goals and specific contents. Author also discovered that focus on the content was rarer and that the teachers mostly focus on their students more than how the students understand the content. Marton & Booth point out that “we can conclude that out of over one million words uttered by teachers about teaching, not a single one was about teachers’ ways of dealing with some particular content in order to help students develop the mastery of that content” (Marton & Booth, 2000, 220f). When the teacher emphasizes the content Alexandersson noticed two specific aspects: focus on the subject they learn or focus on what the students think about what they learn; according Marton and Booth, the most
critical aspect, is the students’ way to experience and understand how they learn. That means that the teachers’ ways to experience his/her own teaching “what” and “how” are the main aspects of their teaching. The teacher has to be aware of the interaction between teacher and student and focus on the students’ perspectives in the learning process. Even Hård af Segerstad et.al (2007) emphasizes the ability of the teacher to reflect and trust his/her student and that they can take responsibility for their own learning, so that the teacher can focus on the students way to think and work.

It is in the interaction with the students that the teacher shows his/her skills (Lagerberg, 2007). He thinks that the art of teaching is related to organizing meetings with the students, and he relates to Sven Delblanc (Swedish author), who says that the teaching must be a dialectical process with a question of give-and-take and where the teacher will learn as much as his/her students. Molander (1996) agrees and means that a good expert must not stop learning. To know and to know how are not separate, they interact. He also emphasizes the students’ learning process and means that they must learn “how” and “what” by doing. Molander means that the teacher must help the student in the learning process but the student has to learn how to learn. The training parts are important and “learn how to learn” demand understanding from different perspectives and using reflection as a part of the learning process. Author also focuses on the holistic point of view in the learning process (Molander, 1996).

Öfverström (2006) points out the meaning of a holistic point of view in education and that learning must happen in different contexts, which develop the student for life. Maltén (2002) also means that knowledge does not have any value if we cannot see it from a holistic point of view. The learning process must use the total resource of the brain: cognitive, creative, emotional and aspects of value.

One very important thing in classroom leadership is what kind of questions the teachers put to the students (Molander, 1996). There are a lot of questions that already have a given answer. Kullberg (2004) talks about the importance that the questions you put to your students are open, which is when they do not have a given answer, or genuine questions. An optimal situation is when the students operate by their own curiosity (Dahlgren, 2007).

Questioning is also Heatcothe’s most important tool in the interaction with her students. She wants her students to be motivated and to reflect in the learning process and she gives them freedom to think. One of the questions she uses is searching for information. Here the teacher has to listen to all answers. She also gives informing questions like concrete information and alternative questions for the group to make choices. Controlling questions she uses to see if the students take part and understand what happens in the classroom: questions that create mood and feelings and questions that feel credible and deepen knowledge of the subject (Wagner 1993).

An often-missed aspect is that when we learn we do not need only our head but we need even our body: "Movement is indispensable for learning" (Hannaford, 1997, 2001, 98). Learning comes first through our senses. Szczepanski describes it in the following way: "The body cannot only be the tripod that carries our head" (Szczepanski, 2007, 14). Hård af Segerstad et.al. (2007) also talks about the importance of remembering that every student has his/her own way of learning, Shratz (2008) encourages us to use the fact that we all are different and have varying experience and skills.
Öfverström (2006) talks about the didactic questions and relates them to the interaction between teacher and student. The questions, she says, have to be asked from both students and teachers: What, Why and How is the student going to learn the knowledge? How does the student experience his/her learning situation? What skills will be trained through the knowledge? How does the student continue his/her learning process? She emphasizes that the student has to be aware of his/her own learning process. The teacher has to motivate the students and develop their knowledge and skills. Reflections have to be the basic for further studies of the subject.

In a dialogue between Heatcothe and Bolton they say: “But for real learning to be going on, the students not only need to reinforce these skills through practice over a period of time, they need to be conscious of their new skills and concepts as they acquiring them – they have to recognise what they are learning – and they have to take responsibility at some stage for their own learning” (Heatcothe & Bolton, 1994, 14).

Leadership Challenges in Music Education

What are the challenges for teachers in Music Education? We will use “The Leadership Diamond” by Koestenbaum to discuss this (see Figure 1). We will also refer to aspects in the part about characteristics in classroom leadership.

The first challenge is the professional level. What skills and knowledge do you have? Which are your strengths and your weaknesses? In Sweden we have different kinds of music teachers. Roughly we have two different kinds of teachers in music (there are

![Figure 1: A model of "The Leadership Diamond" by Koestenbaum (1991) showing the four levels with their four strategies that are needed for great leadership](image-url)
other variations). We have music teachers with a degree from University College of Music and we have classroom teachers with a shorter education in music as one of many other subjects in their degree. Sandberg (1996) shows us that classroom teachers consider that their short education in music is a substantial limitation. They do not have enough skills and knowledge in music as a subject. Music teachers say that they have skills enough in music as a subject, but the difficulties in their profession are the very limited space music has in the curriculum and that they have to work with so many students at the same time in a small classroom and often with limited access to equipment as extra room for smaller groups and instruments. Here we can refer to what Kullberg and Stensmo point out as important for classroom leadership, as theory or competence in subjects, method or didactic competence.

We bring the second (social) and third (psychological) levels together. Here we have the challenge that children and young people often have a rich music life outside school and that youth culture changes very quickly. Ray (2004) has examined 168 essays, written by students at the age of 15 about strong experiences they have had in music. Slightly less than 2% said that they have had this strong experience related to music education at school. To this part we also assign the fear for chaos and noisy lessons. To play, sing, dance demand another sound level than perhaps a lesson in mathematics. It also includes feelings, interaction with the pupils and perhaps (or hopefully) takes a start from the pupils. At the same time you have a great opportunity to create a strong feeling for belonging to a group. Both classroom teachers and music teachers bring up that music shapes strong social belongings, joy and fellowship as the most positive thing with music education (Grahn & Stenbäck, 1995). Another challenge within these two levels is to get every single pupil to grow regardless of their basic conditions. We can also see another risk and that is that music is often used (at least in Sweden) to add splendour to breaking-up days, Christmas, Lucia and celebrations of different kinds. That makes it sometimes difficult for students to take music education seriously as a subject of its own.

The fourth level is the philosophical. What goal do you have as a music teacher with your teaching? Do you use music to develop communicative skills? Do you use music as an aid to reach other goals (in other subjects or social goals)? Do you want your pupils to get musical skills and knowledge? Do you want your pupils to get aesthetical experience? All these different goals are described in both Grahn Stenbäck (1995) and Sandberg (1996). Ray (2004) describes a debate between Reimer and Elliot where Reimer defends what he calls "Music Education as Aesthetic Education" (MEAE) and Elliot a more action-centred policy that he calls "Music Education through Artistic Actions" (META) (Ray, 2004, 74-76). We think that you should look at these two positions as complimentary rather than antagonistic.

We mean that it is important to reflect on all these four levels and then also think of that every level has four strategies: vision, reality, ethics and courage. What visions do you have? How does reality look regarding to your own skills, knowledge, equipments etc.? Do you think of the ethics and do you have the courage to do what you really want?
Conclusion

In dissertation Grahn ([Grahn, 2005](#)) stated that every school subject stands on three feet, science (theoretical), craft (skills) and art (artistic) (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Three feet that every school subject needs (Grahn, 2005, 147)](#)

In school we often forget the artistic feet even in the aesthetical subjects. Perhaps that depends on fear of chaos and/or difficulty to evaluate and/or that it takes time and/or lack of knowledge and/or courage and/or equipment. Saar ([2005](#)) discusses around this and he thinks that it is sad that almost everything in educational discussions is on an organizational level and rarely about the artistic level.

We would like to transfer the above figure into leadership. We consider that this figure summarizes the most important aspects in classroom leadership. You need to have theoretical knowledge, skills and the artistic feet, for example, improvisation (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Three feet that are necessary for classroom leadership](#)

We will finish this article with some pictures from “the music world” that we think can help handle the balance between chaos and order or structure and creativity. The first one is given to us by Bjørkvold: “Pulse shapes coherence, the rhythm gives freedom within the pulse; it is the play within the frames” ([Bjørkvold, 1998](#), 107).

Another picture is about musical improvisation. First you have to learn about how notes and chords work together, about your instrument and its limits and so on. When you have knowledge enough you can use your skills in an improvisation ([Denhardt & Denhardt, 2008](#)).
Denhardt & Denhardt (2006) compare a leader to a conductor. It is important that he/she shows self-confidence because if he/she does not do it the orchestra have no reason to follow you. At the same time it is your task as a conductor/leader to “keep the tributaries from overflowing the banks, so that they all contribute to the ultimate grand flow of the river” (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2006, 152).

At last we will give you three things to consider:

1. Never stop learning and remember that teacher and students both learn but different things.
2. The word charisma comes originally from a Greek word (kharisma) and means a gift without service in return (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charisma; http://susning.nu/Karisma). We would like to see teachers with charisma in that sense. We will also relate this to Kullberg (2004) when she says that it is the student that shall shine, not the teacher.
3. Do not forget that you need time to muse.

References


http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charisma
http://susning.nu/Karisma