Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-Evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs

Section 4: Who is the student? Who is the teacher?

Higher Music Education Institutions (HMEIs) we study and / or work in are built, developed, and experienced through complex and interdependent networks of all the individuals inhabiting them. If we think of them as complex, living and thus inevitably changing environments, the continuous revisiting of the fundamental question of *Who is the student? – Who is the teacher?* could be seen as one of the crucial practices ensuring their sustainability in both present and future. Seemingly simple questions addressing how the different individuals inhabit our institutions; from which spaces and practices and by which existing mechanisms are some of them excluded; how are their individual experiences, needs and aspirations acknowledged and valued; what kind of support do institutions usually provide; and which areas still need our immediate attention might provide a starting point for rethinking issues of diversity and inclusiveness in the realm of HME.

This section of the document introduces a series of questions divided into three main segments – *Diversity*; *Access and Inclusiveness*; and *Support and Feedback* – aimed at highlighting potential areas of further discussion within individual institutions.

4.1 Diversity

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **How would you describe diversity within the faculty and student body at your institution?**
    a. In which ways do you feel the diversity of your faculty reflects the diversity of your student body?
    b. Who do you think might be left out based on your institution's understanding of diversity?

- **Are you aware of any efforts to increase diversity in the recruitment of your students?**

- **Are you aware of any efforts to increase diversity in the recruitment of your faculty?**
    a. In what ways are these recruitment policies (both for students and faculty) at your institution connected to the strategic mission of your institution?

- **What is the ratio of domestic vs international students at your institution (feel free to offer a rough estimate if you do not have a specific statistic to hand)?**

- **Does your institution have principles that guide the curriculum in terms of diversity and inclusion (such as Inclusive Excellence in the US)?**

- **Are there any specific offices managing issues of diversity and equity within the student body? If so, what are the main issues that they deal with?**

- **Are there any specific offices managing issues of diversity and equity within the faculty body? If so, what are the main issues they deal with?**
    a. How does your institution take these issues into consideration in the development of institutional policies, strategies, and curricula?

- **How is cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias training embedded into:**
    a. your professional training for faculty and staff?
    b. the curriculum?

- **How often are issues of diversity and equity formally discussed at your institution?**

- **Do you feel that the existing principles that guide curriculum and institutional culture in terms of diversity and inclusiveness at your institution are sufficient for the challenges that the future brings to higher music education?**
    a. How is faculty encouraged to embrace these values and embed them into the curricula and everyday practices of institutional culture?
    b. What values – pertaining to issues of diversity and inclusiveness – are your students left with after graduating from your institution? In what ways are they empowered and encouraged to embed these values and guiding principles in different aspects of their professional careers after graduation?
    c. What areas do you feel are still neglected or underdeveloped?
    d. What areas do you feel need the institution's immediate attention?

- **In what ways are wider social movements, and global political, social and environmental crises impacting:**
    a. who is the student at your institution?
    b. who is the teacher at your institution?

4.2 Access and Inclusiveness

Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:

- **What policies and practices for students and faculty who need specific accommodations on the basis of a documented disability exist in your institution?**
    a. What are the most common accommodations requested by students at your institution?
    b. What are the most common accommodations requested by faculty at your institution?
    c. Are you familiar with the process that students go through to request an accommodation?
    d. What assistive technology equipment for students with visual impairments does your institution provide?

- **What type of support is offered to students and faculty who experience issues with mental health while enrolled or working at your institution?**
    a. How is this support offered on a case by case basis?
    b. Is there a support system already in place that all students and faculty know how to access?
    c. What areas are underdeveloped or neglected?
    d. What plans do you have to take on these issues in the near future?
    e. Can you give an example on how your institution deals with access for students and faculty with specific needs?

- **How are issues related to mental health embedded into:**
    a. your professional training for faculty and staff?
    b. the curriculum?

- **What financial tools (scholarships, tuition reduction schemes, student-loan programs etc.) do you have for students coming from working-class and other backgrounds lacking financial funds?**

- **How do you accommodate very talented prospective students (e.g. working-class background, refugees, without formal school education, mental / physical health issues) who do not fulfill all the formal requirements (language level, high school diploma etc.)?**

4.3 Support and Feedback

> *Questions to be considered when self-evaluating within this sub-domain:*
>
> - **What type of support services are available to students at your institution?**
>
> - **What type of support services are available to faculty at your institution? Is training provided to the faculty as it pertains to these additional services?**
>   a. What resources (human, financial...) are deployed to provide these support structures?
>
> - **What kind of support does your institution offer to students whose language is not the main language of instruction?**
>
> - **What kind of support does your institution offer to students who do not come from a Western-music theory background?**
>
> - **What are the formal structures for students at your institution to provide feedback to the academic leadership team around the student experience?**
>
> - **What are the formal structures for faculty at your institution to provide feedback to the academic leadership team around the faculty experience?**
>   a. How does the institution take these into consideration in their decision making processes?
>
> - **To what extent are complex issues of power relations / power abuse reflected upon in the decision-making processes at your institution?**
>   a. How are these sensitive issues approached?
>   b. What mechanisms are available at the moment to address these issues?
>   c. How transparent are these mechanisms to all the individuals involved?
>   d. What type of official policies exist at your institution that address these issues (Codes of Conduct, Codes of Ethics...)?
>   e. How are issues of dealing with misconduct (e.g. sexual, verbal, ethical) embedded into institutional policies?
>   ⇒ How transparent is the process of dealing with misconduct complaints?
>   f. How often are the existing policies, mechanisms and practices questioned, revisited and adjusted?

We hope that this catalogue of questions will help you to start a process of consideration and change at your institution. These questions have been at the base of change already undertaken by several HME institutions across Europe and beyond. In the first publication of the AEC-SMS Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group, *How are 'diverse cultures' integrated in the education of musicians across Europe?*, you can find many examples and case studies that might inspire you to consider new paths within your own institution.

Should you have any question, please do not hesitate to contact us via the AEC office or SMS contact form here.

Link to:

- **Section 1: What do we study? What do we teach?**
- **Section 2: How do we study? How do we teach?**
- **Section 3: Where do we study? Where do we teach?**

Publications:

- **Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs**
- **How are 'diverse cultures' integrated in the education of musicians across Europe?**

Please note this document is part of *Decentering Curricula: Questions for Re-evaluating Diversity and Inclusiveness in HMEIs*, written by the members of the Diversity, Identity, Inclusiveness Working Group of the AEC - Strengthening Music in Society (SMS) project.

More information is available on www.sms.aec-music.eu