

AEC - European Association of Conservatoires

INNOVATING CURRICULA - BUILDING CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION IN HIGHER MUSIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

**Presented by the
ARTEMIS
Capacity Working Group**

**AEC - EMPOWERING ARTISTS
AS MAKERS IN SOCIETY**



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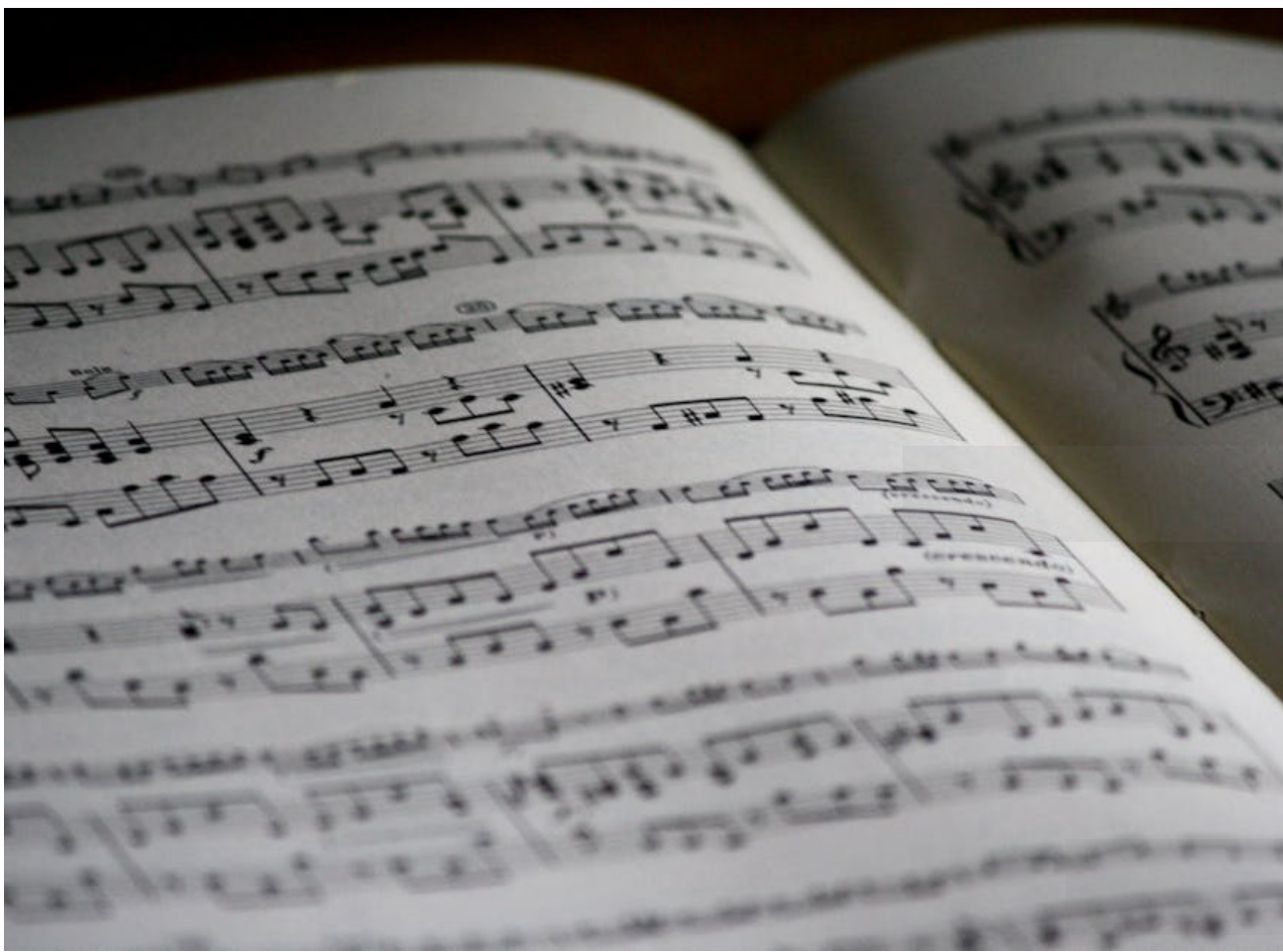
THE ARTEMIS PROJECT EMPOWERING ARTISTS AS MAKERS IN SOCIETY



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Introduction

From 2022 to 2025, the [AEC – l'Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Musikhochschulen et Académies de Musique](#) – spearheaded [ARTEMIS \(Empowering Artists as Makers in Society\)](#), a transformative initiative funded by the [Creative Europe programme of the European Commission](#). This project built upon the achievements of previous AEC-led projects, particularly the [Strengthening Music in Society \(AEC-SMS\)](#) project (2017–2021), paving the way for the next era in higher music education (HME).



Higher music education graduates are the architects of tomorrow's musical landscape. As they step into a world shaped by digital innovation, climate imperatives, cultural diversity, and an ever-evolving labour market, the HME Institutions bear a critical responsibility towards their students, the professionals of today and tomorrow: fostering the resilience of artists, musicians, and cultural professionals to navigate these shifting dynamics.

As the leading voice for HME in Europe, the AEC represents the entire sector across the European Higher Education Area. Its influence reaches an audience of over 100,000 individuals, both within and beyond the sector, advocating for innovation, adaptability, and the integration of social well-being into music education. With ARTEMIS, the AEC opens a new chapter, charting a forward-thinking roadmap for the future of HME.

Professor Helena Gaunt is the Director of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

 [Read here](#)

Helena talks about the context for capacity building for curricular innovation in the Artemis project: how the higher music education is responding to the challenges of Musicians as makers, and what's still to be developed. Finally there are some top tips for engaging in curricular innovation. (page 69)

Key objectives

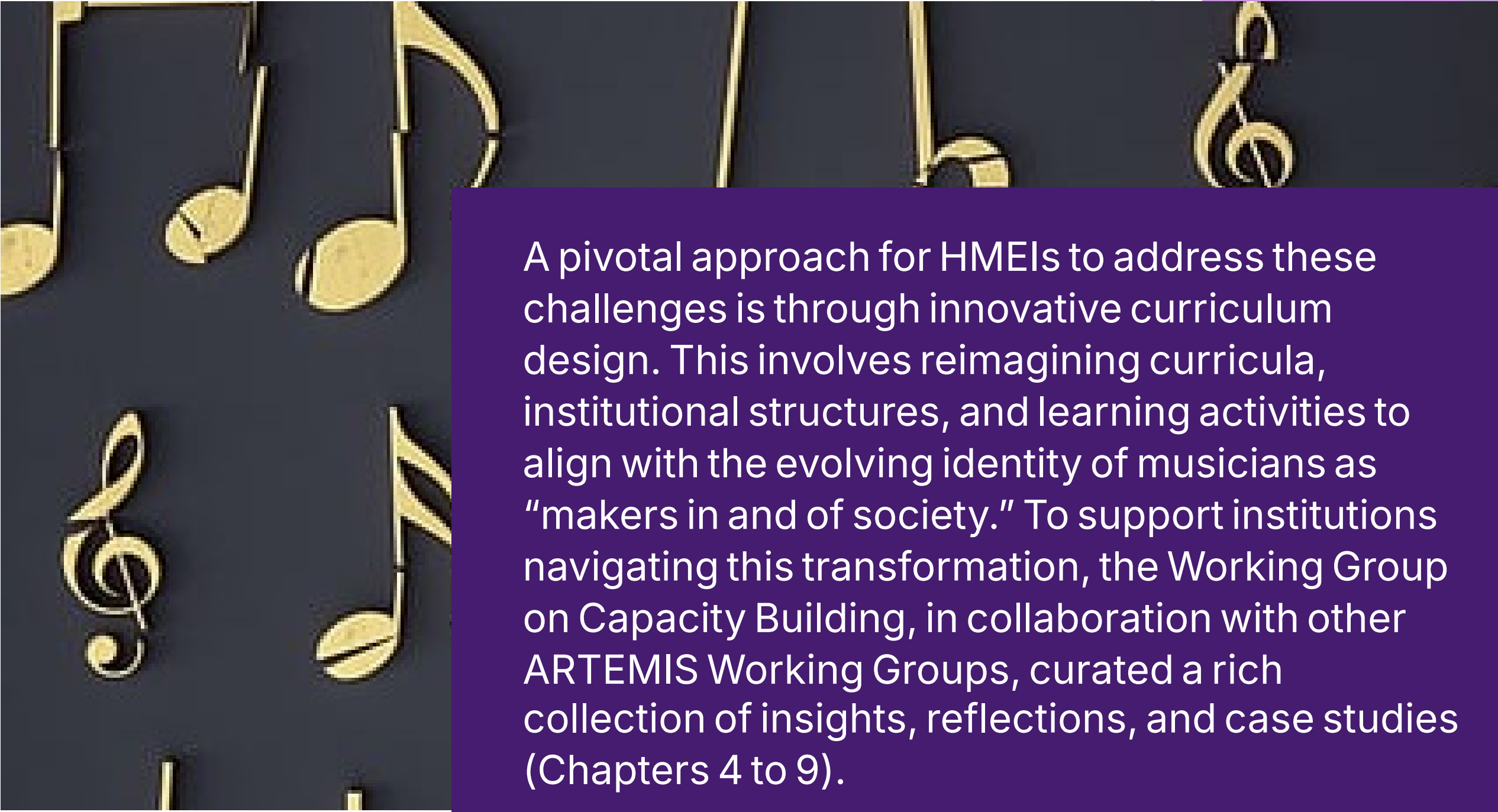
The project envisions a stronger and more resilient HME ecosystem, with objectives that include:

- 
- Enhancing collaboration among HME institutions across Europe and beyond to boost artist mobility and employability.
 - Strengthening lifelong learning opportunities for artists and HMEI educators, while solidifying AEC's role in delivering these programs.
 - Expanding AEC's capacity to represent its members' interests and advocate for the cultural and creative sectors.
 - Establishing a robust empirical foundation to support project goals, with a focus on sustainability and digitization.
 - Innovating music education through curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and institutional responsibilities.
 - Promoting fair, inclusive, diverse, and gender-equal frameworks in HME institutions.

Through ARTEMIS, the AEC reaffirms its commitment to equipping HMEIs to drive innovation, embrace change, and contribute meaningfully to societal well-being, ensuring the cultural sector remains a vital force in Europe and beyond.

Innovating Curricula in Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs)

Within the ARTEMIS Project, the [Working Group on Capacity Building](#) functioned as a think tank, exploring the evolving roles, motivations, and objectives of Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs). These institutions act as catalysts for the sustainable development of arts education and research, while also shaping the multifaceted professional music sector. Central to this inquiry were critical questions about the influence of new skills, attitudes, social awareness, and context-driven approaches, as well as fresh perspectives on excellence, quality, and societal engagement.



A pivotal approach for HMEIs to address these challenges is through innovative curriculum design. This involves reimagining curricula, institutional structures, and learning activities to align with the evolving identity of musicians as “makers in and of society.” To support institutions navigating this transformation, the Working Group on Capacity Building, in collaboration with other ARTEMIS Working Groups, curated a rich collection of insights, reflections, and case studies (Chapters 4 to 9).

Innovating Curricula in Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs)



Additionally, the Working Group developed a comprehensive methodology to assist institutions in implementing curricular innovation. This includes two key components:

▶ The Action Plan for Curricular Innovation

A practical tool offering step-by-step guidance for designing and executing changes.

 Chapter 1

▶ The Mutual Support Platform for Curricular Innovation

A collaborative platform fostering peer learning and knowledge sharing.

 Chapter 2

Through these resources, the ARTEMIS Working Group empowers HMEIs to rethink their educational frameworks and embrace their role as drivers of societal and cultural advancement.

Capacity Building Working Group: Meet the Members



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CURRICULAR INNOVATION PROCESSES: A PLAN FOR ACTION



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There is no such thing as 'the' higher music education institution. In the HME sector, there is a great variety of artistic, educational, cultural, even political,... differences between individual institutions, and a plurality of programmes, curricula, contexts and ambitions.

Therefore, we cannot assume that there is one unique plan that meets the needs of all institutions in the sector when they plan an institutional change process in view of something as multifaceted as 'curricular innovation'.

Instead of compiling a set of guidelines and directives, the working group decided therefore early on to rather design a methodology which is multi-applicable in a variety of settings and situations, as well as in different set-ups, addressing a multitude of objectives, and ...

The guiding principle here was a generic approach based on clarity and simplicity, allowing for specificity and flexibility, so that it can be moderated and applied by an individual institute to fit multiple purposes.

Two principles were combined in the design of this methodology, with a view to maximum transparency, coverage degree and long-term success rate: a template for a comprehensive 'Action Plan for Curricular Innovation' on the one hand, which was then used as a process document in a PDCA cycle (Plan - Do - Check - Act), on the other.

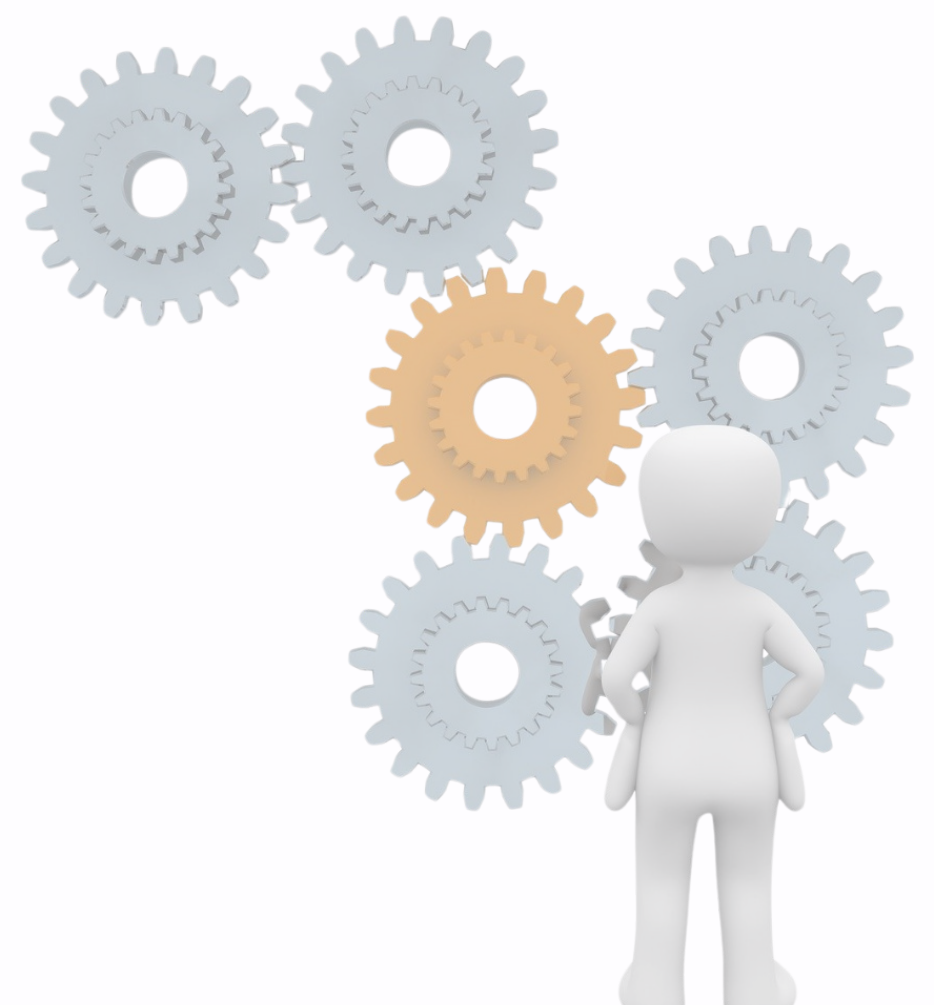


P:PLAN




This phase of the PDCA cycle focuses on designing the change process on the basis of the action plan. This plan is drawn up on the basis of five main questions that must be reflected upon and worked out, before the effective start of the implementation (the 'DO' phase) is given. In addition, attention is given to possible risks and challenges, as well as the necessary resources.

The format for the plan is designed to allow incremental detail, specificity and flexibility, and is applicable to a wide variety of topics for change. At the same time, it invites to take ownership and responsibility, at several places and times, and with different stakeholders.



WHY



A (curricular) change process does not occur in a vacuum: there is always a cause or reason underlying it. This may be intrinsic ('reason' or 'motive') or extrinsic ('reason') in nature: for example, the wish of an institution to pay more attention to representation in a curriculum, the desire to better meet the expectations of the professional field as a function of entrepreneurship, or guidelines from the government to add certain elements or to comply with certain guidelines - e.g. financial or labour-technical.

Often there is also a concrete occasion that leads to the decision to proceed with an innovation process, such as new legislation, an accreditation or the outcome of a study. Naming the occasion can help convey urgency to the internal community or the wider field, or clarify why exactly a particular moment is chosen to implement this concrete innovation.

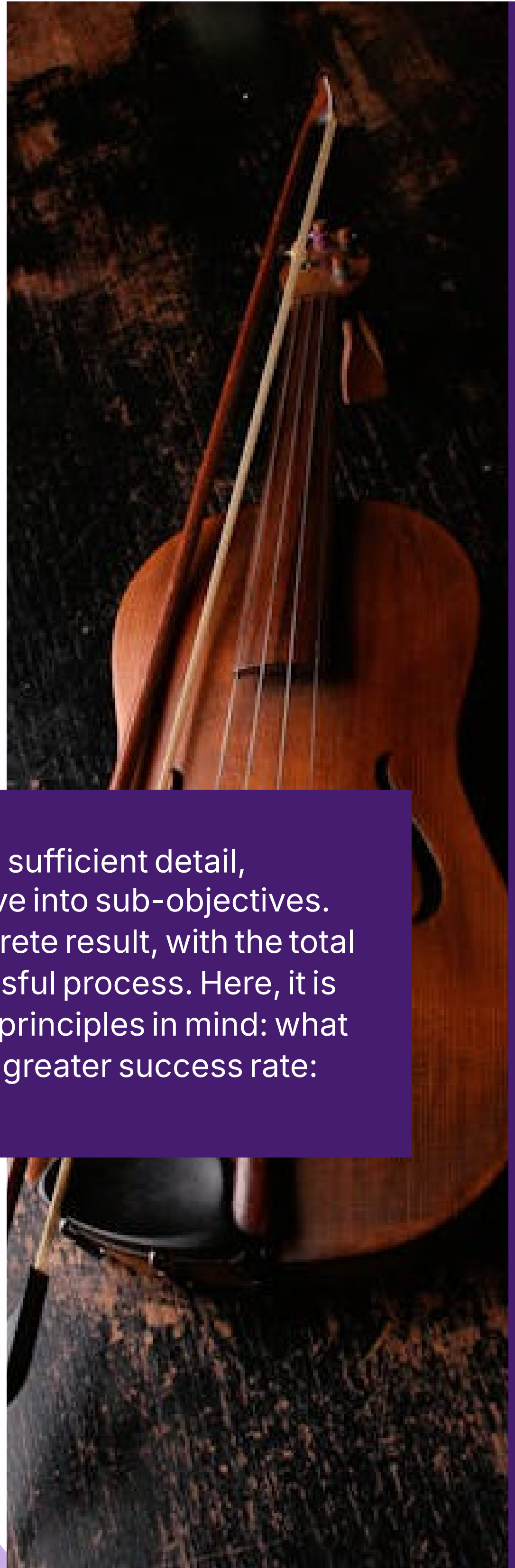
In addition, identifying and defining the rationale behind the cause or reason is also essential for the further development of the plan, as well as for its implementation and success rate. The rationale clarifies (1) why the research is important, (2) what the goals are and (3) what the expected findings are. It is therefore essential to keep the answer to the 'WHY' question in mind during the change process at all time, including as a basis for a proper evaluation of the process and its outcomes.

These three elements are decisive in providing clarity to the entire institutional community, from student, staff, to leadership, as well as creating support from that same community, when they support these elements. If there is insufficient support from within the institution to realise the overarching objective, it will be much more difficult to get the necessary buy-in and support to take the necessary actions.

WHAT

The next point, WHAT, describes what the curricular innovation is about and what the final product(s) and result(s) are expected to be, e.g. a new study programme, an individual course, a research centre, a service for continuing professional development, etc.. Here, it is important to be as clear as possible, and to clearly relate the WHY question to the translation into concrete envisioned outcomes. In other words, the WHAT should provide a direct solution to meet the WHY.

In doing so, it is important to go into sufficient detail, translating the overarching objective into sub-objectives. Each sub-objective leads to a concrete result, with the total of the results determining a successful process. Here, it is recommended to keep the SMART principles in mind: what objectives should meet to ensure a greater success rate:



WHAT

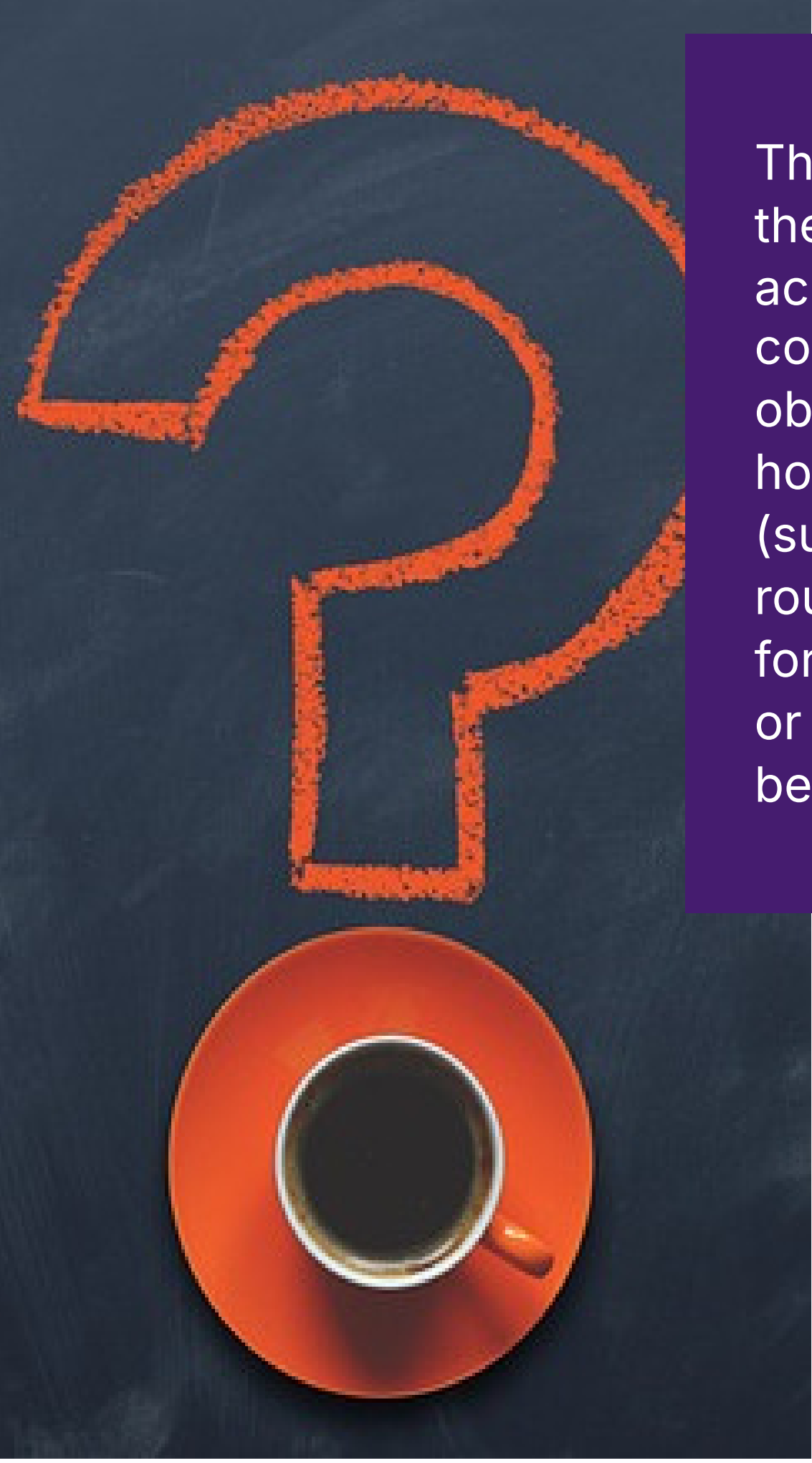
S M A R T

- Specific (be clear and detailed in defining the objective)
- Measurable (define how you can assess whether an objective has been achieved or not)
- Attainable (make sure the objective is ambitious, but within the realm of possibility),
- Relevant (choose objectives that are seen as acceptable and desirable by (the majority of) the community)
- Time-based (keep in mind at what point goals must be achieved, at what point they will be evaluated (CHECK), and when reporting will take place. See also 5. WHEN).



Formulating concrete objectives and defining concrete planned outcomes is important for two reasons: (1) linking concrete actions to achieve the objective, and (2) evaluating whether each objective has been achieved (CHECK) and whether adjustments may need to be made in the next phase (ACT).

HOW



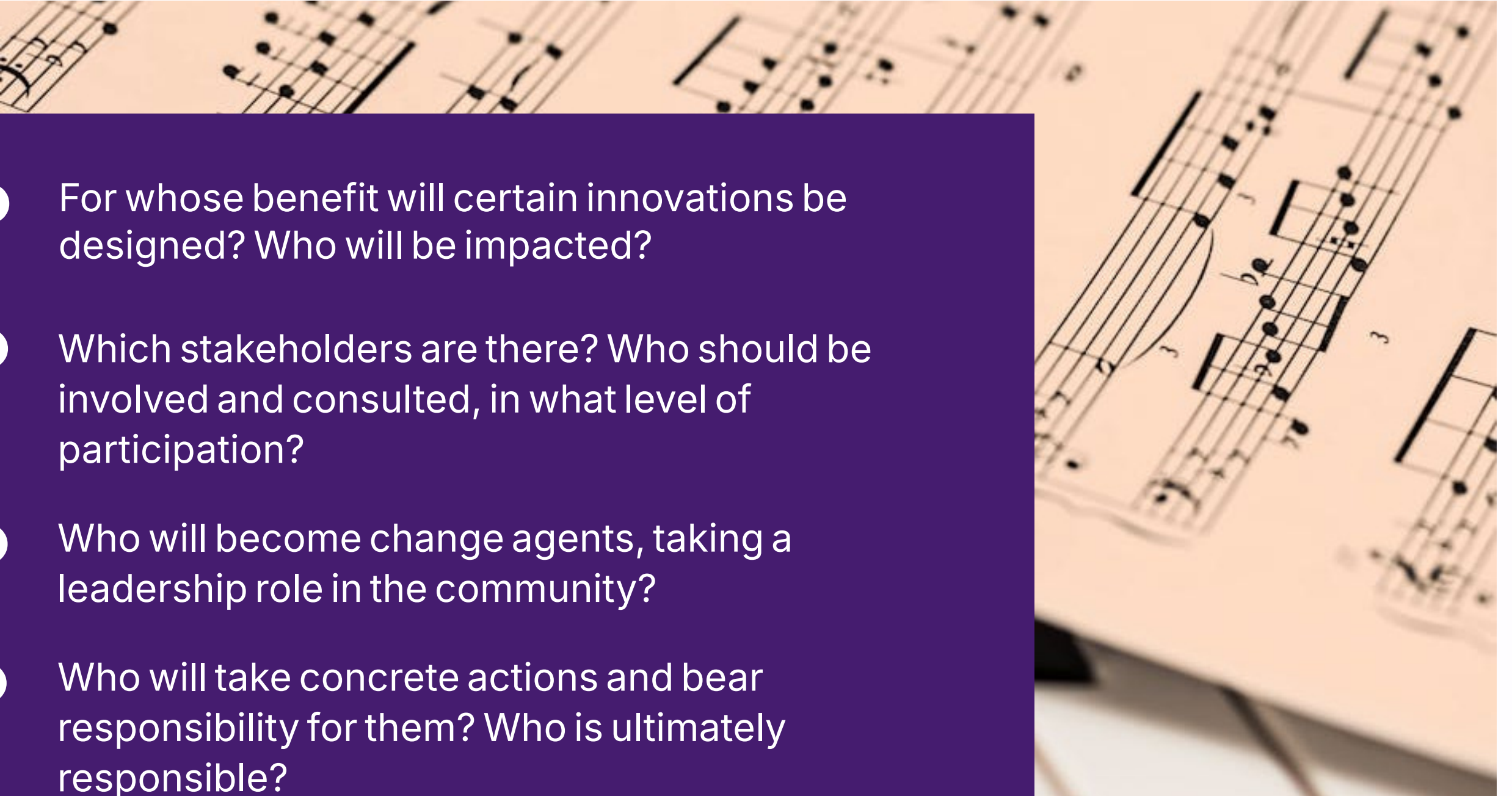
This chapter is the concrete description of the overall process that will be followed to achieve the (sub-)objectives. What concrete actions are planned for each sub-objective? How are these interlinked, and how do they relate to the set of (sub)objectives as a whole? What are the route followed, and what are the milestones for each action, against which the success or achievement of the (sub-)objective can be measured and communicated?

This description is the script to which each (sub)responsible person will link his or her actions, and is leading in the DO phase of the process. The clearer the actions and responsibilities are defined, the clearer it is for an individual to execute, and for the ultimate responsible person(s) to evaluate.

At the same time, it is also essential to build in flexibility. The chance always exists that not everything will be able to go according to plan. To still be able to continue the process and pursue the objectives without throwing in the towel and having to start all over again, it will sometimes be necessary to switch to an alternative route. This does not necessarily mean the process has failed. It can simply be a right action but not the right moment; an unexpected circumstance, etc. Moreover, it may also be that unexpected additional opportunities arise during a process. Therefore, try not to stubbornly stick to the original plan when it turns out that it is not working optimally, and even allow or welcome beneficial improvisations or serendipities.

WHO

The WHO question clearly has an inextricable link to the HOW, but also to the questions concerning WHY and WHAT. Indeed, the WHO concerns different perspectives:

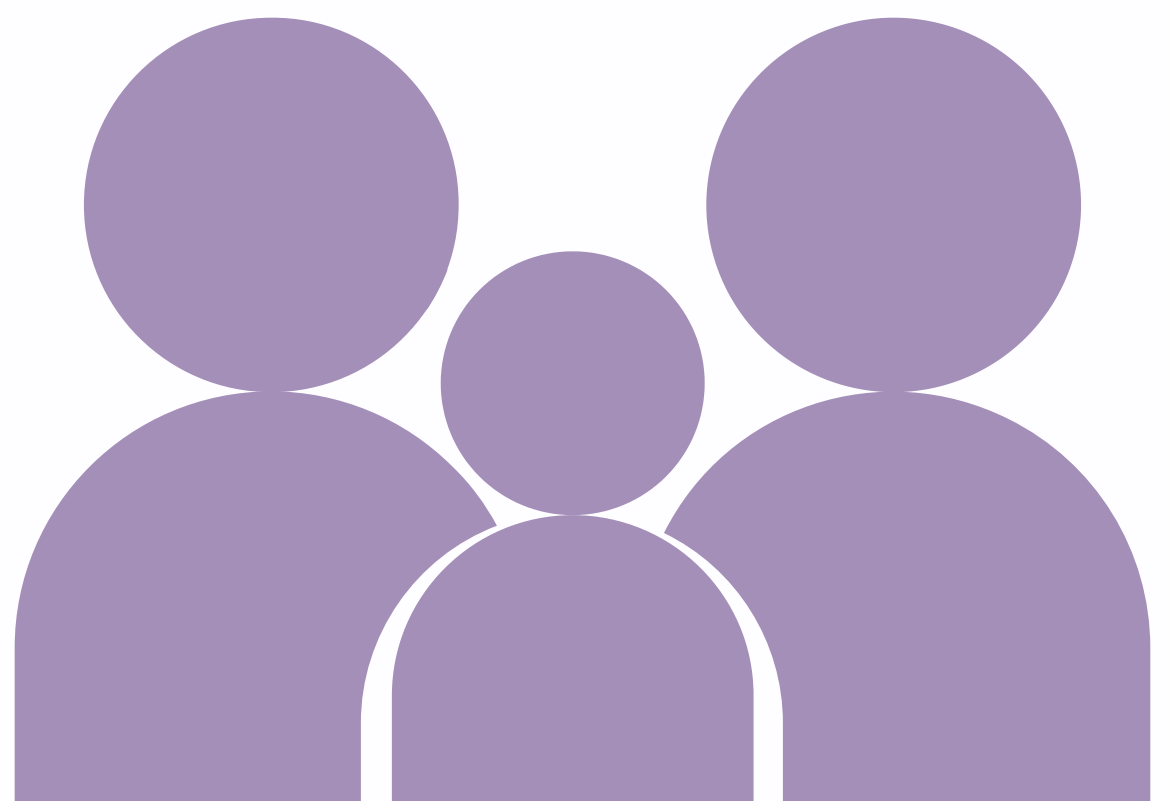
- 
- A background image of a musical score with various notes and staves, partially obscured by a purple text box.
- ① For whose benefit will certain innovations be designed? Who will be impacted?
 - ② Which stakeholders are there? Who should be involved and consulted, in what level of participation?
 - ③ Who will become change agents, taking a leadership role in the community?
 - ④ Who will take concrete actions and bear responsibility for them? Who is ultimately responsible?

In order to create sufficient support to successfully implement the change process, it is of utmost importance to clearly define from the start who will take on which role. Communication is an important element here: are certain groups (e.g. teachers, students, field of work...) informed in a timely and transparent manner, are consultations planned, are they consulted during the design, implementation, evaluation, etc.? Who is assigned an additional role, e.g. as representative for a certain group, performer of a certain task, manager of a certain process line, ...?

WHO

It is also, of course, necessary to be clear about roles, duties, powers and responsibilities. Who does what? What is the concrete goal of that action? What is needed for this, both in terms of time, manpower, training, expertise,...? To what extent does someone's own authority extend, and what is the link with other authorities? And what is the concrete own responsibility, both for the process and for the result?

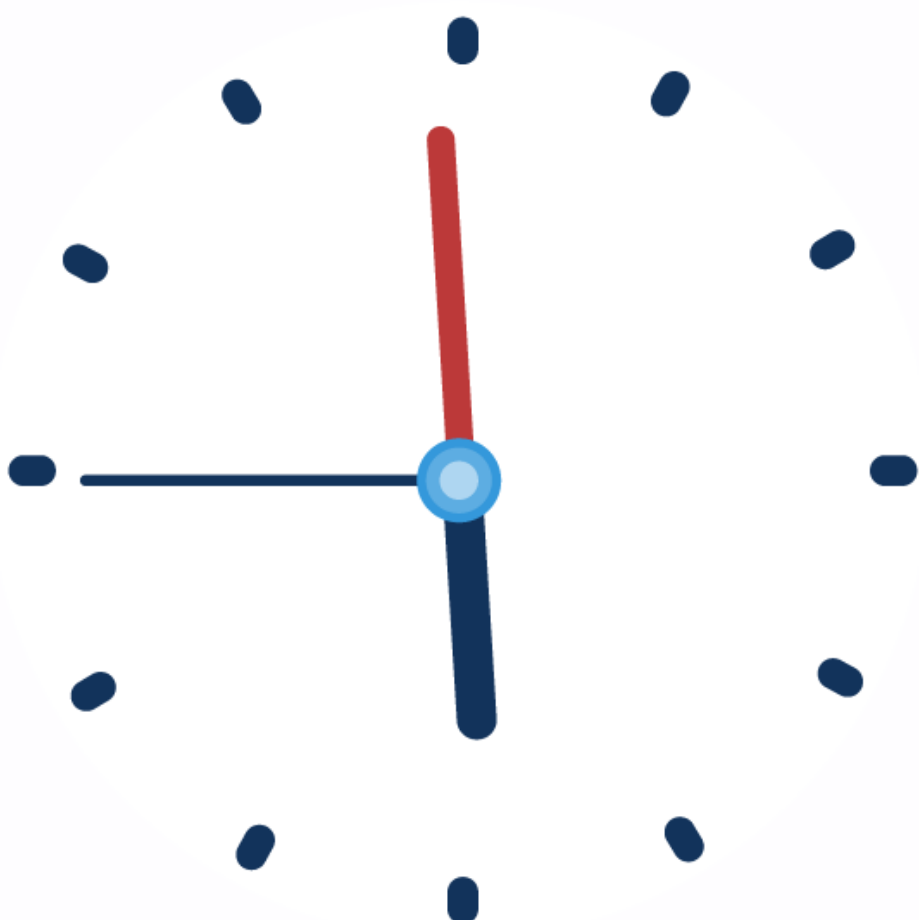
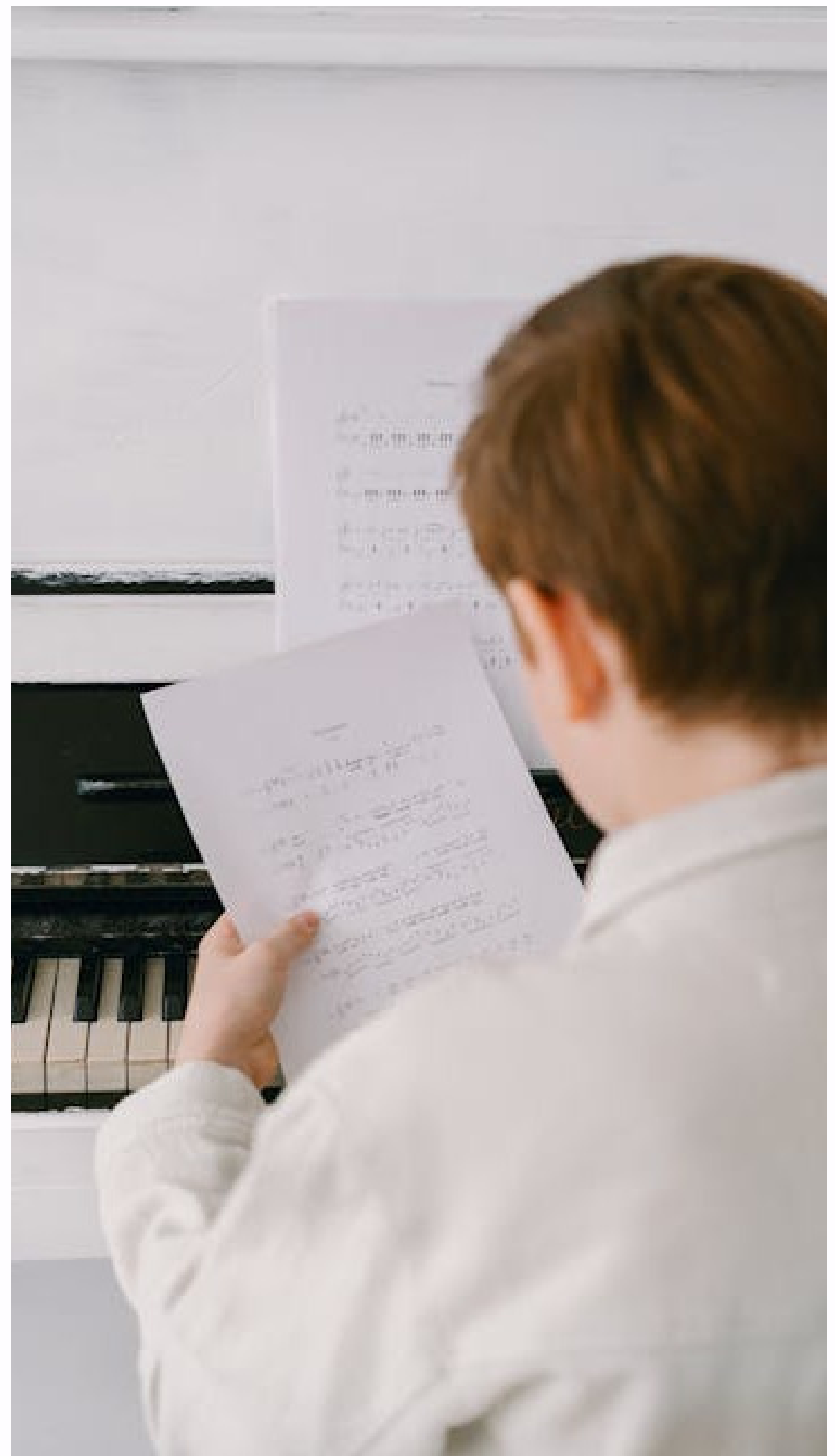
Just as the concrete actions form a whole to achieve a given objective, the set of individuals involved form a network that is interconnected and to some extent interdependent. Again, it is therefore important to determine well in advance whether the allocation of a role is realistic, and to be able to respond to changes, challenges and opportunities throughout the process. :



WHEN

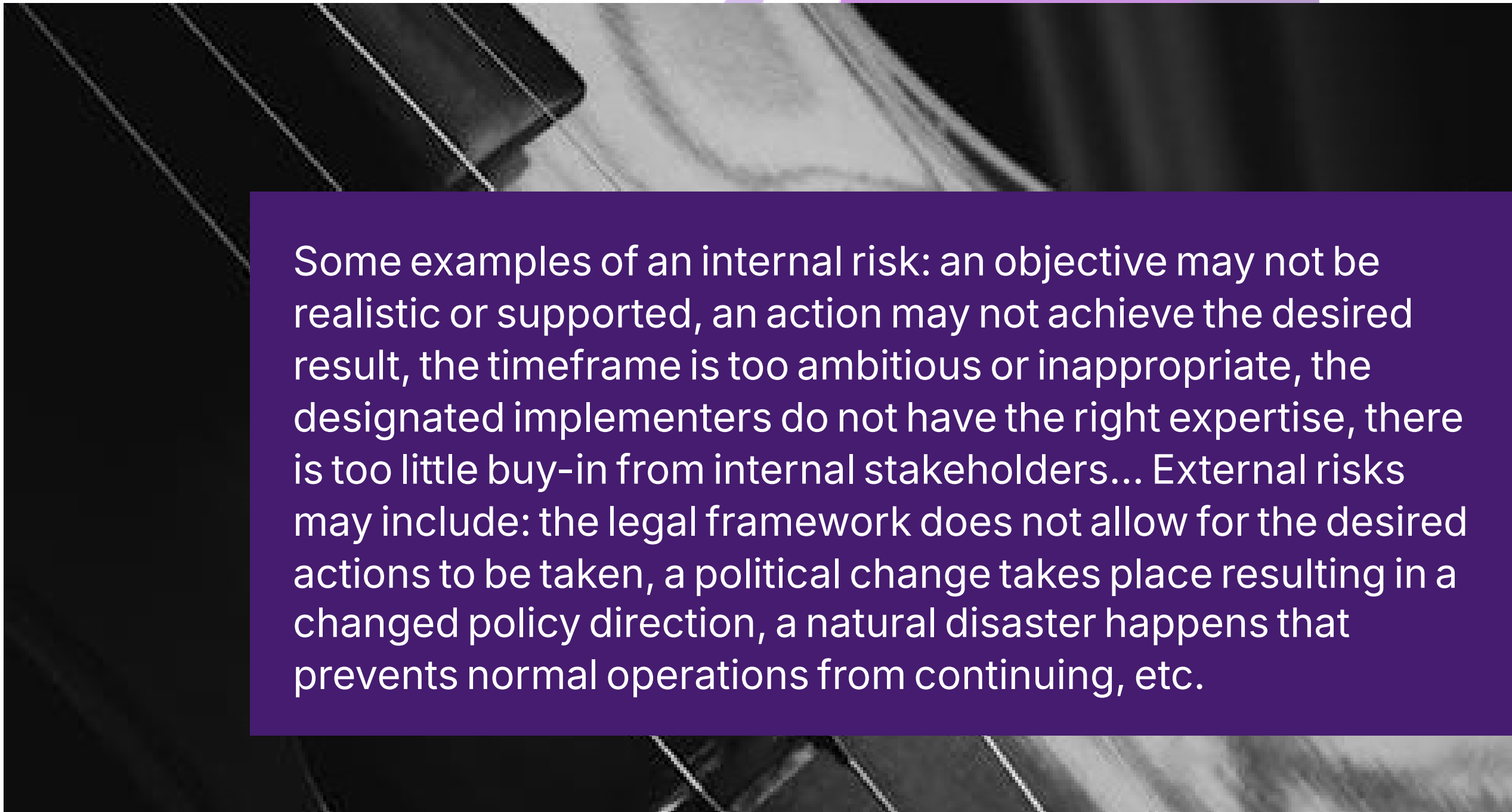
As a final aspect of the SMART provisions, time is a concept not to be underestimated. WHEN involves a concrete determination of the time for each step in the process (the HOW) and the plan as a whole. When should each action be finished, should the (sub-)objective be achieved, and can it be evaluated? When can the next step be planned, and when can the overall change process be considered finished? Is it also the right moment to start a curriculum change process or are there other priorities or circumstances that may influence the process both positively or negatively?

Concrete tools and timelines (e.g. GANTT charts) can provide guidance here to estimate the degree of realism, on the one hand, and also to monitor the totality of the process, on the other. Flexibility is also an important aspect here to take into account as much as possible, as well as the knowledge of when that would just not be possible - e.g. an accreditation moment, the start of a new academic year, etc.



RISKS and CHALLENGES

Although a plan is designed with the hope of following it as much as possible, it is always useful to keep a number of scenarios in mind. At every stage, and in every planned action, it is thereby beneficial to identify a number of possible risks and challenges, for example as a function of human factors, finances, legal framework, logistics..., and where possible also a number of ways to cope with them. These risks may involve internal or external factors, whereby it will more often be easier to deal with the internal issues than external issues that fall outside the scope of an institution's clout.



Some examples of an internal risk: an objective may not be realistic or supported, an action may not achieve the desired result, the timeframe is too ambitious or inappropriate, the designated implementers do not have the right expertise, there is too little buy-in from internal stakeholders... External risks may include: the legal framework does not allow for the desired actions to be taken, a political change takes place resulting in a changed policy direction, a natural disaster happens that prevents normal operations from continuing, etc.

RISKS and CHALLENGES

Especially in the 'DO', 'CHECK' and 'ACT' phases, these risks and challenges may surface, but the more they were considered during the 'PLAN' phase, the more easily and flexibly they can be dealt with. A risk management tool, like a Probability and Impact Matrix, can be valuable for prioritizing and assessing potential risks by outlining the likelihood of their occurrence and the potential consequences for the project's progress and outcomes.

PROBA- BILITY ↓	IMPACT →				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Catastroph ic
Almost Certain	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Extremely High Risk	Extremely High Risk	Extremely High Risk
Probable	Moderate Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Extremely High Risk	Extremely High Risk
Possible	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	Extremely High Risk
Unlikely	Low Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	High Risk	High Risk
Rare	Low Risk	Low Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	Moderate Risk

RESOURCES

1. Decision-making

Who takes what decision, based on what preliminary research, with whose support, at what time,...?

2. Management approaches

Who takes the responsibilities, is there strong steering or does ownership lie strongly with the various actors, is there much opportunity for participation or feedback,...?

3. Human factors

Are there enough people available to perform the tasks, do they have enough time and space to perform their (additional) tasks, is there enough support in all layers of the community, are all sufficiently involved,...?

4. Finances

Is there enough financial clout to realise the goals and pay people, are additional sources of funding needed, is the success rate high enough to cash in on external sources,...?

5. Communication

At what moments will there be communication, what will the message be and in what detail will it be communicated, is there purely information, or is there also opportunity for discussion, consultation, participation,...?

6. Expertise

Do all performers have the right skill-set to carry out the assignments, are additional professionalisation actions needed, is help needed from outside the institute,...?

7. Logistics

Does the physical circumstance of the institute provide sufficient opportunity to carry out the process, is there sufficient manpower to provide support,...?

8. External support

Is the process received positively by the field, by umbrella bodies, by ministries, by committees, public opinion,....



D. Do

The 'PLAN' phase is logically followed by the implementation phase. The plan, with its defined goals, steps, actions, objectives and milestones, serves as a script for each participant in the process. This is also immediately the phase in which it becomes clear whether the plan was sufficiently detailed and realistic, whether there is sufficient support, and whether adjustments need to be made.



C. Check

The milestones, which were linked to certain actions, persons and moments in the 'PLAN' phase, can be used to evaluate whether an action was successful, whether an objective was achieved and/or whether additional corrective actions need to be built in. In doing so, it is necessary to use the right measurement tools: to gain quantitative data (e.g. figures: how many enrolments a new programme has in a first year after implementation says something about its reach and about its alignment with the expectations of future students, satisfaction surveys from students and teachers), but also qualitative data (e.g. feedback panels with students and teachers, to measure the level of support or resistance).

The 'CHECK' can be carried out by different bodies: (1) by the sub-responsible party: the person to whom a particular action was assigned, (2) by the ultimate responsible party: the person or body accountable for the end result and accountable for it, or (3) an internal or external monitoring body, such as a review committee, a governmental evaluation or an external evaluation body.



D. Act

When it is clear that a particular action is not progressing as desired or seems not to be achieving the originally planned result, an intervention must be made. In this regard, the outcomes from the 'DO' and 'CHECK' phases are crucial for identifying process-related problems, ranging from substantive difficulties, to personnel issues, to issues related to time, finance, etc. In other words, there will be a return to the drawing board: first and foremost to identify the causes for the problem, and then to develop a new sub-plan, formulate a new sub-objective with new or modified actions, assign other responsibility and adjust the time plan to the new reality... in other words, in this phase, the path is paved to a new 'PLAN' phase, resulting in a modified and improved 'DO' phase. 'ACT' is therefore sometimes replaced by 'ADJUST', with the emphasis on improvement becoming more visible.

But, to 'ACT' or to 'ADJUST' it should not always be seen as a negative intervention, or as a solution to a problem. Often, during a change process, opportunities also surface, whose value is seen as a surplus in the original plan, or towards the ultimate objective. In that aspect, the PDCA approach therefore offers an opportunity towards continuous improvement of a process or an institutional operation, by remaining alert to opportunities and difficulties, and acting on them in an appropriate way and at an appropriate momentum. It is a process that basically never stops...

➤ ACTION PLAN

A template for the Action Plan

Additional information and inspiration on possible design management processes, tools and resources

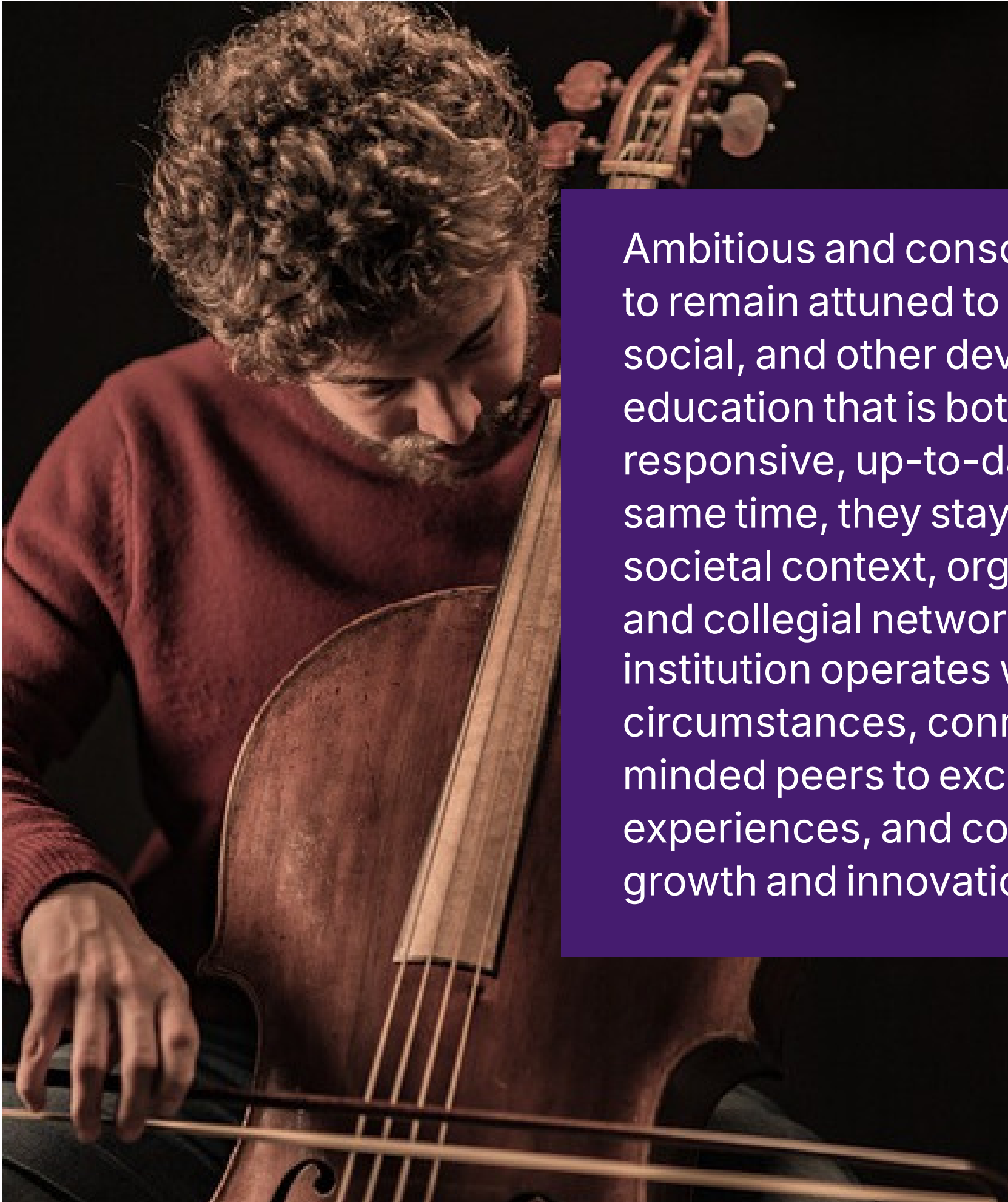
➤ SOURCES

FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION



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The Mutual Support Platform for Curricular Innovation or “Cluster Platform”



Ambitious and conscious institutions strive to remain attuned to artistic, professional, social, and other developments to offer education that is both proactive and responsive, up-to-date, and relevant. At the same time, they stay grounded in their societal context, organizational structure, and collegial networks. While every institution operates within unique circumstances, connecting with like-minded peers to exchange ideas, share experiences, and collaborate fosters mutual growth and innovation.

Recognizing the value of collaboration, the Working Group on Capacity Building created the Mutual Support Platform for Curricular Innovation. This initiative served as both a methodology for peer learning, and a source for gathering insights and good practices, based on the experiences by the participating institutions, of the Action Plan for Curricular Innovation. The platform’s primary objective was, and is, to provide AEC member institutions with peer and expert support, helping them achieve their curriculum change goals.



The Structure of the Platform

The Mutual Support Platform was built around five clusters, each consisting of four or five European higher music education institutions. These institutions, either planning or actively engaged in curricular change, responded to an open call by AEC with proposals outlining their intended reforms. Cluster participants determined their work processes and focus areas, ensuring alignment with their unique plans and needs. Over a two-year period, these clusters collaborated through reflection, exchange, and mutual support.

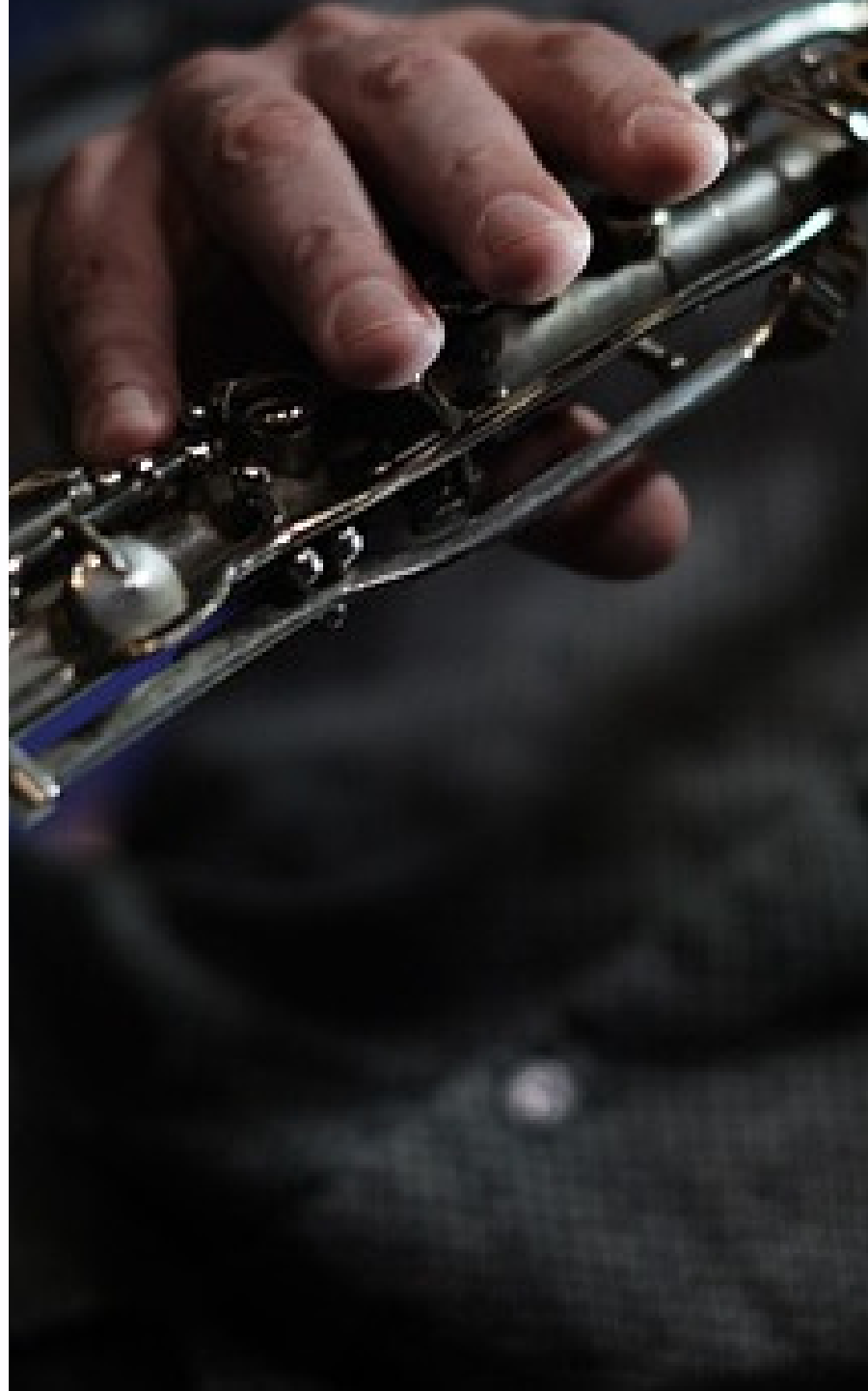
The Working Group facilitated and moderated the clusters, assisting participants in developing tailored action plans and executing them. Moreover, this method allowed the Working Group to explore themes, trends, and challenges, as well as insightful questions, reflections, and case studies: useful information and inspiration for this Book of Big Questions.

Collaborative Approach

Cluster activities primarily took place through online meetings, where representatives from each institution shared updates on their processes, provided peer feedback, and sought expert advice. To enrich discussions, institutions included participants from diverse roles, bringing multiple perspectives to the table. The cluster environment was deliberately designed to be non-competitive, with no imposed timelines or requirements to demonstrate specific outcomes..

improvement, and draw inspiration from their peers. Even those operating within restrictive national legal frameworks found ways to leverage insights from cluster discussions to advocate for more flexible arrangements at the governmental level.

A Framework for the Future

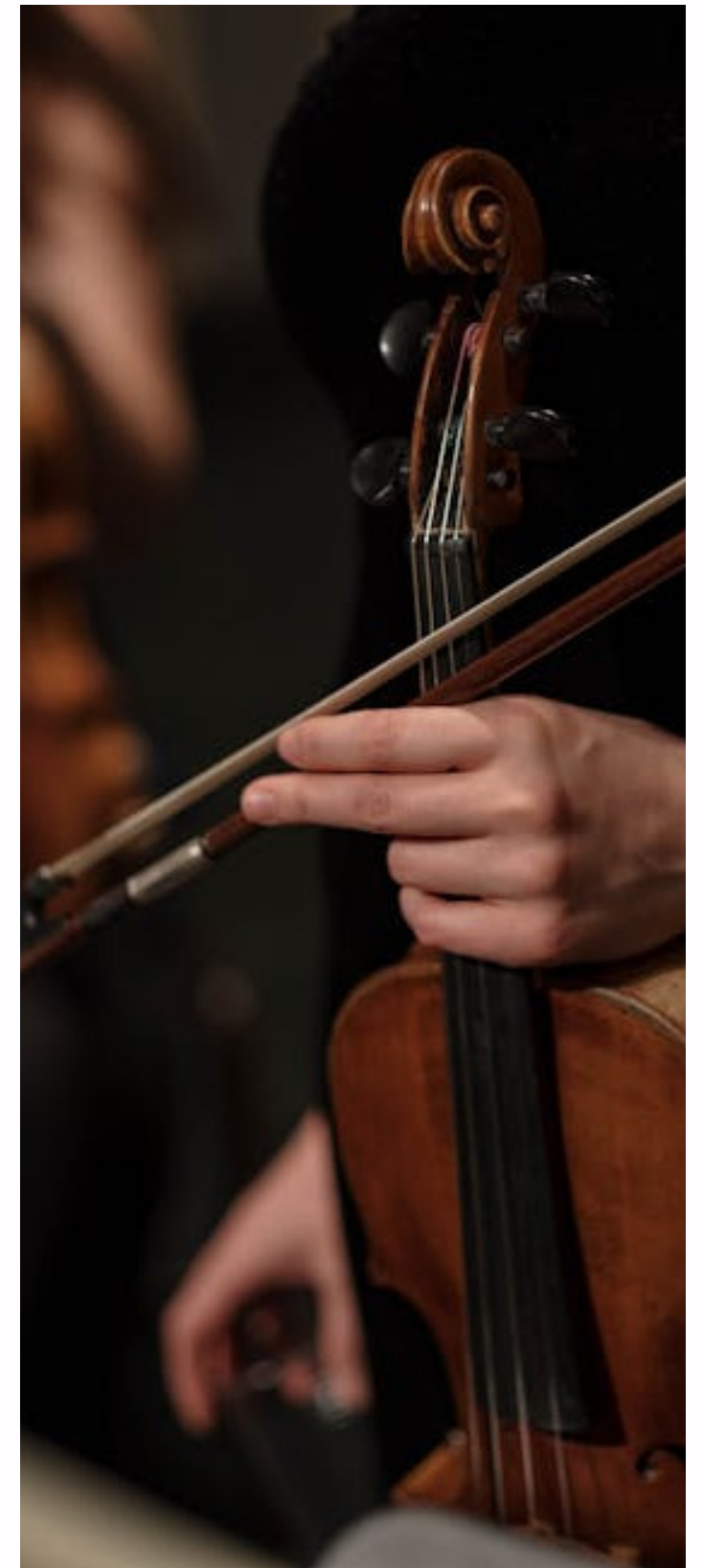


The Mutual Support Platform serves as a model for institutions seeking to embark on their own curricular change processes. Even without the moderation of a central Working Group, the platform's approach offers a framework for fostering collaboration, reflection, and innovation. By engaging in non-competitive peer learning and support, institutions can develop tailored strategies, overcome challenges, and contribute to the collective advancement of the higher music education sector.

Leadership And Management

Opportunities for Peer Learning:

- Engaging with colleagues who share similar goals and challenges.
- Exchanging ideas, knowledge, and perspectives to inspire and inform institutional efforts.
- Providing and receiving external perspectives to refine strategies.
- Identifying actionable insights, even within restrictive legal frameworks, to drive institutional change.



International Support and Recognition

- Gaining recognition for proposed and implemented reforms.

Contributing to Future Developments

- Influencing the evolution of the higher music education sector.

Inspiration and Empowerment

- Empowering colleagues responsible for initiating and implementing curricular reforms.
- Empowering colleagues responsible for initiating and implementing curricular reforms.

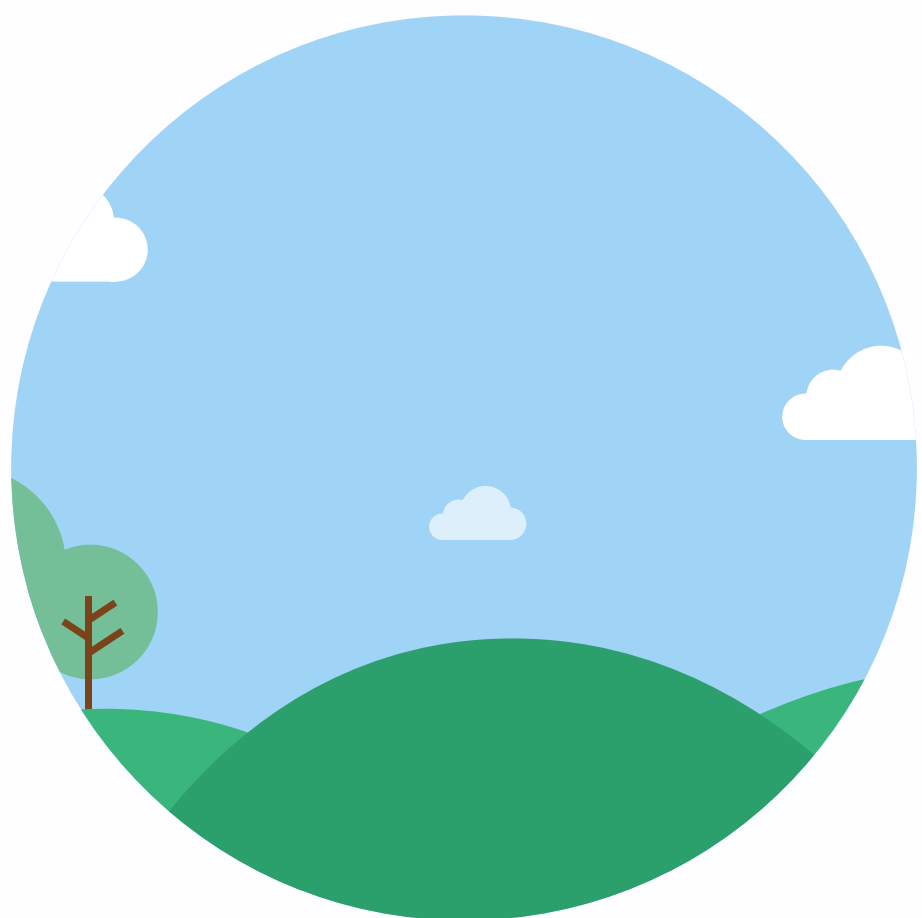
Leadership And Management

Benchmarking information

- Comparing institutional efforts with those of peers to evaluate progress and identify areas for growth.

Networking Opportunities

- Building an international network of relationships for ongoing collaboration and support.



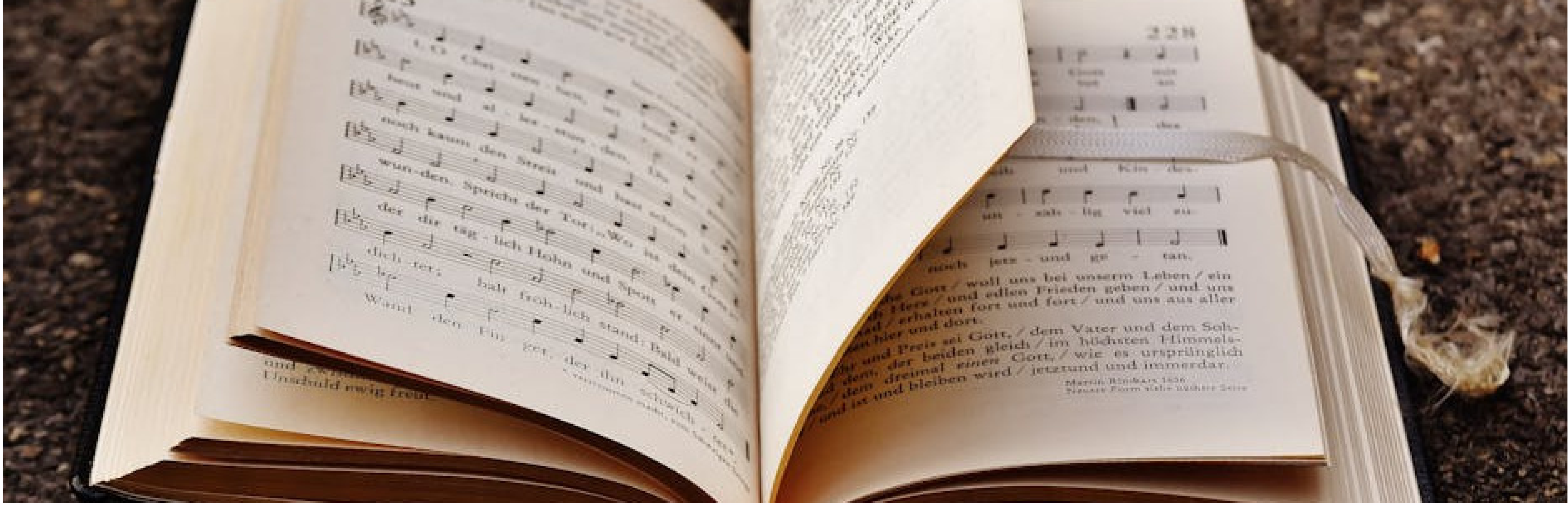
Marijn Abbink, from the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, tells her story of how the institution worked with the questions in the action plan, as part of the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle as used in the Cluster process.

 CLUSTER TESTIMONIAL

A BOOK OF BIG QUESTIONS



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As mentioned earlier, this publication is not meant to provide The Right Answers. Quite the contrary, it focuses on The Right Questions – hence, the Book of Big Questions, or BBQ. Based on the assumption that each institution, each change management process and each curricular innovation trajectory will be unique, the rationale behind this publication is to offer guidance, inspiration and information, while the ownership and specific design will be kept within the institution – close to the institution, the ambition, the people.

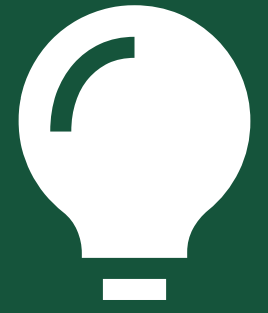
Apart from the methodology, containing the Action Plan and the PDCA cycle, which was designed and implemented over the course of Artemis (see also Chapter 3 on The Cluster Methodology), this publication is built around the main questions and topics of the Action Plan: WHY, WHAT, HOW, WHO, and WHEN. One additional chapter is included: RESOURCES.

▶ RESOURCES

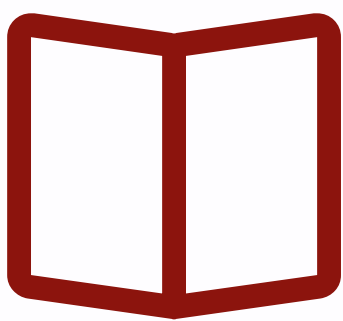
Each of the chapters contains recurring subchapters:

01 Expert's insights and reflections

As the core force of the company's innovation, the R&D department always stands at the forefront of technology and constantly explores the development and application of new technologies.



Case Studies and Stories 02



In this subchapter, specific cases of participating institutions are shared and discussed, as a peer learning experience. Additionally, for each chapter an analysis was made from the Action Plans of the Cluster participant, in order to identify trends and directions for curricular innovation within the current HMEI sector.

03 Risks and Tips

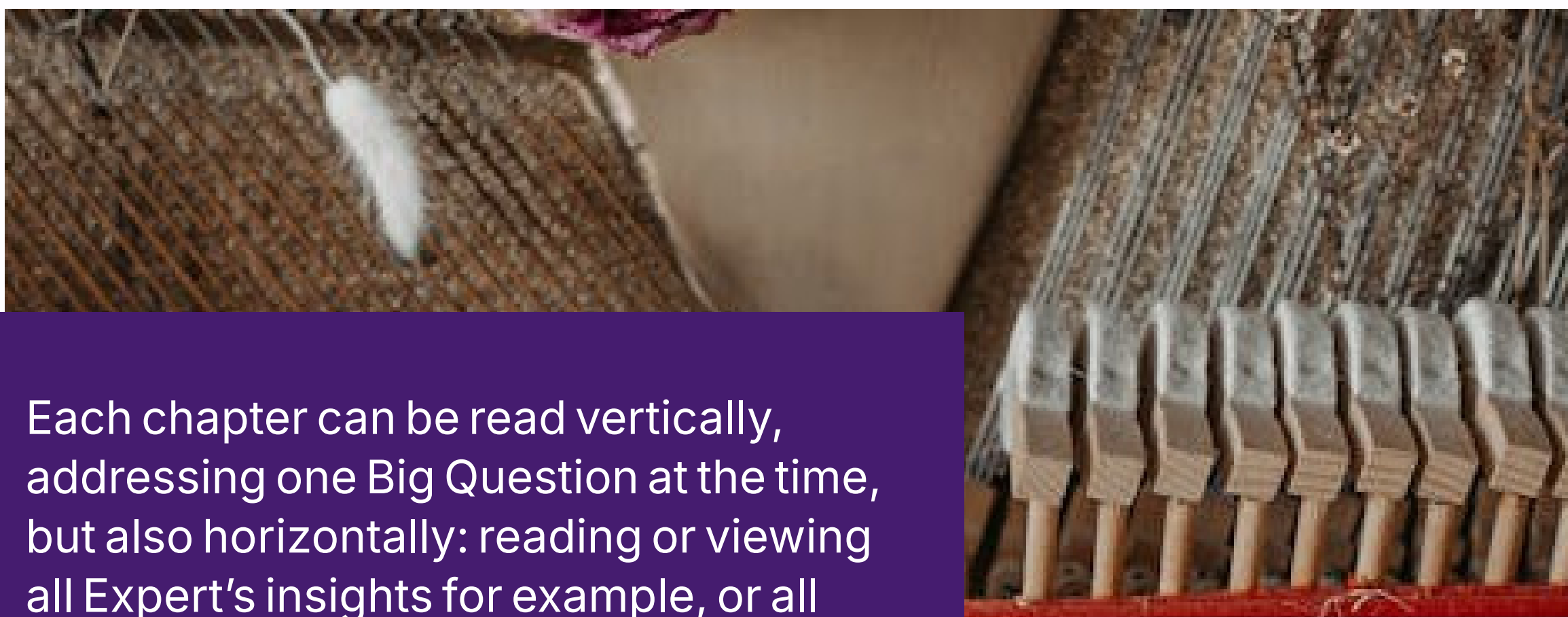
Reflections on risks and challenges are included, both from a hypothetical perspective as sprouting from experience. Some tips were added, but only from a reflective and experiential viewpoint – and not necessarily to be seen as the answer, or the solution.



Thought-provoking Questions 04



Designing and executing a comprehensive plan is time consuming and challenging, and might incur difficulties of gaps. To stimulate the thought process and to spark conversations, some questions were formulated for each chapter.



Each chapter can be read vertically, addressing one Big Question at the time, but also horizontally: reading or viewing all Expert's insights for example, or all Thought-Provoking Questions. In other words: this publication is an invitation to scroll, to read and view ad libitum, and to take away what is useful for one's own situation.



WHY

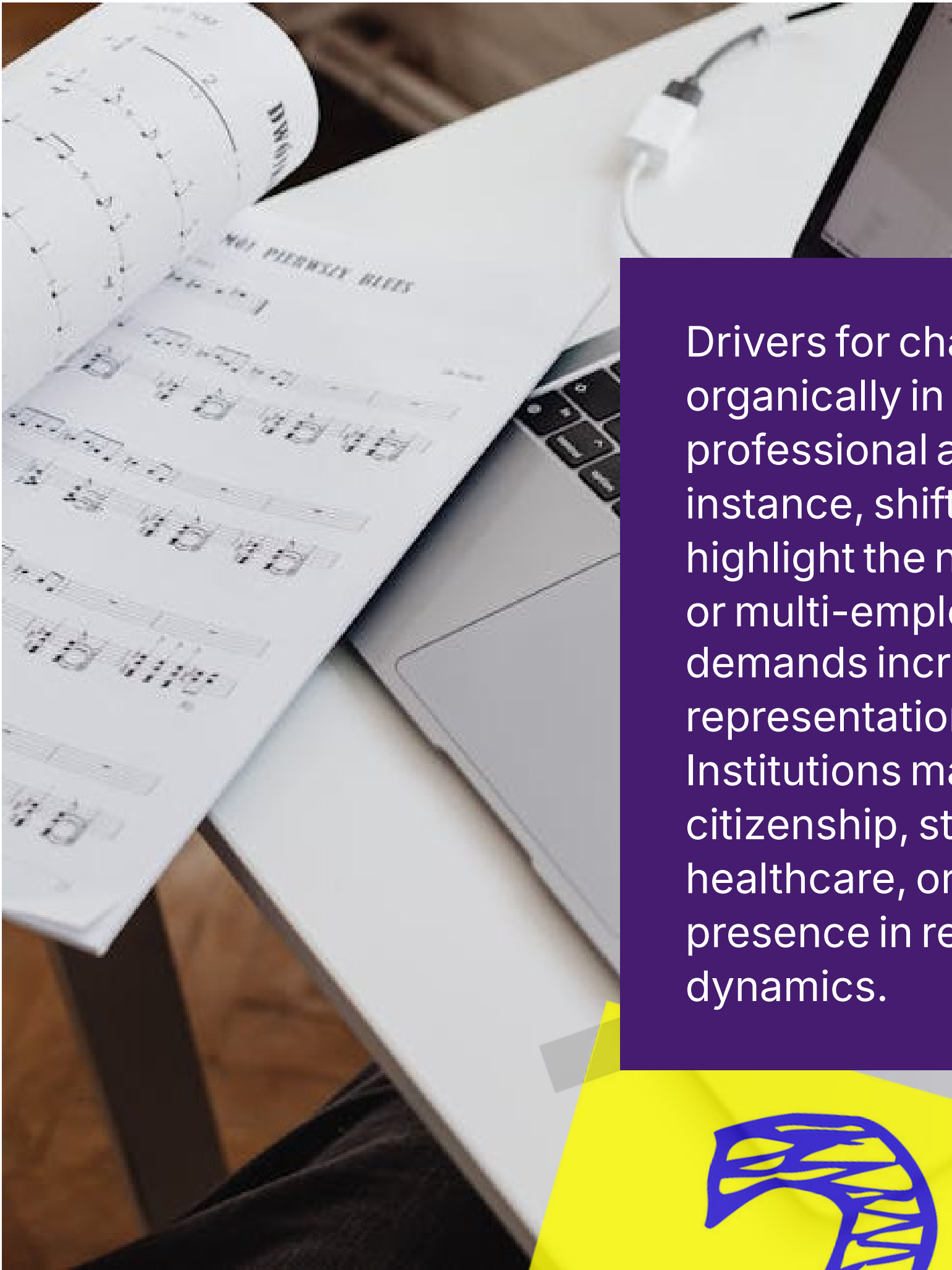
THE RATIONALE FOR CURRICULAR CHANGE



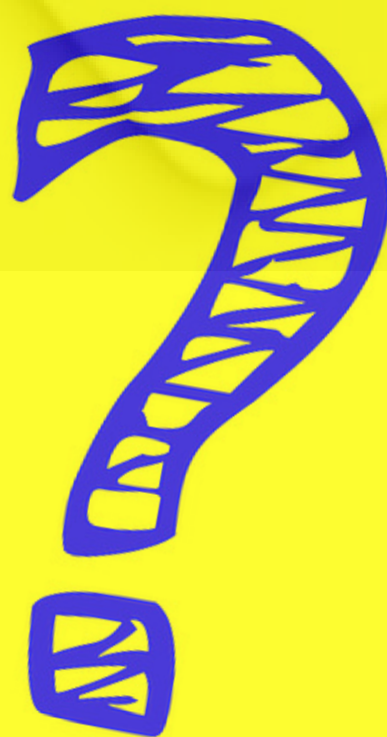
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WHY: The Rationale for Curricular Change

A (curricular) change process does not arise in a vacuum; it is always driven by a clear rationale. This rationale may stem from institutional ambitions—such as enhancing appeal, leveraging existing strengths, or expanding the range of study options—or from external pressures like changes in organizational structure, legislation, or funding.



Drivers for change can also emerge organically in response to evolving professional and societal landscapes. For instance, shifts in the job market might highlight the need for entrepreneurial skills or multi-employability, while societal demands increasingly call for greater representation, diversity, and inclusion. Institutions may also aim to foster artistic citizenship, strengthen ties with sectors like healthcare, or enhance their digital presence in response to these changing dynamics.



Examples shared by working group cluster participants include:

- Adapting to legal and institutional requirements.
- Advancing internationalization initiatives.
- Responding to music industry trends.
- Emphasizing inclusivity, diversity, and social engagement.
- Promoting curriculum flexibility and student autonomy.

A clear and well-substantiated rationale is essential to the success of any change process. It serves as the foundation for defining the final objective and envisioning the desired future state, which then guides the creation of concrete objectives and measurable outcomes. Simply put, without a clear rationale, there is no compelling reason to initiate change.

This **WHY** is critical not only for justifying the actions that need to be taken but also for effectively communicating the need for change to all stakeholders—both internal and external. By articulating a compelling rationale, institutions can build the support necessary to drive meaningful progress.

The rationale must also align closely with the institution's overarching mission. For higher (music) education institutions, this mission encompasses four interconnected pillars: educational, artistic, research, and social responsibilities. A well-defined rationale ties these elements together, ensuring that all stakeholders can identify with and rally behind the institution's vision for the future.

Insights and Reflections of Experts and Colleagues

**Deborah Kelleher, Director, Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM),
President, AEC** Interviewed by Lynsey Callahan, Head of Programmes,
Research and Academics, RIAM

On why institutions should engage in curricular change ...

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**Tamar Brüggeman, Founder and Artistic Director, Wonderfeel
Festival, Netherlands**

On broadening our understanding of excellence and
quality, and fostering curiosity...

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**Stephen Nachmanovitch, violinist, Free Play Productions, Ivy, Virginia
USA**

On the changing educational and societal environment
and the reaffirmation of core values...

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**Anothai Nithibon, Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music,
Bangkok, Thailand; President of SEADOM (Southeast Asian Director
of Music)**

On curricular reform in a globalized cultural context....

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**Martin Prchal, Vice-Principal, Royal Conservatoire of The Hague (NL),
Co-Secretary General of IN.TUNE—Innovative Universities in Music &
Arts in Europe**

On developing a new project-based master of music curriculum...

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**Lynsey Callahan, Head of Programmes, Research, and
Academics, Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), Dublin**

On the capstone project as a key element in curriculum design and content...

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Luc Nijs, Music Education, University of Luxembourg

On developing a brand-new bachelor programme in music education, from vision to execution

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**Natassa Economidou, Music Department, University of Nicosia,
Cyprus**

Thematic Analysis of the WHY Working Groups...

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RISKS & TIPS



All risks

- Preliminary research fails to adequately consider the institution's local, national, or international context.
- Lack of full support from government or regulatory bodies poses obstacles to the approval or implementation of proposed changes.

- Assess the institution's appetite for risk and readiness for change among all stakeholders before proceeding.
- Engage government and regulatory bodies early in the process to address concerns, seek alignment, and minimize delays.



All tips

WHAT

DEFINING OBJECTIVES



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WHAT: Defining Objectives

A fundamental step in developing an action plan for change is defining clear and measurable objectives. What is the overarching goal of the intended change? What specific outcomes are sought through the curricular change process? And what tangible achievements will help the institution realize its underlying rationale?

In essence, this phase addresses the critical question: What solutions must be achieved to address the problem or fulfill the ambitions driving the change (the Why)?



- Developing a student-centered study program that incorporates greater flexibility through open spaces in the curriculum.
- Introducing a newly developed third study cycle to enhance educational pathways.
- Modifying admission procedures to foster a more inclusive and diverse student body.

To streamline the process, it can be helpful to define intended partial outcomes, breaking the change initiative into interconnected sub-phases. Success in these incremental components contributes cumulatively to achieving the overall objectives.

Clear and concrete formulation of goals and outcomes is essential. This clarity serves multiple purposes:

- To inform the development of specific actions
- To identify the Stakeholders that should be involved
- To establish realistic deadlines for implementation

THE HOW

THE WHO

THE WHEN

Moreover, precision in defining objectives is crucial for monitoring and evaluating progress during the 'control' phase of the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle. It also plays a vital role in quality assurance, ensuring that the change initiative remains aligned with its intended goals.

Ultimately, success will be measured by whether the desired outcomes and overarching objectives are fully realized. By setting clear, actionable targets, institutions can lay a solid foundation for meaningful and sustainable change.

Insights and Reflections of Experts and Colleagues

Tanja Orning, Norwegian Academy of Music (NHM)

On embracing contemporaneity, diversity, and interactivity to moving from 'makers in society' to 'makers of society...

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Bernard Lanskey, Queensland Conservatorium, Brisbane (AU)

On what represents 'current' in the Conservatoire World...

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Guro Graven Johansen, Ingesund School of Music, Karlstad University (SE)

On gender equality in jazz...

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Enrico Bertelli, Wong Bing Lai Performing Arts Unit, Lingan University, Hong Kong.

On the opportunities of Artificial Intelligence and tips on how to get started...

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On the development of a programme-wide collaborative interdisciplinary week...

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Sandrine Desmurs, Head of Digital Department, Cefedem Auvergne Rhon-Alpes (FR), Chair of ARTEMIS Digitisation Working Group

On digitization and curriculum change...

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On embedding a research project on live-music in hospital settings into the curriculum...

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Natassa Economidou, Music Department, University of Nicosia, Cyprus

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RISKS & TIPS



All risks

- The new curriculum is based on current needs without anticipating future trends in arts and education.
- The new curriculum fails to take into account the local socio-cultural context of the institution and its connection with the needs and requirements of stakeholders.

- Be led by a clear vision and educational goals for the new curriculum; this should minimise the risk of overburdening an old structure with new elements.

- Consult external advisors and colleagues who have implemented similar projects to anticipate potential turbulence and strategies for addressing it.



All tips

HOW



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Introduction: How

Once the overall objectives and specific goals have been established, the next step in the change process is determining how to transition from the current situation to the desired future. What path will take you from point A to point B? What stages must you navigate along the way, and what milestones will indicate progress? Most importantly, how will you know when you've successfully reached your destination?

This phase focuses on **PLANNING**: outlining every action and linking it to a concrete (sub-)goal. The resulting plan becomes a roadmap to guide the implementation of actions. A well-constructed plan—with clearly defined actions, goals, milestones, and timelines—makes execution (DO), evaluation (CHECK), and adaptation (ACT) far more straightforward and effective.

Various methods, techniques, and tools are available to support this planning and design process. General change management frameworks can offer structured approaches to change, such as:

- Lewin's *Unfreeze–Change–Refreeze* model
- Kotter's *8-Step Change Model*
- McKinsey's 7S Framework

Other models emphasize the human element and adopt a more creative perspective, such as

- *The Design Thinking* approach
- The *ADKAR* model
- *Radical Creativity*



While there are often multiple routes to reach the same destination, the chosen approach must align with the specific goals, people, organization, and context. Thorough knowledge of the situation and a meticulous planning phase are essential for success. However, it's equally important to acknowledge that not everything can be predicted or controlled. Unexpected obstacles may arise along the way. Depending on the situation, the best course of action might involve finding an alternative route, overcoming the obstacle directly, or removing it entirely.

Effective planning, therefore, requires both structure and flexibility. Anticipating potential challenges while remaining adaptable ensures that the journey toward your goals remains as smooth and effective as possible.

Insights and Reflections of Experts and Colleagues

Tuulikki Laes, university researcher, academy research fellow, University of the Arts, Helsinki

On higher music education, transprofessional collaboration, and eco-political activism

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Gilvano Dalagna, researcher, University of Aveiro (INET-md), Portugal, senior lecturer, University Alfonso X el Sabio (UAX), Spain

On navigating resistance to curricular change, particularly in the area of artistic research...

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David Bahanovitch, Associate Provost, Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, USA

On change management in HMEIs ...

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Katja Thomson, Music Education, University of the Arts, Helsinki Chair of the ARTEMIS Working Group on Diversity, Inclusion, and Gender Equality

On the ongoing process of changing curriculum to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion...

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On a comprehensive review of programs and redesign focusing on community engagement, inclusion, and the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills...

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Barratt Due Institute of Music, Oslo ????

On curriculum redesign in an alternative smaller institution...

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Joris Blanckaert, KASK & Conservatorium, School of the Arts, HOGENT

On a process of holistic curriculum redesign...

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Natassa Economidou, Music Department, University of Nicosia, Cyprus

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RISKS & TIPS



All risks

- Overly ambitious timelines, inadequate resource allocation and lack of skilled staff could jeopardize the quality of the redesign.
- Lack of preparation of the staff to adapt to the new methods to be implemented, which could lead to inconsistency in teaching quality or staff resistance to change.

- Set specific, measurable goals and achievable milestones with adequate time for stakeholders to meet them without excessive stress.
- Learn from the successes and challenges of similar institutions that have undergone curricular changes.



All tips

WHO

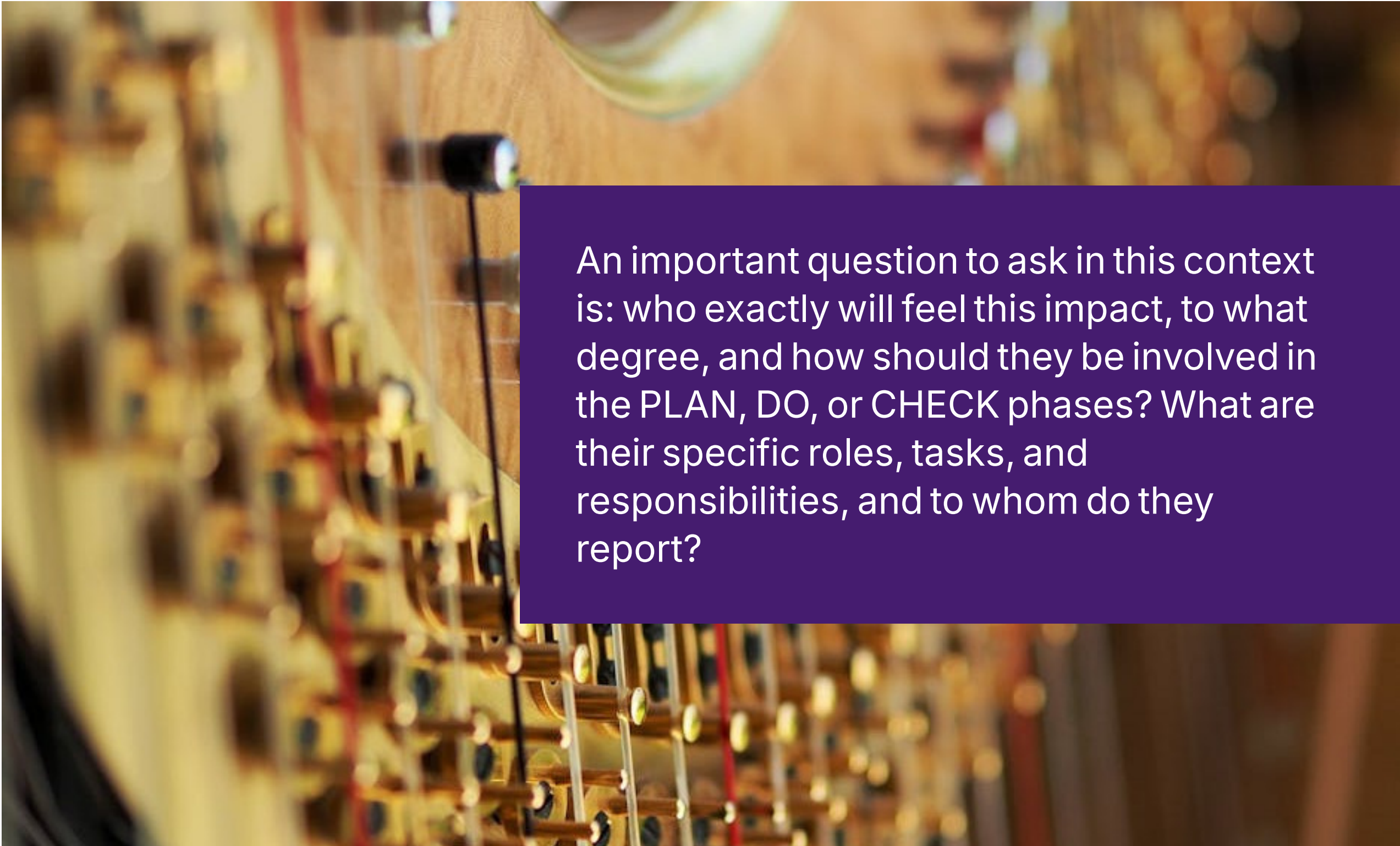
DEFINING STAKEHOLDER ROLES IN CURRICULAR INNOVATION



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WHO: Defining Stakeholder Roles in Curricular Innovation

Evidently, any plan remains nothing more than an idea until someone brings it to life and people begin to benefit from it. In this sense, the question of "who" is key to unlocking possibilities and opening doors to new realities. However, the question of "who" goes beyond determining the individuals who will be the executors of the plan. After all, those directly involved as actors in the change process represent only a small percentage compared to the broader group of stakeholders who will experience the impact of curricular innovation. In that sense, it is not only important to think of representation in terms of roles and responsibilities, but also in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion (see also the [ARTEMIS resource package Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Higher Music Education - An Invitation for Action](#)).



An important question to ask in this context is: who exactly will feel this impact, to what degree, and how should they be involved in the PLAN, DO, or CHECK phases? What are their specific roles, tasks, and responsibilities, and to whom do they report?

The stakeholders are mainly found within the institution and may involve individuals, groups, or committees. Examples include:

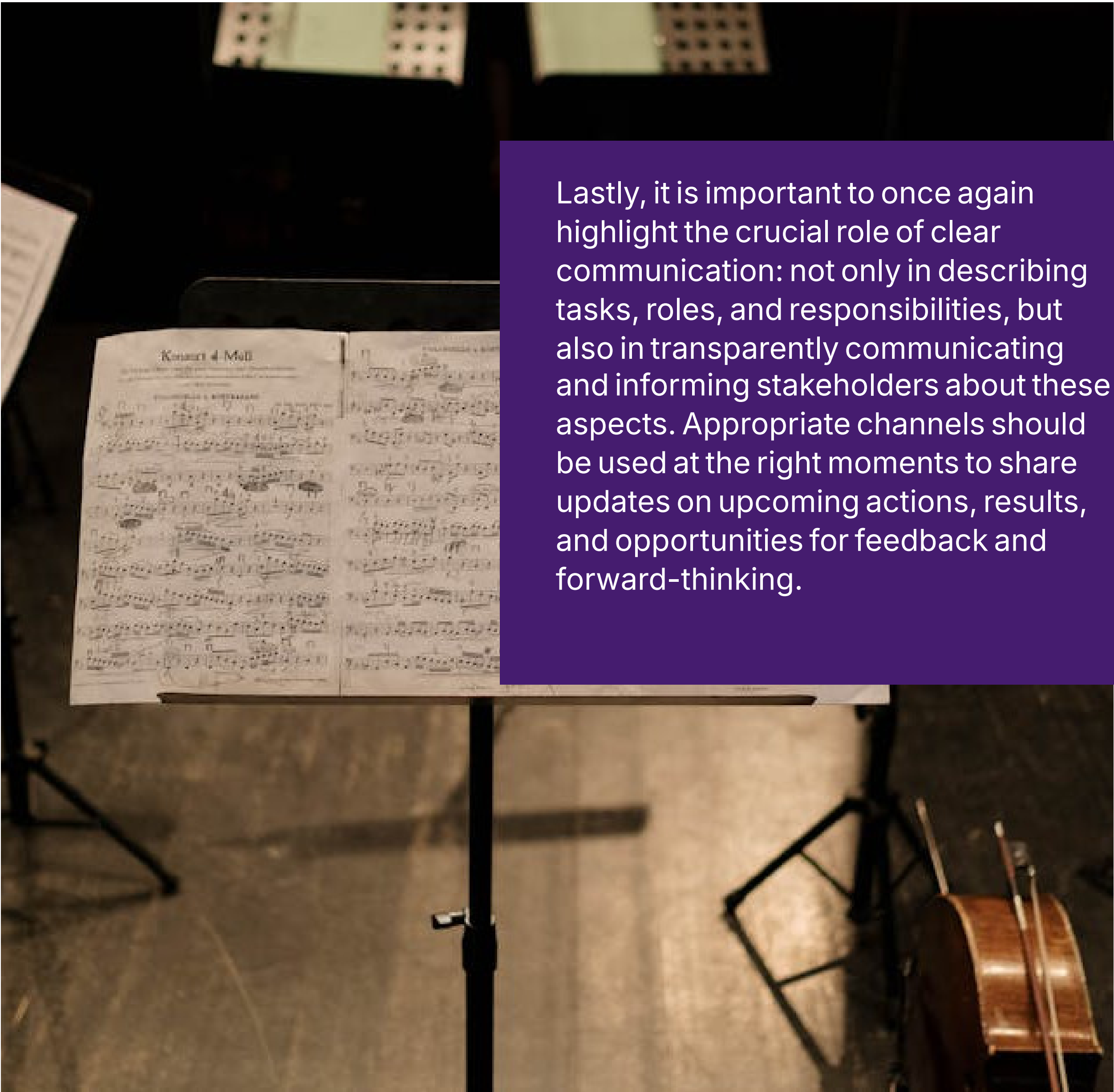
- Students and student councils
- Faculty members and departments
- Coordinators and middle management
- Educational developers and policy advisors
- Senior management
- Study Programme Committees
- Exam Committees
- Participation boards
- Support staff such as technical and logistical teams, communication departments, IT departments, quality assurance offices, etc.
- ...

Externally, there are stakeholders who can play a valuable role in the PLAN and CHECK phases, or who have direct or indirect interests. Examples include:



- Industry committees
- Professional partner organizations
- Partner institutions
- External experts
- Alumni
- Government agencies
- External panels
- The press and media
- ...

Within the ARTEMIS Project, the Clearly defining and aligning roles, tasks, and responsibilities ensures that all activities are coordinated and that the flow of the process is optimized. A useful tool in this process can be the "RASCI" matrix. "RASCI" stands for Responsible, Accountable, Supportive, Consulted, and Informed. Each stakeholder may have a different role or responsibility in various aspects of the process, but there must be, and can only be, one accountable person.



Lastly, it is important to once again highlight the crucial role of clear communication: not only in describing tasks, roles, and responsibilities, but also in transparently communicating and informing stakeholders about these aspects. Appropriate channels should be used at the right moments to share updates on upcoming actions, results, and opportunities for feedback and forward-thinking.

Insights and Reflections of Experts and Colleagues

Elsa Arnaiz, President & CEO, Talento para el futura, Spain

On "democracy by lottery": a participatory approach to decision making...

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Monika Nerland, Department of Educational Research, University of Oslo (UiO), Norway

On student involvement in the design of higher music education curricula and learning environments...

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Jacques Moreau, President of the Board of MusiQuE, Brussels

On the role MusiQuE can play in curriculum design...

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Asbjorn Keiding, Board Member of Pearle* (Performing Arts Employers Association League Europe), Director of Danish Association for Orchestras, Ensembles, and Opera Institutions (DEOO), Denmark

On engaging professional stakeholders when curricular innovation is explored...

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Tymon Zgorelski, student, Conservatory of Amsterdam (CvA), Royal College of Music (UK), Poland

On curricular development in several countries from an international student perspective...

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Jeroen Billiet, horn teacher, researcher, educational developer, Royal Conservatory of Brussels, and guest lecturer, KASK & Conservatory (Erasmushogeschool), Ghent

On involving principal-study instrumental teachers in the process of curricular design...

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Javier Soriano, Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Poitiers, France

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Natassa Economidou, Music Department, University of Nicosia, Cyprus

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RISKS & TIPS



All risks

- The drivers for change are only partially understood by the academic staff body, they feel out of their comfort zone and brief against the project to students.
- A change in leadership in the institution weakens senior-level advocacy for change.

- Part-time visiting staff are less available for meetings and discussions but they are a huge asset as a channel to the professions, so take every opportunity and put resource into providing mechanisms to include these teachers in discussions and planning.
- Foster open communication and involve key stakeholders early in the process to build consensus and reduce opposition.



All tips

WHEN

TIMEFRAMES, MILESTONES, AND STRATEGIC PLANNING IN CHANGE PROCESSES



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WHEN: Timeframes, Milestones, and Strategic Planning in Change Processes

Time is a critical element in any process, whether it involves change management or regular operational activities. It functions as a parameter (e.g., how long will specific actions or sub-processes take? How much time should we allocate in our plans?), as an indicator (e.g., when should milestones be achieved, and when should results be visible?), and as a resource (e.g., do we have sufficient time available? Can we adjust schedules or priorities to ensure success?).

Each stage of the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT cycle requires thoughtful time investment. Striking a balance between allocating enough time for thorough planning and execution, while maintaining momentum to sustain enthusiasm, is crucial. This balancing act ensures the initiative remains impactful and does not lose its energy or direction.



Key considerations for timing in change processes include:

① Strategic Timing

- ▶ Is now the right time to launch this change initiative?
- ▶ Is there sufficient support from stakeholders (WHO)?
- ▶ Are necessary resources (RESOURCES) available?
- ▶ Will the change process impact the continuity of ongoing operations, particularly education or other critical functions?

② Influencing Factors

- ▶ Are there internal or external conditions that might complicate or delay progress?
- ▶ Should priorities be reassessed to address these challenges strategically?

③ Milestones and Dependencies

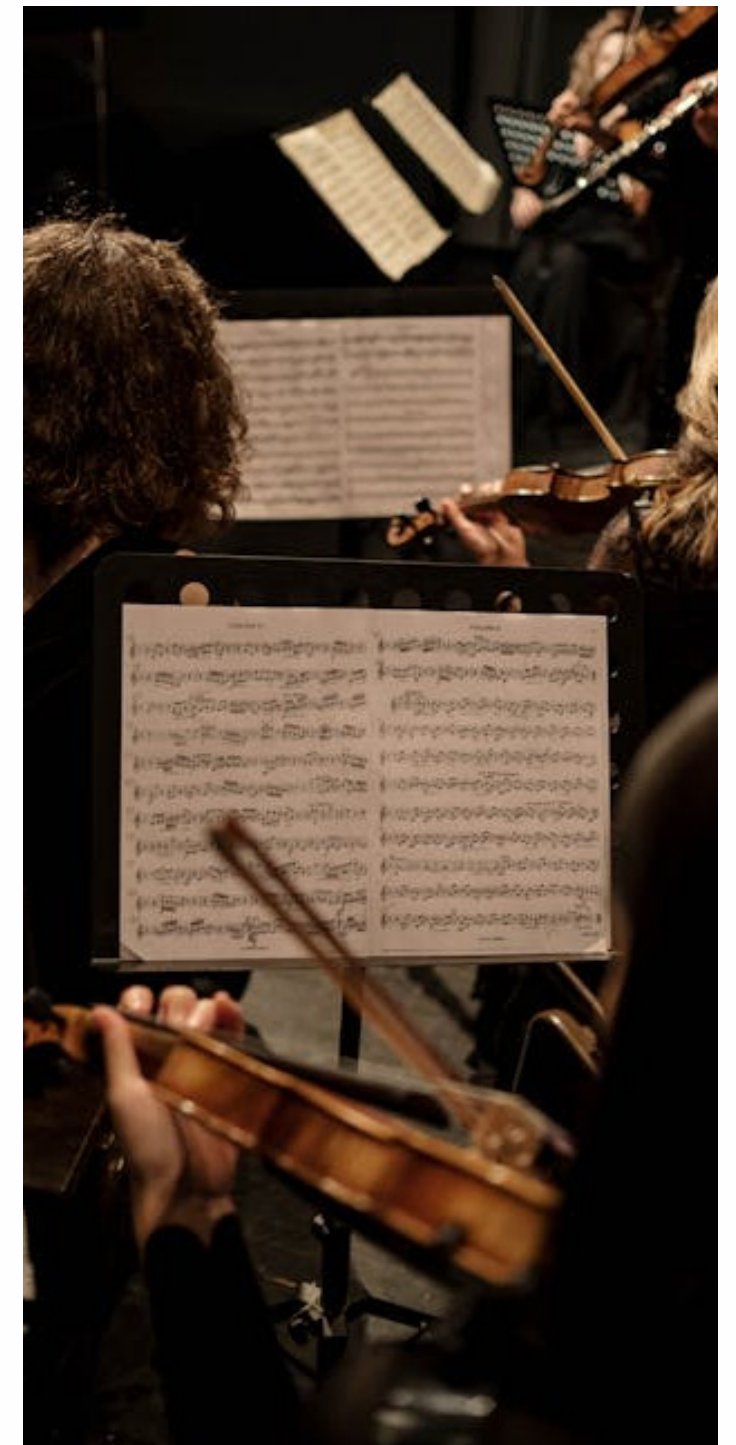
- ▶ What is the projected completion date?
- ▶ How are interim objectives scheduled, and how do they interconnect?
- ▶ What steps should follow evaluation and adaptation phases?

④ Contingencies and Flexibility

- ▶ Should buffer periods be built into the timeline to handle potential delays or unexpected opportunities?
- ▶ How can agility in the timeline support smoother transitions?

Time also plays a pivotal role in people management. An institution's readiness is a key factor in determining the appropriate timing for a change initiative. Important questions to consider include:

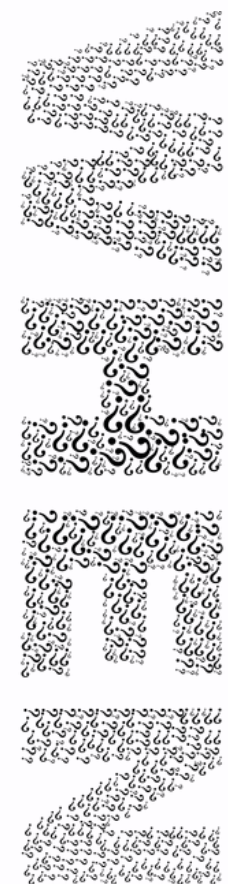
- Are all stakeholders prepared to engage in the change process?
- Do they understand and support the rationale behind the initiative?
- Is there sufficient enthusiasm, and do individuals feel adequately equipped to fulfill their roles?



Conversely, change fatigue can hinder success. Employees may experience apathy or resistance if too many changes occur in quick succession without proper planning, communication, or engagement. This fatigue is particularly pronounced when changes are introduced without adequate notice or consideration of their impact.

Effective communication is essential throughout the process to ensure clarity, alignment, and motivation:

- Establish opportunities for dialogue and information-sharing at every stage.
- Provide consistent updates and channels for feedback.
- Celebrate progress and achievements to maintain morale and momentum.



The WHEN is deeply intertwined with the HOW and WHO of a change process. Timing is not merely a logistical detail but a fundamental resource that requires deliberate attention and strategic foresight. By considering time comprehensively—across planning, execution, and stakeholder management—you can maximize the success and sustainability of your initiatives.

Insights and Reflections of Experts and Colleagues

Peter Tornqvist

XXX

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Lies Colman, Royal Conservatoire The Hague and MusiQuE, Netherlands and Belgium

On lessons for change management from performing artists...

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Albert Osso Castillon, physicist, Wegener Centre for Climate and Global Change, GrazReport on Interview by Stefan Heckel, University of the Arts, Graz

On change management parallels between the natural/social sciences and the arts...

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Paul Craenen, research professor, lectorate, Royal Conservatoire The Hague

On when external and internal contexts lead to different curriculum innovation responses...

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Yves Senden, artistic research, Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp (RCA), Belgium

On the long road from idea to implementation...

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Maria Gstättnner-Heckel, Magdalena Bork, and Axel Petri-Preis, University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna

On the development of a new master study programme in contemporary arts practice...

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Natassa Economidou, Music Department, University of Nicosia, Cyprus

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RISKS & TIPS



 All risks

- The change initiative is overtaken by urgent external events, such as shifts in the political landscape or financial cuts.
- Resistance and internal conflict and turbulence among staff could cause delays and disruptions in the process.

- Keep stakeholders informed about the timeline, progress, and key deadlines to avoid confusion and develop a detailed schedule for stakeholder involvement, ensuring each group is consulted at the right stage.
- Engage government and regulatory bodies early in the process to address concerns, seek alignment, and minimize delays.



 All tips

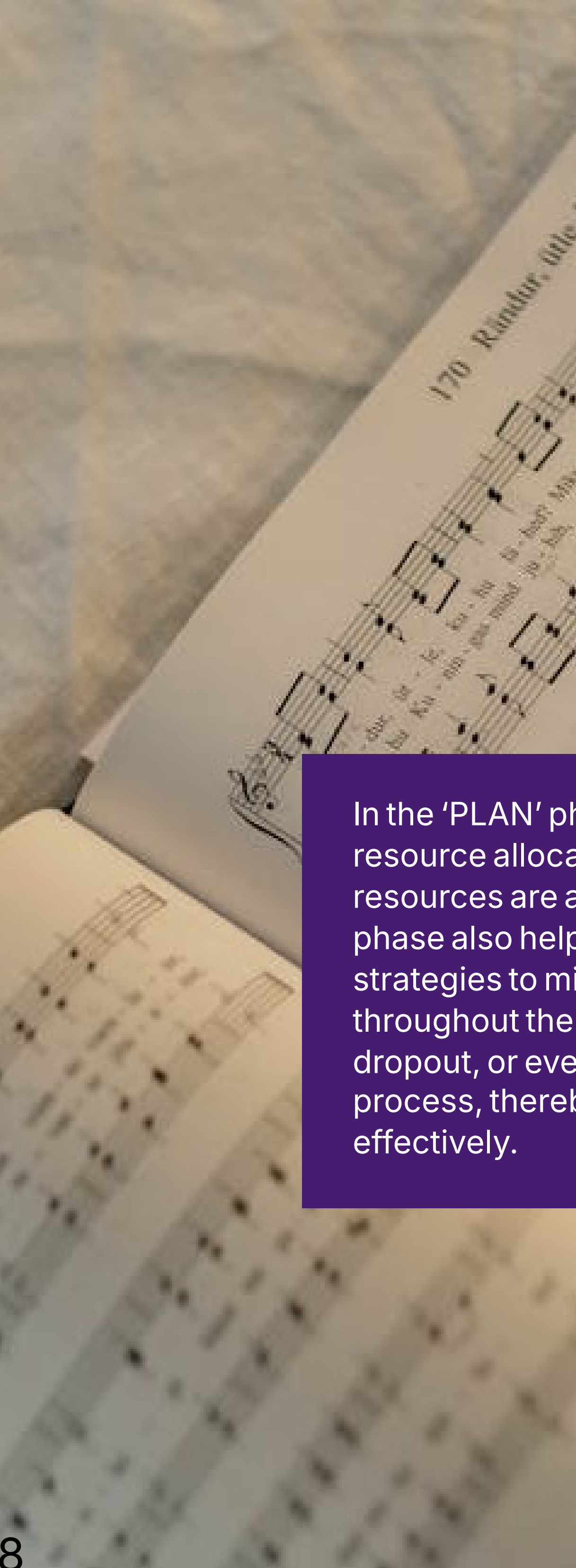
RESOURCES

THE ROLE OF RESOURCE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN CURRICULAR CHANGE



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The Role of Resource Planning and Management in Curricular Change

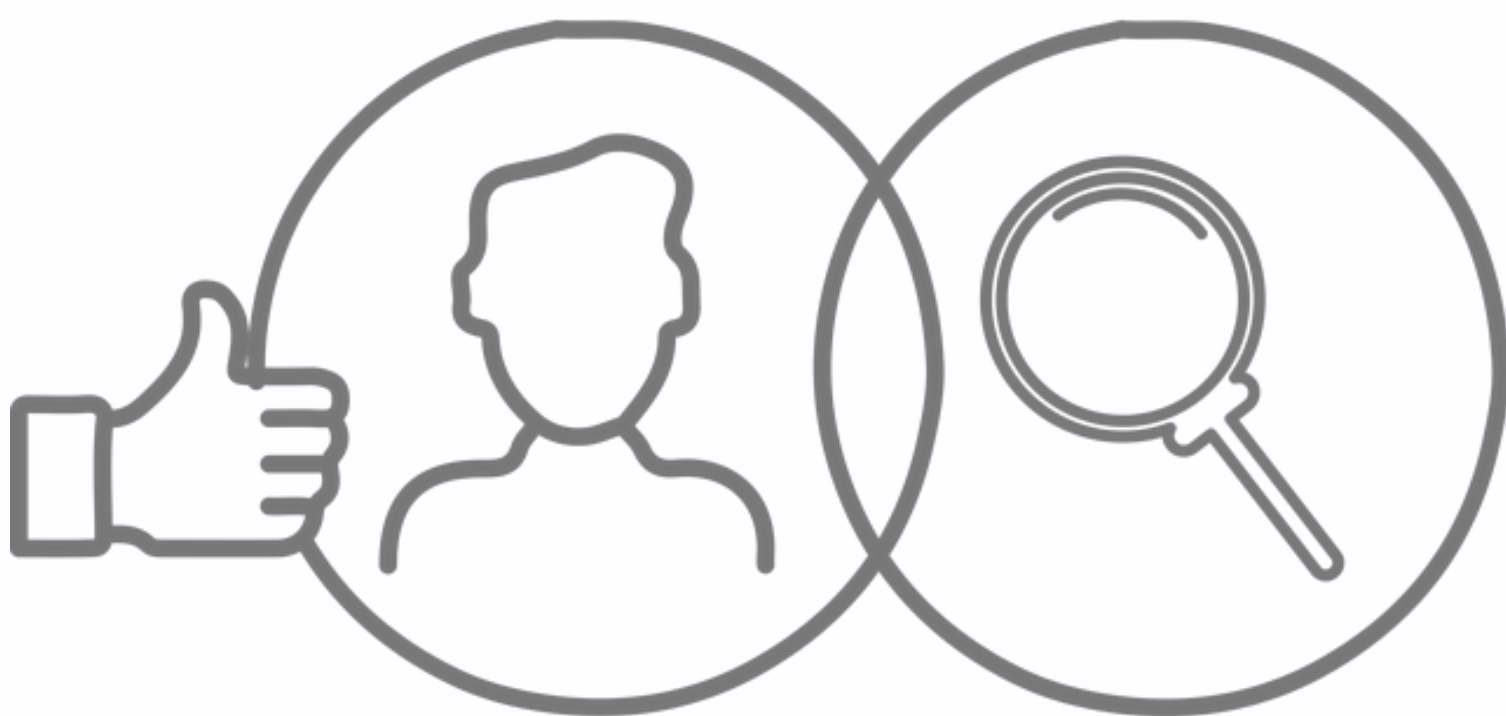


The effective planning and management of resources such as personnel, time, budget, knowledge, technology... play a critical role in the success of curricular change processes, ensuring that the intended innovations are not only implemented but also sustained. Moreover, when stakeholders feel that their contributions are adequately supported by effective resource allocation, they are more likely to be motivated and aligned with the change.

In the 'PLAN' phase, a realistic and comprehensive resource allocation plan will ensure that the right resources are available at the right time. This phase also helps identify potential risks, providing strategies to mitigate and monitor them throughout the process, in order to avoid delays, dropout, or even the cancellation of the change process, thereby ensuring that the timeline is met effectively.

During the 'DO' phase, the allocated resources are deployed according to the initial plan, ensuring that the change process stays on track. By having the right resources in place, all parties concerned can execute their tasks efficiently, which helps maintain momentum and prevent setbacks. At the same time, continuous monitoring of proper use of allocated resources will allow for efficient evaluation of the achieved outcomes.

In the 'CHECK' phase, the proper use of resources is reviewed alongside the realised objectives, according to the plan. If adjustments appear to be necessary, decisions can be made based during the 'ACT' phase. Resource management during this phase may involve reallocating resources, extending timelines, or securing additional financial support to address emerging challenges. .



CONTRIBUTIONS



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Professor Helena Gaunt is the Director of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Helena is in the forefront of curricular innovation in higher music education and the author of Musicians as "Makers in Society": A Conceptual Foundation for Contemporary Professional Higher Music Education.

It feels as though the world is continuing to change and changing really fast. The importance of music in society and the ways in which it connects with different communities and more diverse communities in society, is changing. Needs are changing and I'm heartened to see quite a lot of institutions and lots of individuals really searching and starting to shape practice in different ways to try and connect with those shifting needs.

I feel as though there's a big outward turn coming with institutions developing more courses that really do take student musicians out into society and into different places in society.

One of the underlying rationales of Musicians as Makers in Society was that we believe that music is incredibly important in society and as society changes, so the ways of actually making music also need to evolve to be able to respond to the changing needs and ways of working in society. So it feels as though lots of conservatoires are on track in terms of finding ways, looking for ways, developing ways, to be connected in society.

Certainly one of the really interesting things in all of this is the issue of who are you making music for and with, and the degree to which that connects with what is the music itself, and how we understand quality in that music. This is something that we're still very much at the beginning of in terms of what is the real interaction between those two key areas. It still feels as though in quite a lot of our courses in conservatoires there's the part which is about learning your craft and learning to play and learning the repertoire and learning to perform. And then there's the piece about being out in society. And actually the deep connections and questioning of the connections between those things is something that there's a lot more to work at.

Certainly one of the really interesting things in all of this is the issue of who are you making music for and with, and the degree to which that connects with what is the music itself, and how we understand quality in that music. This is something that we're still very much at the beginning of in terms of what is the real interaction between those two key areas. It still feels as though in quite a lot of our courses in conservatoires there's the part which is about learning your craft and learning to play and learning the repertoire and learning to perform. And then there's the piece about being out in society. And actually the deep connections and questioning of the connections between those things is something that there's a lot more to work at.

What I've found to be successful is on the one hand to have a very clear vision of where you want to go and why that's important, and to be able to have time and to engage people in what that vision is, to help evolve what that vision is, and consider it and wonder about it, so that it becomes a shared vision.

And then to really empower people to think about, well, what does this mean in practice? How do we actually achieve any of this? Ultimately it's the people who are going to have to make the change need to come up with how to do it. Also you need to be willing to start quite small and very specifically. Trying to go with a particular idea, really working on it and making it happen is more effective than trying to do everything at once. Momentum comes from success and small successes that you can make visible.

Experiences with the ARTEMIS Clusters and Methodology

Marijn Abbink, Royal Conservatoire, The Hague, Participant of ARTEMIS Cluster 4
September 2024

Purpose

The AEC ARTEMIS Working Group started five Clusters with the goal to empower institutions by providing them with tools to undertake their curricular innovation. This is linked to one of the ARTEMIS objectives: further developing and innovating music education. Each Cluster consisted of several Higher Music Education Institutions which were in the process of a curricular reform.

Design (Do)

The ARTEMIS Clusters methodology was two-pronged. Firstly, by way of an Action Plan template, with the Plan-Do-Check-Act approach as its underlying principle, the participating institutions were guided into writing down the various strategies and steps to curriculum reform in a structured way. The set-up of this Action Plan made us reflect on our usual curriculum changes processes. It included what at first sight appeared to be simple headings: Why/What/How/Who/When. However, it turned out that many of us do not take the time to properly consider this Why question. We seem to answer the What question almost before the Why question, as we tend to come up with solutions immediately. For example, at the Royal Conservatoire we wanted to look at student-centred learning, flexibility in the curriculum, and integrated assessment. But we had not asked ourselves why exactly we wanted to look at this. It was useful (and a small relief) to notice that this was happening to other participants too. This deceptively simple instruction gave us the opportunity to revisit and reflect on our rationales. Secondly, by facilitating networking and peer learning via online meetings, the Cluster participants inspired each other, shared and recognised their experiences, lessons learnt, challenges, setbacks, suggestions and ideas. Participating institutions in a Cluster, facilitated by several ARTEMIS members, acted as a mutual support platform.

Curriculum (Check)

Before the Cluster meetings commenced, we had begun our curricular reform process by creating a Working Group Bachelor Curriculum. However, filling out the Action Plan was still a very helpful starting point which gave us a sense of direction in our planning and approach of our curricular reform in relation to our Bachelor of Music curriculum. As written in our Action Plan: "We aim to take a fresh look at the bachelor curriculum with a focus on establishing more student-centred learning by adding optional pathways and taking into account possibilities for integrated assessment. In the process we aim to create more coherence in the bachelor curriculum and to invest in the role of the student". By writing down the various strategies and tools in the Action Plan we came up with a timeline, from initial discussions to testing and implementation, and we noticed the variety of stakeholders to consider. The main discussions, preparations, and development of proposals took place within the Working

Group Bachelor Curriculum. Our main goals were decided upon, a new vision statement was written up, and various new models for a Bachelor of Music curriculum were developed. Additionally, the Working Group looked at the new CALOHEX structure (a European TUNING project which developed Qualifications Reference Frameworks and which has led to updating the AEC Learning Outcomes from 2017 for Bachelor and Master level) and considered that this methodology for curriculum development could possibly benefit the European University Alliance IN.TUNE (Innovative Universities in Music & Arts in Europe). This has all been communicated in a dedicated session with a larger group of heads and coordinators of four various educational departments. Colleagues were asked to give feedback on various issues and the vision statement has been updated according to their comments. Besides feedback from our colleagues, we at the Royal Conservatoire pay attention to student feedback via student panels, student surveys, and student focus groups on the curriculum as a whole. With this curriculum development in mind, a new tool called Curriculum Carte Blanche was developed. In these sessions, small groups of students are asked to come up with an entirely new curriculum. These meetings include a clear focus on managing the students' expectations and are wrapped up with information on the programme objectives and a small exercise regarding connecting the newly developed curriculum to the programme objective categories. Our students' ideas on existing and new courses gave us input for the curricular reform. Additionally, we have close connections to and regular communication with the professional practice and our alumni. One of the Cluster participants advised us to ensure we get all departments on board at an early stage, including Student Administration, which was valuable information. The one group of stakeholders which are very present in our building yet harder to reach and to involve are the instrumental/vocal/composition teachers. This process highlighted once more the complexities and challenges within HME due to the relatively large number of teachers with often small contracts.

Afterword (Act)

The Clusters did indeed act as mutual support platforms and the live meeting contributed to this. However, it was not easy to get to grips with each other's curricular reforms due to different terminology and not being aware of each other's programmes and management structures. The PDCA format was used as a basis for the Cluster meetings, but the timing of the Cluster project itself did not necessarily line up with the timing of the participants' curricular reform. As our new curriculum is not due to be implemented until 2026-2027, we are currently focusing on more detailed curriculum design and we are investigating how to best involve our teachers. We want to give the latter extra attention due to lessons learnt regarding our recent Master of Music curriculum innovation, a curricular reform we are proud of and which is in many ways successful, yet we could have done better regarding informing and involving our teachers. We are learning that we need to work on involving the full community when it comes to successful curricular reform.

Why institutions should engage in curricular change

Deborah Kelleher, Director, Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM),
President, AEC Interviewed by Lynsey Callahan, Head of
Programmes, Research and Academics, RIAM

TRANSCRIPT

Question 1: Why should institutions engage in curricular change?

The curriculum in any programme is the course of study, the components in a course of study. A curriculum must adjust according to trends in education, trends in industry, in regard to how in terms of music performance our graduates will have careers as regards to the purpose that they have in their lives and what they contribute to society as performers and composers and creators. And the curriculum must change in order to reflect those kinds of developments.

Question 2: How could institutions think about a curricular change before embarking on it?

The process of thinking through curriculum change probably needs a structure, so before embarking on it, it might be useful to have such a structure in place. So for instance, one could start by identifying the need for curriculum change—why are we looking to change the curriculum? The second is, having identified the need, trying to find what the goals of the curriculum change would be at a high level and then increasingly with more detail. Step three would be designing the plan by which those goals would be achieved and so again you're getting from the high level down to a more detailed 'well what's the plan' to make these curriculum changes? Once the plan is there then it's developing the content and at all stages it gets more and more detailed and more deep; the content will deliver the plan which delivers on the goals, which hopefully responds to the need. And then once you have the content then you have to consider the instruction, the faculty, those who are delivering the content, training them up, upskilling, having them reflect on it. So, then you have a point where the instruction is in place and the changes are enacted. At that moment ideally, you're evaluating the impact. You're letting a year ago, you're letting a couple of years ago, you're seeing if the changes that you've made are actually responding positively to the needs that you identified in step one. This is what I would say is, you know, a blueprint that institutions would need to consider before embarking on curriculum change because it's not just about defining the need and even establishing goals, you need to go through the process of the detail right to implementation and, in fact, impact assessment.

Why institutions should engage in curricular change

Question 3: How have you engaged your institution in thinking about objectives or rationales or opportunities when embarking upon curricular change?

In the Royal Irish Academy of Music, we probably started to think about curriculum change in relation to our bachelor degree in late 2018 and through 2018, 2019, 2020 we established the foundations. There were certain inspirations or high points, for instance the MeToo movement which uncovered power imbalances and in fact hierarchical structure in higher music education that we felt certainly in terms of the Academy were limiting our students' sense of autonomy. It was linked with a period of incredible growth in the Academy, but we were an institution that had grown from a junior school so we also had systems in place that perhaps were not appropriate to the training of adults so that aspect of student autonomy and choice was something that was important. So there were certain rationales like this, like feedback from students, that would indicate that we were training in a way that was for legacy pathways and not particularly perhaps for the industry that was now. And then later on in 2019/2020 our governing institution Trinity College Dublin was itself reevaluating its education pathways with some really interesting thinking about assessment and graduate attributes. So we engaged at a kind of a high philosophical level in a way with individual staff meetings between myself and staff in twos or threes—this was kind of in 2018—and then we gradually layered up through a new strategic plan and through the hiring of new senior figures in the Academy particularly, we found a kind of a process by which our high-level needs, what we perceived as a need, became goals and then became eventually the design of a reformed bachelor degree. So the reformed structure came about through a period of consultation, with strong leadership by our new Head of Programmes, Research and Academics Dr Lynsey Callaghan, and the plan came down then to content, to certain key elective some key foundation classes was designed and that flowed into instruction. We evaluate the impact through student surveys. It's very new. In fact, the first academic year was I think 22-23 so the wider impact is yet in place. I would also say in terms of certain content and instruction we've gone down to a detailed level. In others we've left it maybe a little bit more at the discretion of the tutor and the teacher, so a combination of high organisation and some leeway and I actually think that is correct because this is not a quick process. This is a process of change that does need a little bit of iteration and back and forth, so I think probably our most significant curriculum change has been the bachelor programme and I think in many ways we did follow the structures that I answered in question two, but giving ourselves a little bit of leeway and time. But in terms of engaging the institution and thinking about the objectives and rationales, we made every effort to engage staff and students and wider stakeholders from industry in understanding why we wanted to make the changes and assisting in how we made the changes. That level of engagement required, I would say, a lot of discipline and stamina on the part of the senior figures to try and bring people in who perhaps weren't used to engaging or perhaps particularly interested or have the time for engaging. But without engagement you're not really going to make substantial change so I think it was worth it.

Beyond excellence

Tamar Brüggeman, Founder and Artistic Director, Wonderfeel Festival, Netherlands

Examining the curricula of Dutch conservatories, such as the Royal Conservatoire, reveals three main pillars: individual development (specialization), research (reflection), and practical training (experience). While there is now more emphasis on a comprehensive education for professional musicians, the traditional focus on excellence—primarily technical virtuosity—remains strong. This is partly reflected in the prominent role of principal study teachers, who continue to hold a central position in the curriculum.

As the artistic director of Wonderfeel, I value the freedom that the pop festival model provides. With a day ticket, festival-goers have the freedom to explore and be surprised, while we, as programmers, can curate without having to balance perceived 'bleeders' with 'cash cows'. This approach allows us to avoid prioritizing the classical canon and to present programs featuring young creatives, lesser-known musicians, and emerging composers alongside more established names.

Although we see the conservatoires' more comprehensive focus on practical training and the development of an individual artistic voice reflected in the proposals and entrepreneurial spirit of many young professionals, many program proposals still take the safer route by emphasizing the classical canon, likely believing that performing familiar repertoire increases their chances of receiving invitations. This pattern is unfortunately also evident at venues: concerts increasingly need to be financially self-sufficient, leading to a preference for the DWM's ['dead white musicians'] over the lesser-known composers or emerging artists. The Netherlands, renowned for its bold programming, risks losing this edge due to declining subsidies and rising costs, potentially resulting in more homogenized programming.

However, when the barrier to experiencing unfamiliar repertoire and artists is lowered by the pop festival format, audiences often prove to be more adventurous than expected. Our experience shows that 65% of our audience encounters music they wouldn't normally listen to. They are hard to categorize by musical taste and often do not recognize major names in our sector, except for a few well-known artists and ensembles. For them, the concert experience encompasses more than just the music; presentation and appearance play a crucial role. The difference between good and excellent? Not that important. Impact? Key.

Beyond excellence

This raises the question: what does excellence truly mean? What defines quality? And what are your goals as a musician? While there are many possible answers, each begins with curiosity—about your instrument, history, and most importantly, your context, fellow students, and audience—and culminates in sincerity and integrity. If either of these qualities is lacking, or if we don't see a twinkle in your eye and a genuine eagerness to share your own story, it will be challenging for you to be part of Wonderfeel.

It seems essential for art schools to nurture and encourage this curiosity as students develop professionally. While everyone aims to excel, the challenge is in making that excellence meaningful. What is your role in the broader context? What are your responsibilities as a professional, and how do you fulfill them? Are we prioritizing collaboration and ensemble work as much as we focus on developing individual career skills? These questions can only be answered in relation to others: fellow students, teachers, audiences, and the world. Being valued for your technical and artistic skills doesn't necessarily reflect your overall worth as a musician.

The danger of strict guidelines and assessment criteria is that they become the norm, with little room for personal discovery and what is of value to the student. Conservatoires should encourage curiosity and emphasise that professional responsibility includes relating to others—whether in the classroom, on stage, or beyond. Teachers play a crucial role by recognizing students as individuals, not just as instrumentalists or singers. Perhaps it all starts with the simple question: "How are you doing?"

 Bio-note



An Open Letter to the AEC

Stephen Nachmanovitch, violinist, Free Play Productions, Ivy, Virginia USA

For my friends at the Association of European Conservatoires:

As I look at what the AEC has done since I was last there in 2018, I see deep commitment to an inclusive, imaginative, transdisciplinary education for your students – not just as musicians but as citizens of the world. This is admirable. The trick is now finding the language and the languages in which we can realize these commitments.

When I look at the western musical tradition for a musical citizen, I think of Pablo Casals. He was an exemplar of a very particular tradition, but at the same time a citizen of the world, advocating for peace and for connection and human decency. There have been many others such citizens, from many traditions. Their object is not only to play the cello or the sitar or sing very well, but to use music as a vehicle for expressing a dharma of goodness.

When I visit schools and universities, I notice that students are often way ahead of their teachers. One domain where the students are ahead is the intense blending of genres and cultural styles. Another that comes to mind is the digital domain; the students are way ahead there. At the same time there is a lot of yearning for analog technology. It doesn't have to be either-or. You can enjoy and make use of digital technology and enjoy and make use of analog technology and it doesn't have to be a fight between them. The digital domain though presents some very difficult challenges in terms of the ownership of one's art. God forbid that music, art, literature, poetry, sculpture, movies, should be regarded as mere "content" for some corporation to vacuum up. Young artists are in this precarious position being often disregarded and having no place in this world that is being made around them, and certainly not in the political world that is being made around them. And at the same time, they are in an extraordinarily strong position, because they see patterns, they understand patterns, and can transform them into something we can see, hear, and touch. They are extraordinarily courageous. The fact that a young person wants to go to music school, or whatever their art form is, is such a brave move.

I am a violinist, and when I play, just inches from my eyes is the momentary, evanescent, ever-changing point of contact between bow and string, the way it looks and feels close-up (as well as how it sounds). Two substances touch over an infinitesimal gap. It is bow and string kissing each other, but also right and left hand, right and left brain kissing each other. (The left brain moves and senses the right hand, and vice versa, so a lot of crisscrossing is going on in that kiss of bow and string!). The bow touches the string, the finger touches the drumhead or piano key, the dancing toe touches the floor. The finger touches the shutter on the camera. Conscious and unconscious touch in that spot. That is what makes art. (I'm thinking of Peter Falk rubbing his hands together in *Wings of Desire*, perhaps the most beautiful movie ever made. The angelic and the human touch across that infinitesimal gap).

An Open Letter to the AEC

One of the most essential elements of art is the touching and mixing of traditions and cultures. A mixing and meeting that has always taken place across the centuries, and always gives rise to new styles and new understandings.

Right now our world is in a poly-crisis. A huge driver of the crisis in many countries is fear and hate of other kinds of people. Fear of migration, fear of culture contact. As artists we can help soothe those fears. We can play and listen to each other's music. We can play across the walls. Hot and cold wars rage. Screaming voices tell us to fear each other, dominate each other, build bigger walls and throw bombs over them. It's not easy to play across walls, toss music across walls, but musicians can do it, artists of many kinds can do it. If we can teach just a bit of deep listening to people, the world will be a bit better.

Improvising together means listening to each other with intensity and attention. It means stepping back so the other person can shine; and stepping forward into the present moment. Playing in the moment, we evoke the reciprocal quality of relationship (Ubuntu). When asked to define improvising, I say that I play music that is less than five minutes old. Note that I say improvising, not improvisation. Improvising is not a noun (a thing) but an active verb in the present. Improvising music, creating new work in any medium, gives us the space to make our own choices, to take control of something in our lives. Many of us do not feel that we have a lot of choice, that we are carried on a stream by circumstances beyond our control – racial, gender, and social inequity, climate change, war. So to be able to make a free gesture, a free sound, either alone or together with others, is an extraordinary thing.

Educated artists may feel the weight of the giants of the past, Beethoven or Coltrane or Tansen or whoever it may be, demanding that we adhere to a kind of certified excellence. To know that we, here and now, can create our own work together is an extraordinary thing. We can appreciate and learn from the giants of the past without being bound by them. We can feel ownership of our creative process.

How does a musician address the big gaps, the big rifts, that are appearing in our world today? I can't initiate a program to save the biosphere, or even a plan to make music education more equitable or more accessible. It just begins from the subjective experience of one musician which is all I can aspire to. Having a program or curriculum has some value, but what really has value is embodying inclusiveness and curiosity in one's behavior. Being an explorer.

An Open Letter to the AEC

The power of the arts is to make bridges for people, and to give them the sense of satisfaction that they can actually communicate in a new way. I'll leave you with three points, and two quotations:

- 1 As an artist you can create a little zone of sanity around you and invite others in.
- 2 Music is transcultural and so the way it is taught and presented can be transcultural.
- 3 Art is a corrective to one-sided awareness.

Christopher Alexander: "Making wholeness heals the maker."

William Carlos Williams: "It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there."

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Curricular Reform in Higher Music Education: A Response to the ARTEMIS Project

Anothai Nithibon, Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music,
Bangkok, Thailand; President of SEADOM (Southeast Asian
Director of Music)

Music embodies human experience, transcending time and culture. At this crucial juncture in music education, the Capacity Building Working Group calls for reimagining its foundations. From the Princess Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music in Bangkok, we offer our perspective on why curricular reform is vital for music's future in our rapidly changing world.

Objectives

Our primary objectives in this curricular reform are twofold, each addressing a critical aspect of music education in our globalised world. 'Finding roots and realities' is our first imperative. Music represents rich traditions that have flourished across centuries, deeply embedded in specific cultural histories. But what happens when these traditions cross borders, entering regions far from their provenance, such as Southeast Asia? We must acknowledge that music, in its journey across cultures, has been transplanted from its original soil. In this new environment, we find ourselves with insufficient knowledge of its new context. The task at hand is not simply to replicate tradition but to interrogate it, find its relevance in our contemporary world, and reshape it to be meaningful in new cultural landscapes.

This quest for relevance naturally leads to our second objective: 'Knowing our resources and reasons'. We must take stock of our current conditions, our strengths, and our potential. Only by understanding where we stand can we chart a course forward. "We must ask: what does music mean to us today?" How can we ensure its relevance in regions with their own rich and diverse musical histories? And most importantly, how do we connect it to the cultures, people, and places in which it now exists?

Rationales

Our rationales for curricular reform are rooted in the nature of music itself and its place in human society. 'Music as human expression' is fundamental to our understanding. It is a creation born of human imagination, deeply rooted in history, yet it encompasses all genres. To maintain music's relevance, we must view it as a spectrum of valuable forms of artistic expression. This is why PGMIM cannot be exclusive to any single musical tradition; we must embrace the full spectrum of musical expression.

Curricular Reform in Higher Music Education: A Response to the ARTEMIS Project

This inclusive approach leads us to recognise that 'Music lives through sharing'. Music only survives when it is shared with others, when it becomes a part of the collective consciousness. Our activities must involve sharing music with our communities. Music must engage with local cultures, philosophies, and contexts if it is to thrive in new environments. We must use local knowledge and blend it with various traditions, allowing them to coexist and influence each other.

The natural progression of this sharing is 'Cross-pollination and adaptation'. Like nature, music thrives when allowed to evolve. We must allow music to cross-pollinate across genres and traditions. Music must be constantly investigated—observed, questioned, discovered, and rediscovered. We must allow it to experiment, grow, mutate, and change. By fostering cross-genre engagement and allowing music to absorb new influences, we ensure its ongoing relevance and survival. This adaptive approach ensures that our musical traditions remain vibrant and relevant in an ever-changing world.

Opportunities

The contemporary world offers unprecedented opportunities for the evolution and dissemination of music education. 'Ubiquitous knowledge' is at our fingertips. In today's world, we have unparalleled access to information. Digital resources and artificial intelligence have accelerated the pace at which we can learn, discover, and create.

This wealth of knowledge is amplified by our 'Global interconnectedness'. Our world is more interconnected than ever before. We can connect with people of different mindsets, experiences, rationales, cultures, and places. Music institutions now have opportunities to connect with individuals from different cultural and intellectual backgrounds, sharing knowledge across borders, disciplines, and even generations.

To harness this interconnectedness, we have 'New possibilities for imagination' at our disposal. Emerging technologies are opening doors to uncharted territories of musical creation and dissemination. These advancements allow us to reimagine how we compose, perform, and share music. By embracing these possibilities, music education can redefine its scope, fostering creativity that pushes the limits of what we once thought possible.

This technological advancement fosters 'Collective enlightenment'. The boundaries between disciplines are blurring, giving rise to a new era of collaborative discovery. Musicians are engaging with scientists, technologists, philosophers, and artists from diverse fields. This cross-pollination of ideas is leading to groundbreaking innovations and a deeper understanding of music's role in society.

Curricular Reform in Higher Music Education: A Response to the ARTEMIS Project

In this context of rapid change and global challenges, we recognize 'Music as a beacon of hope'. In an age often defined by uncertainty and division, music retains a unique ability to bring people together, offering hope, empathy, and a shared sense of humanity. Through order and harmony, music reminds us of our shared humanity. In this context, music is not just needed—it is essential, serving as a universal language that can bridge divides and inspire positive change.

Hopes

We are living in a unique moment in history, where the concept of 'Cultural sustainability' has become paramount. For the first time, there is widespread recognition of the need to leave the world in a better state than we found it, both environmentally and culturally. We are the first generation to truly grapple with the idea of sustaining and nurturing our diverse cultural heritage on a global scale.

In this era of innovation and collaboration, we must celebrate our 'Shared humanity' through music. By nurturing musicians who are not just skilled performers, but culturally aware and adaptable, we can address the challenges of our time. The "why" of curricular reform is clear: it is our responsibility to empower future generations of musicians to create a harmonious future where music serves as a unifying force in our global society. This is our challenge, our opportunity, and our legacy.



WHY A NEW MASTER OF MUSIC CURRICULUM?

A case study from the Royal Conservatoire The Hague

Martin Prchal, Vice-Principal, Royal Conservatoire of The Hague (NL), Co-Secretary General of IN.TUNE—Innovative Universities in Music & Arts in Europe

At the Royal Conservatoire The Hague, following the introduction of the masters degree as part of the Bologna process 3-cycle system in the early 2000s, the Master of Music programme curriculum combined performance (or composition) studies with a research component, for which students had to write a paper. Even if after the introduction of the research component a strong evolution could be seen in how to give research a place in the context of a conservatoire masters programme, some challenges persisted:

- Firstly, it took some time to create the connection between the performance studies and the research component for the students. It was felt that some students experienced the research component as a (sometimes annoying) 'must', while mainly focusing on their playing or singing. Instrumental and vocal teachers did not always pay attention to the research component of their students, which also gave the impression to the students that the research component was of lesser relevance to their development. The situation slowly improved by giving teachers the opportunity to do research assignments and obtain a masters degree themselves, and also by the close connection to the Academy for Creative and Performing Arts (ACPA) at Leiden University that offers a PhD programme. At ACPA, former students and teachers can obtain accreditation in an officially recognised university-level PhD programme, mainly in the area in artistic research. Musicians with this PhD gave a strong impulse towards the research component in the masters programme by being active as supervisors, leaders of Master Circles (see below for more information about these circles) or as teachers in master elective courses. Nevertheless, the research component, as good as it was, was still often perceived as something separate. The vision of the conservatoire that research and reflective skills were important elements to support the artistic development of the students was not embraced by all.

- Secondly, alumni surveys were rather consistent over the years with feedback that was both positive and negative. Positive, as the students clearly stated their satisfaction about how their studies helped them to gain instrumental and musical skills with high quality teachers and exciting artistic projects organised by the conservatoire. Negative, as it was strongly felt that the gap between life at the conservatoire and the reality of the profession was too large: many alumni seemed to feel lost after graduation. This was echoed by conversations with students in Master Circles, in which at the end of their studies they often indicated they did not know what their life following their graduation would look like. The pertinent question then arose: did the conservatoire do enough to prevent this sense of insecurity among its graduates?

WHY A NEW MASTER OF MUSIC CURRICULUM?

Something needed to be done to not only improve the quality of the curriculum in terms of its internal connections, but also to improve expectation management, i.e. how to ensure that students would feel more confident about their professional future. Another issue at stake was the positioning and attractiveness of the programme, which seemed to be very similar to other masters programmes in and outside the country.

The gap between education and the professional world is an issue that higher music education has struggled with for decades. This gap can vary from country to country. The Master of Music programme at the Royal Conservatoire must be seen in a professional context in the Netherlands (which is also applicable to some other countries), in which there is less and less formally organised employment in the field of music. With formally organised work we mean work based on (temporary or fixed) contracts with (often state funded) organisations in the field of performance (ensembles, orchestras, operas, etc.) or music education (music schools and conservatoires). As a result, graduates mostly have to organise their own professional practice. Higher music education institutions responded to this development by setting up courses in both bachelor and master programmes in the area of career skills, music management and entrepreneurship. Often these courses were simply added to the curriculum without changing the rest of the study programme. Sometimes such courses were offered in isolation without a clear connection to the rest of the curriculum, leading to questions from students about their relevance and additional study load.

At the Royal Conservatoire, this is exactly what we did: add career skills courses to the curriculum. On paper, no one could say we were not taking the needs of the profession seriously. But paradoxically, the results in the alumni surveys did not change: the gap between education and professional practice was still perceived as too large. Partly this was caused by the fact that music students tend to ignore professional integration courses during their studies, being understandably mainly focused on developing their instrumental, vocal and musical skills. But it also seemed this was changing slowly, with students increasingly understanding that they had to already look into career issues during their studies. So this could not be the only reason; maybe we should also look at the curriculum or indeed the learning environment of our students as a whole?

Imagine this situation: as a music student you have a great instrumental, vocal or composition teacher that gives you quite a bit of individual time every week and guides you in your artistic and musical development. You participate in great projects organised by the conservatoire in which you are told what, how and when to play, often in attractive performance venues or festivals with an audience attracted by the institutional marketing and communication teams, and with production teams that prepare the performances professionally, sometimes even with recordings.

WHY A NEW MASTER OF MUSIC CURRICULUM?

But then you finish your studies and you find yourself alone with none of this support there. You will either have to organise all this yourself or try to get a position in a professional organisation where this kind of support is present. However, the latter option is exactly the one that is increasingly difficult to reach: normally this is only possible through audition or selection processes that are becoming very competitive due to the decrease of employment in such formalised professional contexts, as stated previously. Would it then not be wise to invite students to pro-actively and independently explore their interests and plans for their future during their studies, so that the gap will be smaller? Build an integrated approach to prepare students for their integration into the profession instead of focusing on artistic training, research and career skills in separation from each other?

These questions were the basis for a curricular change in the master programme that led to a new curriculum starting in 2019, in which all students have to set up their own Master Project, which is then the main goal for the masters studies. This Master Project includes three pillars that must be connected: to the already existing two pillars for artistic development and research, a third one was added for professional integration. Students are asked at the point of admission to propose a Master Project Plan, which plays an important role during that process. During the first semester they follow introductory courses on research in the arts and project management, after which they submit a more definitive Master Project Proposal. In the development and execution of their project, the students are assisted by the Master Project Network (, a team of experts) to reach their stated goals: their instrumental/vocal teacher, a research supervisor, a professional integration coach and a Master Circle leader. In the monthly Master Circle, students discuss the progress of their project with each other. The content of the Master Project is up to the students. This leads to a great variety of topics and outcomes: from basic Master Projects, in which students study and research repertoire that they will then present in a performance or festival they organise themselves outside of the institution, to more advanced outcomes, such as concert tours, new editions, teaching methodologies, installations, instrument building and recordings. The main purpose of this curriculum is to activate the students and strengthen their agency during their studies, so that they further develop a personal musical vision and fulfil their aspiration of becoming an enterprising musician with artistic awareness and the ability to reflect on and communicate about their work (Royal Conservatoire Study Guide 2024-2025).

Can we call this curriculum innovative or progressive? Aren't there other master programmes with master projects? Certainly, but the innovation is in the fact that all students have to do this, no matter their orientation, and that the philosophy underpins the entire 2-year curriculum and not just one separate module or course. This marks an important shift from input-based education (from teachers and institutional activities) to an approach that puts the students in the driver's seat. We hope this will make the gap to the profession smaller and, even if we are aware that this is a long term process, early evidence from students and graduates already shows this is the case.

Implementation of the Capstone Project at the Royal Irish Academy of Music: Connecting Performance and Academics in a Bachelor's Degree Programme

Lynsey Callahan, Head of Programmes, Research, and Academics,
Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), Dublin

At the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), we designed and introduced the Capstone Project in 2023 as a pivotal component of our Bachelor of Music (BMus) programme for Senior Sophister (Year 4) students. This project must be an independent and substantial piece of original work or research that allows students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have cultivated across various subject areas throughout their degree. It is a stand-alone module carrying a weight of 20 ECTS, reflecting the significant effort required to complete.

The Capstone Project

was designed to be deeply integrated with musical practice, fostering the student's development as an artist and connecting scholarship to practice. It encourages students to engage in comprehensive research or creative endeavours, resulting in a final product that can be in a multitude of different formats, e.g., a performance, a composition, an installation, an experience. Each project must be supported by detailed documentation and every student must also showcase their insights in an end-of-year presentation. The project is assessed based on individual effort, although collaborative elements can be involved, such as performances requiring stage management or compositions needing other performers.

Rationale for the Introduction of the Capstone Project

The initiative was undertaken for several reasons, including:

- Strategic priorities: It aligned both with the Trinity Education Project (RIAM is an associate college of Trinity College Dublin) and the strategic objectives outlined in the RIAM Strategy 2020.
- Connecting Performance and Academics: The Capstone Project promotes the engagement of students in a more holistic project, seeking to encourage students to bring together a range of competencies to create a project that contributes to the development of their own artistry. Students are encouraged to transcend the false binary of 'performance versus academics', and instead work towards making something meaningful.

Implementation of the Capstone Project at the Royal Irish Academy of Music: Connecting Performance and Academics in a Bachelor's Degree Programme

- Rebalancing student workload: An evaluation of the Year 4 workload revealed that the current ECTS allocation did not accurately reflect the students' efforts. The previous allocation of 10 ECTS to the academic elective in the final year of the degree did not reflect the workload inherent therein. Therefore, the Capstone Project's ECTS was increased from to 20 ECTS, ensuring a more accurate representation of the required work. The workload for the Capstone Project has not increased from what students were previously expected to produce. However, as a stand-alone module carrying a weight of 20 ECTS, the Capstone Project now better reflects the significant effort required to complete it.

- Universal Design for Learning: Capstone Project revitalised the existing Year 4 academic elective without altering the programme learning outcomes. It offered students options in research (broadening the requirement of producing a dissertation to an acceptance of different kinds of research in different formats, including research expositions through the Society for Artistic Research's research catalogue), composition (broadening from a traditional portfolio to the acceptance of a multitude of compositional practices), and music technology (allowing students to pursue their own projects by any reasonable means necessary), along with the addition of a verbal presentation component all enhanced module diversity and adhere to Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.

Conclusion

The Capstone Project has marked a significant development within our bachelor's degree programme, underscoring our commitment to enhancing our students' autonomy and broadening our recognition of artistic achievements. The introduction of this project has not only allowed us to align with Trinity College's best practices but has also ensured that our students receive a comprehensive, challenging, and rewarding educational experience that contributes to their development of RIAM's graduate attributes: to communicate effectively, to think independently, to develop continuously, and to act responsibly.

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Student-centred education in a new bachelor programme in music education

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Curricular Innovations in Higher Music Education Institutions: WHY

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Introduction

In the action plan, the clusters' participants were asked to answer the following questions: Please indicate why your institution is undertaking a curricular innovation, what are the objectives of your curricular innovation and what is the rationale behind it. Please also indicate what opportunities this innovation holds.

This analysis focuses on identifying common themes among the reasons that led higher music education institutions to undertake curricular innovations. The responses from higher music education institutions reveal a shared desire for innovation and adaptation in response to evolving industry demands, societal changes, and educational advancements. Several key themes emerged, providing insight into the reasons behind curricular reforms, the objectives institutions hope to achieve, and the opportunities these innovations hold.

Reasons for Undertaking Curricular Innovations

1. Adapting to music industry trends

A dominant theme in the action plans provided by the institutions, is the recognition of the changing music industry, with many institutions aiming to update their programmes to better reflect contemporary trends. Several institutions emphasised the need to incorporate modern music trends, including jazz, pop, rock, and interdisciplinary fields, into their curricula. Incorporating music technology and new media also features prominently as part of the adaptation process, ensuring that students are equipped with skills in areas like music production, film scoring, and digital platforms. Many institutions are also keen on enhancing employability by offering students a broader skillset. This includes fostering versatility through additional training in fields like music entrepreneurship, psychology of performance, and interdisciplinary learning, making students adaptable and better suited for an increasingly competitive industry. Institutions are also focusing on creating more performing opportunities for students, ensuring they have both theoretical and practical experience, during their studies.

2. Incorporating Inclusivity, Diversity, and Social Engagement

Another significant theme is the desire to make music education more inclusive, diverse, and socially relevant. Institutions are focusing on inclusivity by creating more accessible programmes that reach underrepresented student groups. Respondents also pointed out the need to incorporate diverse music genres—such as folk, world music, and non-Western forms—and to bring attention to issues, such as power relations, inclusion, and diversity within the curriculum. By integrating these topics, institutions hope to foster a more socially aware and inclusive educational

Curricular Innovations in Higher Music Education Institutions: WHY

Furthermore, several institutions are prioritising community engagement and professional partnerships as a way to connect students with real-world opportunities and help them contribute meaningfully to society. These partnerships include collaborations with professional organisations, orchestras, and cultural institutions that provide students with practical experiences and an understanding of how music can contribute to societal change.

3. Curriculum Flexibility and Student Autonomy

Several responses indicate a desire for more flexible, student-centred curricula that provide students with greater choice and autonomy in shaping their education. Institutions are striving to create a balance between breadth and depth, allowing students to explore multiple areas of interest while delving into their chosen specialisations. A major goal is to offer students elective courses, so they have more freedom in shaping their educational paths and can tailor their studies to their career aspirations. A repeated concern across multiple institutions is that the current curriculum is overloaded with too many small courses. Many responses mentioned efforts to reduce the workload, for example, by merging smaller courses into larger, more cohesive modules. This streamlining allows students to focus more on experiential learning and less on course completion, leading to a more manageable and meaningful learning experience. The idea of increased student autonomy is tied to the adoption of reflective methodologies and a focus on student feedback to enhance the learning process. Institutions are actively seeking ways to make students more responsible for their learning, by integrating self-assessment and feedback loops into the curriculum.

4. Internationalisation

The responses also highlight a growing emphasis on internationalising music studies in Higher Education Institutions with objectives which encompass institutional and educational innovation through transnational cooperation, alongside the development of an international learning environment, supported by the presence of international students, joint modules and joint programs with other institutions, international faculty, and assessments with global elements. All of those mentioned above will incorporate a global perspective in the curriculum which, besides attracting international students, will prepare all students for increasingly international professions and careers in a globalised music industry. By modernising curricula, institutions position themselves to increase their reputation both domestically and internationally. The focus on international recruitment and collaborations with global partners not only enriches the student experience but also enhances the institution's standing on the global stage.

Curricular Innovations in Higher Music Education Institutions: WHY

5. Responding to Legal and Institutional Requirements

Many of the curricular innovations are driven by legal frameworks and institutional regulations, which necessitate periodic evaluations and reforms. Some institutions mentioned having to adapt their curricula to align with national university laws and other legal requirements. These adaptations are often tied to the restructuring of degree programmes or the implementation of new teaching standards. Other institutions are undergoing reaccreditation processes, which require them to revise their curricula to meet new standards and expectations. For example, institutions undergoing reaccreditation often need to address issues such as credit distribution, workload balance, and modularisation of courses to ensure compliance with updated guidelines.

6. Opportunities for Institutional Growth and Development

Curricular innovation opens up various opportunities for institutional growth. The creation of new degrees and the expansion of existing ones provide higher music education institutions with opportunities to attract more students and diversify their offerings. For instance, several institutions mentioned their plans to create master's programmes in underrepresented music genres, such as pop, folk, and world music, addressing gaps in their national music education systems. In addition, institutions are increasingly emphasising interdisciplinary learning and the integration of research into

Conclusion,

The analysis of the responses reveals a multifaceted approach to curricular innovation in higher music education. Institutions are adapting to meet industry demands, societal needs, and legal requirements while prioritising student autonomy, inclusivity, and flexibility. Opportunities abound for institutional growth, the diversification of course offerings, and the fostering of internationalisation and cross-disciplinary collaboration. These innovations promise to prepare students not only for the music industry of today but also for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

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