

Help! A Talent!

The Student-Teacher Relationship
in Higher Music Education

Paul Deneer
& Gerda van Zelm



KC Koninklijk
Conservatorium
Royal Conservatoire

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About this publication

Faculty research at the Royal Conservatoire The Hague focuses on a wide range of topics relevant to the artistic practice of its teaching staff, to the artistic development of its students and to the world of musical practice at large. Areas covered include informed performance practice, creative (artistic) research, instrument building, educational research, and music theory.

One strand within the faculty research programme is directed towards the understanding and the enhancement of the student-teacher relationship in higher music education. Two investigations within that strand – ‘Making Music: Being Heard and Seen’ by Paul Deneer, and ‘The Teacher-Student Relationship in One-to-One Teaching’ by Gerda van Zelm – were performed in close collaboration. This publication brings together the outcomes of both research projects, including an appendix ‘Reciprocity: The Two Studies Combined’, which offers conclusions and recommendations to further enhance the student-teacher relationship in conservatoires.

Help! A Talent! documents and communicates knowledge, understanding and practical recommendations, based on accumulated experiences, theoretical insights and data collection. Its empirical base is the practice of teaching and learning at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. The relevance of the findings, however, reaches beyond the confines of this institute. Other conservatoires and music departments might benefit from the insights and suggestions offered. Research into the student-teacher relationship in higher music education is gaining more and more attention lately. This publication is both a contribution to this emerging research field and an invitation to further research.

Help! A Talent! is part of *Royal Conservatoire Publications*. With this series the Royal Conservatoire aspires to contribute insights and experiences, embedded in its higher music education culture and embodied in the professionals who study and work here. With the publication of *Help! A Talent!* we support the dissemination of knowledge and understanding, but we also show our commitment to research and our readiness to be in front of the development. In doing so the Conservatoire manifests awareness that today’s higher music education is in constant need to refine and attune its programme to an ever-changing world.

Henk Borgdorff, Professor of Research in the Arts
Royal Conservatoire The Hague

Making Music: Being heard and seen

Paul Deneer

Foreword

Since 1997 I have been working as a student counsellor at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. In that capacity I have spoken to many students over the years and a number of problems that kept recurring set me thinking. Because I have also been a teacher at the conservatory since 1985, I have always been intensively involved with the educational aspect of institutions like the conservatory and have been particularly fascinated by the one-to-one relationship between teachers and students. In 2002, I was a member of the research group *Teacher of the 21st century* at the Conservatoire, where I participated in a project, analysing the relationship between the subjects covered during lessons and how students study at home and then share those experiences with their teacher during the next lesson (Koopman et al. 2007). Even then, it struck me that the role of the teacher comprises more than guiding the learning process. The teacher's *persona* and passion form a direct *source of inspiration* for the student. Something happens in the one-to-one relationship that is difficult to describe in educational terms. I became more interested in aspects such as mutual trust, reciprocity and acknowledgement in the student-teacher relationship. That interest and my experiences as a student counsellor prompted me to undertake this research in the context of the *Research in the Arts* programme at the Royal Conservatoire, and this paper is the result.

The paper encompasses:

- a description of situations that I have encountered in my work;
- the methods I use to provide assistance in situations where stress is a factor;
- all seen from the perspective of the theoretical framework that I feel should apply for dealing with such problems.

I eventually abandoned the original plan of conducting interviews, surveys, etc., to gather new information and decided to confine myself to information I had assembled from earlier interviews conducted over the many years I have worked as a student counsellor at the Royal Conservatoire. For her study for the *Research in the Arts* programme 'The teacher-student relationship in one-to-one tuition' (see elsewhere in this publication), Gerda van Zelm did produce information about the teacher-student relationship based on questionnaires. In a separate chapter entitled 'Reciprocity: The two studies combined', Gerda van Zelm and I have tried to place the information from her study in the context of my findings.

All of the descriptions of a student's personal context, such as teachers, family and fellow students, come from the students' own observations. In my work as a student counsellor, it is irrelevant for me to engage in a search for the objective truth with students, never mind looking for a 'guilty party' in their environment for any misfortune they may have suffered. This would be impossible with the available information and, in my view, is also not the key issue. The main point is that a person can present his or her own perceptions and thus has a sense of being seen or acknowledged. Trying to resolve problems by *creating an objective level* transcending the parties removes the need for dialogue. This deprives the parties

of the possibility of discovering, via this dialogue, that the other is willing to accept that there is more than one truth (i.e., perception) open to discussion. In the rest of the paper I will further explain this proposition.

I am grateful to the students I have spoken to in the course of my work as a student counsellor for their narratives. By sharing their stories with me, they made it possible for me to help them. Their stories also set me to thinking. My observations showed me the crucial importance of 'being of significance' in a relationship. These observations also raised questions and prompted me to search for visions/theories that connected with what I had observed. I have tried to incorporate my observations within the format of this paper. From my interviews with students over a period of 16 years I have attempted to distil *statements* that connect up with specific elements of my narrative. As far as possible, I have made these statements anonymous. They are presented throughout the text in a way similar to the example shown below.

- 'I am unable to plan or bring structure to my work.'
- 'I am not properly prepared for lessons.'
- 'I do not attend studio performances.'
- 'What will happen if I call in sick?'
- 'I feel empty and listless, and time is passing.'
- 'I isolate myself from my fellow students.'
- 'My teacher gets irritated and then nothing works anymore.'

I have also extracted a number of cases from the interviews because they provide a good illustration of a number of phenomena that I wish to describe. Here too, I have done my utmost to preserve the anonymity of the subjects of the cases. This means that aspects such as the instrument they play, the gender of the student or teacher and the family circumstances are mixed or reversed in such a way that any connection with actual persons or events at the Royal Conservatoire is purely coincidental. Although some actual cases mesh seamlessly with the text, out of respect for the students – who manifestly trusted me – presenting them in such a way that the student or anybody close to him or her could be recognised from the description was not an option. The cases are presented in the text in the following form.

Veronica, a vocal studies student from Spain, lives with her mother in the Netherlands. Her mother has sacrificed everything for her daughter's career. Veronica is a perfectionist and has a fear of failure. The exposure of her doubts by an examination committee had led to a conflict with her teacher. Veronica had lost confidence in her teacher and felt that her talent was not sufficiently recognised. She contacted me because she wanted to change teachers.

The use, throughout the text, of pronouns indicating the male gender is purely for brevity. In reality my text concerns male as well as female persons.

Introduction: musical talent is a gift

Dream and reality

Most of those who choose to study at a conservatory are trying to fulfil a dream. Often it is the dream of playing the violin in a symphony orchestra or appearing on stage as a solo pianist before a sell-out audience. These individuals will probably have been told earlier that they are talented and should perhaps consider a musical career. Being admitted to a conservatory represents confirmation of that talent by experts. Consequently, it is the first, essential step on the way to achieving their dream.

The conservatory encourages its students to stretch themselves to their limits. It goes without saying that this will involve *stress*. The absence of stress could be seen as an indication that the school is not doing enough to challenge its students to do their very best. In that sense, concern about the fact that students at conservatories suffer from stress and are struggling because of it is tantamount to complaining that footballers often suffer injuries to their knees. Stress (in the sense of an alarm reaction) also provides energy, which keeps students alert and ready for action. Following Selye (1974: 171), one often refers to stress that is manageable and leads to growth and greater competence. Selye refers in that context to *eustress* (the *eu* standing for *positive*), in contrast to stress that is necessary for self-protection (coping strategies), which he calls *distress*.

The unique learning environment created by a conservatory has an unintentional side effect, however. Suddenly, the student who has been admitted is surrounded by 20 other talented musicians who are often chasing the same dream, while there will only be places for a few of them later. It often also seems as though the others find it easier than the student himself. Unconsciously, a sense of *competition* arises.

During the programme, the realisation sinks in that a musical career depends to a great extent on factors beyond the student's control and on factors unrelated to a musician's quality, such as impresarios, commercial factors, charisma, etc. The film *Janine* by Paul Cohen in 2010 about violinist Janine Jansen portrays this very clearly. Naturally, Janine has more than achieved her dream, but even Janine suffers the occasional dip. In an interview in a Dutch newspaper (De Bruijn 2010), Janine lamented: 'Sometimes I have the feeling that all I do is *give*.' This is a remarkable statement and one that raises a number of questions. In the rest of this paper, I will try to provide answers to some of those questions.

Despite ripples that can disturb the dream, this dream remains an important incentive for students. They badly need that motivation, since their everyday lives are often quite boring and lonely: many hours spent studying every day, and at the end of it all it is usually impossible to say that anything has been completed, but at best speak of a *work in progress*. To reach a standard where a career as a musician

is a realistic option within four years, a student has to work efficiently. Pedagogy teaches us that an efficient learning process requires the student to be eager to absorb recurring information. This creates what is known as the *spiral of learning*, an incremental process in which the recurring information is incorporated in a following step (Van Parreren 1993). In the case of students at a conservatory, this information is provided through the weekly feedback from the teacher of the main subject, the assessments of examination committees, feedback after studio performances, feedback from other students during group lessons, grades, etc. Where the recurring information that students receive disturbs their dream, it can cause anxiety. It is not hard to imagine that anything that might end their pursuit of the dream will be a potential source of stress, and that students will use every weapon in the arsenal of self-protection – known in psychology – to protect themselves against such feelings. The following examples of statements made by students might illustrate this. (I describe the phenomenon of *self-protection* more in detail in section 6.)

- ‘I no longer go to the solfeggio lessons’ (avoidance)
- ‘I would like to postpone my exams’ (procrastination)
- ‘I don’t ask anyone for help’ (isolation)
- ‘My teacher says that I think too much’ (control)
- ‘No one must see me at my weakest’ (shielding oneself)
- ‘I feel that I am treated differently than other students’ (accusation).

The fact that this self-protection (hereinafter referred to as *coping strategy*) is often so intense implies that there are other factors involved that fundamentally affect some students – factors that might result in their not achieving their dream. Students often speak in terms of *feeling as though their entire being is being judged* (read: obliterated) (I will return to this in section 3). Unfortunately, the stress and the associated coping strategies continue to follow musicians throughout their careers.¹ This is why complaints of burnout are not uncommon in the music world, and the consumption of drugs is quite prevalent (West 2004: 271).

Exceptional people

In addition to the effect of the environment in which students have to function, there is considerable evidence that the student population in arts programmes is a distinctive one. Artists are often seen as ‘exceptional’ people, slightly on the fringes, sensitive and vulnerable. When it comes to art, this gives them the benefit of being able to see things from an unusual (surprising or creative) perspective.

However, some exceptional people also suffer from the handicap of often finding it difficult to connect with others.

Cooperation, taking inspiration from one another, can be difficult. Sometimes it seems as their work is the *only* way in which the artist can connect with others. Accordingly, art offers artists a medium both for escaping from and confronting what they find difficult in other areas: *connecting with others*.

1. ‘The working conditions of professional musicians generate a ‘total stress quotient’ that far exceeds that observed in other professions. Like athletes, performing artists must maintain their skills at peak form, endure many hours of solitary, repetitive practice, constantly self-evaluate their performances and subject their public performances to close scrutiny.’ (Sternbach 1995: 283)

Tessa, a talented violin student, was referred by her teacher because she was behaving strangely during performances. In the words of her teacher: ‘She is trying too hard to do what she thinks the other wants to hear. It is inappropriate to the situation.’ Tessa was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.

At her exam, the examination committee gave her the following tips: be more mature in ensemble playing, take the initiative rather than following, be forceful rather than accommodating, study even more efficiently.

During the interviews, it emerged that Tessa found it difficult to translate the subjects in the lessons into the right choices while studying. She remarked that despite her efforts, she always disappoints people. The committee’s feedback made her feel insecure, making the aforementioned behaviour even worse. Tessa only seemed to look for solutions within her own world.

During the interviews, I noted that Tessa felt a great need to connect with others, despite the difficulty she had with it. There were also circumstances in Tessa’s past that made it more difficult for her to connect: she had been bullied and made fun of a lot in primary school.

According to Fitzgerald (2005), giftedness and disorders such as *autism* (Asperger syndrome) and *depression* (bipolar disorder) are relatively common among artists. He mentions a number of past musicians who would probably be diagnosed with *Asperger syndrome* today: Mozart, Beethoven, Satie, Bartók and Gould (Fitzgerald 2005: 149 ff.). The autism helps artists to adopt surprising positions because they are not influenced by others.² Being introverted, autistic individuals pay less attention to their surroundings.³ Grandin (1995: 152) goes a step further: what autistic people lack in verbal proficiency (the ability to express emotions in words) they can convey through images or music.

There seems to be a correlation between *bipolar disorder* and creativity. The emotional extremes of the disorder reflect the extremes of the creative process: there is the ecstatic generation phase, full of divergent ideas, and the attentive editing phase, in which all those ideas are made to converge (Lehrer 2012: 80). People with psychological problems often find being in touch with their feelings threatening, and expressing their feelings directly quickly throws them off balance. Expressing feelings through music or images feels less threatening. Failing to express one’s feelings often leads to *destructive* behaviour, which may partially explain why some artists lead a destructive life. (In section 7, I will return to the topic of destructive behaviour.)

2. ‘Persons with the syndrome [autism] are often workaholics, highly persistent, content with their own company and solitary occupations; they focus on detail with massive curiosity and total immersion; they are novelty-seekers in terms of their art, with massive imagination in their specialized spheres. They are also far less influenced by previous or contemporary artists in their work [...]’ (Fitzgerald 2005: 239)

3. A famous quote from Hans Asperger is: ‘It seems that for success in science or art a dash of autism is essential. For success the necessary ingredients may be an ability to turn away from the everyday world, from the simple practical, an ability to rethink a subject with originality so as to create in new untrodden ways, with all abilities canalised into the one speciality.’ (James 2003)

A cautionary note

Despite the potential pitfalls, the majority of students succeed in completing a course at a conservatory relatively unscathed. The majority of the staff at the conservatory are musicians themselves, or have close ties with music. Consequently, most of the people a student encounters at school can fully empathise with the passion and idiosyncrasies of musicians and the potential

pitfalls they face. There is far more scope for a personal approach than in many other programmes. Students receive a lot of personal supervision. In addition to the personal contact with the *main subject teacher*, for example, students at the Royal Conservatoire can follow a range of elective subjects, such as *Performance preparation and flow*, *Alexander technique* and *Effective studying*. In addition to the substance of the subject itself, all of these courses contain valuable elements that can help them to deal with stress and stage fright. Students can also go to their *tutor* or the student counsellor. The rest of this paper is based on my experiences with students who chose the latter option.

1 The lonely battle against stage fright

Solitary beings

We live in a time dominated by the idea of the ‘makeable person’ who can accomplish anything – *if he or she really wants to*. At the same time, everyone is in direct competition with others. In Darwin’s terms, we refer to *solitary* creatures that are doomed to a lonely *struggle for life* in the environment in which they live. Whether a person can survive this struggle depends entirely on his or her own efforts. In his book *Identiteit* [Identity], Paul Verhaeghe (2012: 116), describes the makeability of the human being, where we are all responsible for our own success or failure and everyone must constantly grow. We see this view reflected in the economy (de Waal 2011) and in health care (Verhaeghe 2009). Yes, the entire spirit of the age seems imbued with individuality and autonomy (Brinkgreve 2009: 11). Consequently, the pressure on the individual is enormous.

Not surprisingly, we also encounter this view in education. Parents who are themselves often caught up in the rat race consciously choose to have children and make them part of their success story.⁴ Students who encounter problems will at some point be informed that *they* are not trying hard enough, or that there are obvious reasons why *they* are not functioning. Those reasons lie within the limits of the student concerned and range from a *lack of skills* to the accepted excuse of having a *handicap*.⁵ The path to the top in the world of education seems like a lonely battle in which you have to seize every opportunity that comes your way. Even cheating with research data then seems to be an accepted means of reaching the top in the academic world.⁶

Self-help and resilience

If the pressure of the lonely struggle becomes too great, we have a whole choice of tools at our disposal, ranging from medication and nutrition to lifestyle and self-help books. By extension to the individualistic vision outlined above, most tools are aimed at strengthening the individual’s personal qualities. The focus is on the individuals’ need to develop the skills they

4. Micha de Winter refers to survival of the fittest child, a practice aimed at raising the perfect child. (De Winter 2011: 28)

5. This is not to say that handicaps or learning difficulties cannot play a role. Furthermore, a diagnosis can often have a positive effect since the individual concerned then feels seen and recognised.

6. The controversy surrounding the Dutch social psychologist Diederik Stapel proved to be no exception.

lack, to correct mistaken thoughts or to be more assertive. Not only are individuals pigeonholed, their problems are also analysed outside of any context. Verhaeghe uses the term *decontextualisation* (Verhaeghe 2009: 35). The following example shows that there is apparently no doubt about what the problem is: an individual dysfunction indicating a disorder. However, there is also often a more complicated context ...

Alex, a student of the trumpet, had problems at school and was diagnosed with ADHD. ‘My parents could do nothing with me when I was 18. I failed to pass my secondary school leaving exams by a hair’. People who knew me saw me as a problem child and that’s how I felt. I now want to show that it can be different, show people that I can play the trumpet, that I’m not a failure.’ There were also problems in Alex’s family. His parents were divorced. ‘I am very scared of my father, who plays clarinet in a brass band. He says: “You are the one who is going to make me proud.” I disappoint him. I’m afraid of being rejected.’

To illustrate the individualistic perspective in counselling, I will mention two examples from the world of psychiatry/psychology.

- According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the current version is DSM V), there are certain symptoms that together can form a personality disorder. The term *personality disorder* implies that the individual has a *defect*. Like Verhaeghe (2012) quotes in his book *Identity*, in its criticism of the new DSM, the *British Psychological Society* said: ‘We are also concerned that systems such as this are based on identifying problems as located within individuals. This misses the relational context of problems and the undeniable social causation of many such problems’ (*British Psychological Society*, June 2011).
- A lot of attention is devoted to the working of the brain and how its behaviour can be understood and tackled in a neurological (read: individual) manner. The fact that a book like *Wij zijn ons brein* [We are our brain] by Dick Swaab has sold so many copies (it was one of the ten best-selling books in the Netherlands in 2011 and 2012) demonstrates the level of interest in neurology and behaviour. In an interview with a Dutch newspaper (*NRC Handelsblad*, 5 November 2011: 8-9), Swaab even referred to *neuro-aesthetics* and agreed that he traces everything back to matter, chemistry and survival (of the individual, that is).

If we look more specifically at stress and stage fright, we encounter the same view. Here are a number of examples to illustrate that.

- Most training courses for coping with fear of failure are based on *rational emotive therapy* (RET) or *cognitive behavioural therapy* (CBT). Common to both methods is that they show that a person can think rationally and can therefore control disruptive/negative thoughts. Titles of books like *Ik kan denken/voelen wat ik wil* [I can think/feel what I want] (Diekstra 1999) and *Denk je sterk* [Think yourself strong] (Sterk & Swaen 2000) speak volumes in that regard: ‘Disarm and

reject the old negative programme that you received earlier in your life. You have no control over what others say or think, but you do have control over yourself.' (Sterk & Swaen 2000: 43)

- The *Mindfulness* method is based on the premise that you can learn to observe and accept things, rather than worry and being judgmental. 'The worrying or judgmental messages from earlier can still be in our head. Those who raised you may have had good intentions but *their opinions need be reviewed* because they no longer fit your life course.' (Bolmeijer & Hulsbergen 2009: 66). You must *shake off the influence of the other* in order to find yourself and so become accepting and observant.
- In *The Inner Game of Music* (Green & Gallway 1986), a self-help book that was used for musicians for a long time, the authors explain that you must be attentive rather than critical (cf. mindfulness). They make a distinction between *Self-1* and *Self-2*. *Self-1* is a critical voice that interferes and judges; it issues *do-this instructions*. *Self-2* is playful and creates *awareness*. They suggest that we do not have to respond to *Self-1*. 'The choice is *ours!*' (Green & Gallway 1986: 19. Italics are mine.) Here too, the solution seems simple: *choose for yourself!*

All this help is aimed at making *individuals* stronger and more resilient so that they can cope better with the big bad world outside. They can learn to pay less attention to others. They can programme themselves to say, as Kenny Werner (1996) puts it in his book *Effortless Mastery*, 'I'm a master'. They can make the other less significant, isolate themselves and withdraw into themselves and can focus their attention in such a way that they no longer allow certain thoughts.

The whole is more than the sum of its parts

Nevertheless, there are also other views. In economics, it apparently took a credit crisis to really move the discussion forward. In his book *The age of empathy*, Frans de Waal (2009) tried to explain that *survival of the fittest* should not be understood only at the individual level, as though we were solitary beings trying to survive at the expense of others. According to him, cooperation – and therefore trust in others – also helps us to survive. In addition to *working* together (think of hunting), cooperation gives us an opportunity to share the information in our brains with others. Keyzers (2011: 98) refers to *shared circuits*, two brains that together form a mutually connected operating system. This creates a powerful mechanism, not based on the individual's intellectual capacities but on complementary building blocks. The famous expression from Gestalt psychology, *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*, neatly encapsulates the essence of this idea⁷. Hargrave (2000: 6) mentions *us-ness*, 'what is exiting about this concept of 'us-ness' is that it is not quite me, and not quite you. 'Us' is what we are together. 'Us' is created by two individuals in a committed relationship; it takes on a *personality with characteristics of its own*.'

The downside that comes as an evolutionary side effect of our cooperation is that we *depend on those others* for our identity and our well-being; there is no self without the other.⁸ Ideas about our identity are a consequence of existing in relation to others (Brinkgreve 2009: 113). According to Verhaeghe (2012: 29), characteristics such as *self-confidence*, *self-esteem*, and *self-respect* can be better understood in their original context of *other-confidence*, *other-esteem*, and *other-respect*, which then determine how people see themselves in relation to the other.

If a person has problems with identity (read: self-confidence), then in order to find the solution for those problems, building on the above, it is logical to look at *relationships* rather than individuals. That brings me to the central argument of this paper:

Problems that cause stress often have a relational component, which can only be resolved in relation to the other, in other words, not within the individual (in a person's own head).

Ironically, it is the music world that actually illustrates how the essential role that *connecting with the public* plays in things like experiencing flow moments – moments when we experience the feeling of being carried along by what is happening. On the other hand, the absence of flow moments – moments when we want to maintain control – might perhaps sometimes be linked to an inability to connect (or not daring to connect). By *connecting with our fellow musicians*, we can create a piece of music in which the whole is indeed more than the sum of its parts. The quality of the performance is not determined by how exceptional the individual parts are, never mind being in competition. Frank Heckman (2012) refers to *fellowship* as an essential element of making music.

7. 'Because when ideas are shared, the possibilities do not add up. They multiply.' (Lehrer 2012: 223)

8. Philosopher Martin Buber describes it as follows: 'Through the Thou a man becomes I.' (Buber 1958: 28)

2 Students requesting help

The student counsellor

An extract from the annual report for 2012 gives an impression of the types of problems that are presented to me in my role as a student counsellor.

Royal Conservatoire

Nature of problem	number of students	
	2010-2011	2011-2012
anxiety & procrastination	16	23
problems with studying (dyslexia, ADHD, Asperger syndrome, etc.)	21	19
personal problems affecting study	33	52
problems with a teacher	1	5
study financing	8	5
letters of recommendation for funds	16	18
problems of students of School for Young Talent and Dance Academy	12	3

Apart from the categories *study financing* and *letters of recommendation for funds*, the students usually contacted me for reasons that were *stress-related*. Sometimes the situation called for practical solutions that would immediately relieve the stress. In those cases, it is a question of discussing an action plan, to negotiate postponing an exam with the coordinator for example.

However, if the stress is directly related to performing music or the student's musical development, the student is usually very worried and it will be impossible to relieve the stress immediately. The problem when dealing with musicians is that stress is not only upsetting for them, it also has a negative impact on their performance (West 2004: 272). It is well known that stress undermines a person's *courage to rely on automatic actions*, because of the *need for control*, which has to be seen here as an example of the previously mentioned coping behaviour. Its purpose is to help us survive, but it also has the undesirable side effect of causing us to lose our flexibility and power of expression. Stress often also interferes with actions that we perform automatically in our everyday lives. During a driving exam, for example, tension causes us to start thinking about what our right hand and our

left foot are doing when changing gears. By that time the examiner already has stepped on the brake. A pianist who starts playing a difficult passage note for note loses the musical image.⁹ A relaxed (read: not controlling) mood is important to allow *creative thought*. Stress creates *tunnel vision*, with thoughts converging rather than diverging.

Students often express their request for help in the form of a problem they are personally experiencing in performing musically or functioning at school. A few examples of statements made by students are given below.

- 'I am not properly prepared for lessons.'
- 'My teacher criticised me for not appearing at the studio performance.'
- 'What will happen if I call in sick?'
- 'I feel empty and listless, and time is passing.'
- 'I work in a chaotic manner and consequently get bogged down.'
- 'I isolate myself from my fellow students.'
- 'I do precisely what he says, but my teacher still becomes irritated, so that nothing works anymore.'

The following case illustrates that, apart from the problems directly related to stress, the student is often suffering from a complex medley of concerns. The student's problem can usually be addressed at a number of different levels. Almost without exception, the specific problem at school is related to problems in the context of the student's life.

Monique, a cello student, contacted me when, shortly after starting her Master's programme, she was considering stopping and looking for another profession. Her initial question was whether I had any information about other Higher Education programmes. During the interview, it became clear that she was no longer able to study and that concerts caused her serious stress. She had suffered from severe stress previously, with symptoms such as an eating disorder, but this had never caused her to consider ending her career.

Monique was from France and already had an international career, with impresarios in other countries. Her parents had supported her since she was seven years old and had invested in her career. When she was 12, they even moved to a different city to help her.

Monique's mother saw dangers everywhere and was obsessed by the need to have her children close by. Monique kept her mother happy by calling her every day to assure her that everything was alright. Monique's mother could not follow her own dream of following an education in the arts because she would have had to move a long way from home, which was unacceptable to her own mother. Monique's father was the stable factor at home but he displayed a lack of interest. He had given up supporting Monique's mother and was withdrawn. Monique also had a brother and a sister. Her brother – the oldest child – had

⁹ Yo-Yo Ma says: 'And it's when I'm least conscious of what I'm doing, when I'm just lost in the emotion of the music, that I'm performing at my best.' (Lehrer 2012: 88)

distanced himself from the family and started his own family. Monique often stayed with him and discussed the situation. The next oldest was her sister, with whom Monique had a troubled relationship for a while. According to Monique, this was because her sister blamed her for the move the family made to allow Monique to study. She had re-established contact with her sister, who understood the problems that Monique was struggling with and said she had suspected that Monique would eventually stop studying music.

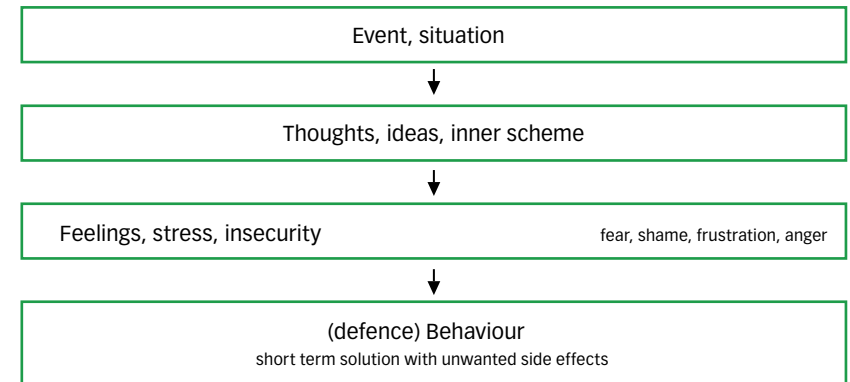
Monique had a boyfriend, also a musician. He tried to help, but did not really understand why she was so upset by everything. He himself was successful and Monique sometimes begrudged him his success. A gap was growing between them. She felt he did not understand her.

Monique needed teachers who took complete control. She had always had that type of teacher when she had studied abroad, including some with the accompanying large ego. Her current teacher was more of a coach. This made Monique feel insecure. Because she saw the audience as her enemy, a more protective teacher could arm her against that enemy during preparations by convincing her to believe in him. Her current teacher did not take that approach.

A sponsor of her Master's study had asked her to give a concert in France in return for the support he was providing. When Monique contacted her older sister, her sister said, 'Your mother is proud and is looking forward to a tremendous concert.' She seemed to be picking up the pieces again ...

The G-model

Once a student has explained his problem, I try to organise the information presented. For this, I often use a matrix with which I try to place the student's problem in the context of a pattern that he can recognise. The matrix is based on the so-called *G-model*, using the 4 G's known in the world of anxiety training in the Netherlands: Gebeurtenis (*Event*), Gedachte (*Thought*), Gevoel (*Feeling*), and Gedrag (*Behaviour*) (Diekstra 1999: 24). This matrix is similar to the ABC framework used in rational emotive therapy (RET) and in cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). In the ABC framework, A stands for *Activating event*, B for *Beliefs* and C for *Consequences*, emotions that prompt other behaviours (Dryden & DiGiuseppe 1990: 4). For the sake of convenience in using the matrix for students, in my version I have replaced the term *behaviour* with *defensive behaviour* (coping behaviour) *with unwanted side effects*. Students suffer from stress, but usually even more from the side effects of the coping behaviour that they develop to relieve the stress (subdue the feelings). In my experience, it is usually the side effects that form the complaint the student presents to me. Unfortunately, although the coping behaviour is intended to reduce the stress and is therefore functional, it usually comes at a cost (the side effect). By watching television, I can reduce feelings of stress (the benefit) but tomorrow the deadline will be even closer (the cost). This makes it difficult to address the coping behaviour. The matrix is shown below.



By inserting the information provided by the student in the matrix, the student comes to realise that the complaint has not appeared out of the blue but is part of a larger pattern. The matrix helps to draw the student out by inviting him not to simply remain *within* the maze, but also to look down on it from *above*.

I. The first step is to translate the complaint in terms of an *unwanted side effect* of the *defensive behaviour/coping behaviour* that has developed. I will give a few examples. Flexing our muscles prepares us for action (read: protection), but eventually the tension will lead to complaints such as neck and back problems or inflammation of the tendons. If making excuses is the coping behaviour, an undesirable side effect might be that the person is accused of being untrustworthy. However, the coping behaviour also has a positive effect; it *protects* the student against the *stressor* (the cause of the stress that the student usually does not yet recognise). The insight that procrastination – often interpreted as laziness by the student and those around him – usually does not arise from a lack of motivation but from the fact that the motivation generates so much stress that the body and mind want to protect themselves in the *short term*, brings enlightenment. Unfortunately, this insight also brings with it the realisation that the protection often creates a new problem *in the longer term* in the form of an undesirable side effect, such as a negative self-image or missing a deadline. A number of the aforementioned examples of requests for help could therefore be a side effect of the following types of coping behaviour.

- 'I am not properly prepared for lessons', as a side effect of attempting to survive in the short term by devoting time to other things.
- 'I do precisely what he says, but my teacher still becomes irritated, so that nothing works anymore', as a side effect of not adequately discussing one's own needs with the teacher.
- 'I work in a chaotic manner and consequently get bogged down', as a side effect of avoiding confronting reality; it often emerges that the student actually does possess planning skills.
- 'My teacher criticised me for not appearing at the studio performance', as a side effect of preferring not to receive any feedback or avoiding potentially negative feedback.

II. Step two is trying to get the student to *recognise* that he actually has a lot of stress in his head (and hence also in his body). This determines the student's resilience and also how urgent the short-term coping behaviour is. Since Hans Selye (1956) introduced his *general adaptation syndrome* (GAS) theory, we know that stressors initially cause an alarm reaction, which prepares the body and mind to switch to survival mode.¹⁰ In time, according to Selye, the adjustment we make has a destructive effect – if the stressor continues. Selye connects psychosomatic complaints, such as stomach and intestinal complaints, skin rash and headaches, with this. Sometimes the coping behaviour is so effective that the student apparently does not feel any stress, but the psychological and/or physical complaints then cause their own problems, such as the student no longer coming to school. Here too, a number of the examples of requests for help mentioned above could be linked to complaints that reflect prolonged stress.

Problems like:

- 'I am not properly prepared for lessons.'
- 'I isolate myself from my fellow students.'
- 'I do precisely what he says, but my teacher still becomes irritated, so that nothing works anymore.'

could, for example, be reflected in:

- poor concentration;
- sleeping badly;
- headaches;
- becoming irritated quickly;
- frequently being sick.

III. Step three is to make a list of the *situations* that cause the most stress or defensive behaviour. This will often show that they are not only the situations that led directly to the interview but that there are also *other situations in the day-to-day life* of the student and *parallel situations from the past* (I discuss this in more detail in section 3). The following examples illustrate this.

- 'I panic at solfeggio and, in fact, always if I have to do something that I am not good at.'
- 'I control too much when I am singing. My friend says that I am also a control freak in day-to-day life.'
- 'Even in secondary school, I always wanted to do everything well, the thing is I was also able to then.'
- 'I do not ask for help, I never have.'

IV. Step four is translating the reality (the *situation* in the matrix) into the reality as the student concerned experiences it. This reality guides his emotional reactions and (defensive) behaviour. This subjective reality lies in the student's own mind, his *conception* of what he should do or can expect in the situations he encounters. An example of such a conception might

10. The general adaptation syndrome theory states that stress is our internal response to circumstances, which causes us to adapt or change, resulting in the fight-or-flight reaction. The adaptation/change is psychological and physiological and can eventually be destructive. (Selye 1956: 29 ff.)

be 'Everything I do has to go right; it is terrible when it doesn't'. In situations in which something is expected of the individual concerned, this conception acts as a stressor that sets off the alarm reaction and then the coping behaviour. The understanding that it might be more effective to address the stress at the level of the thoughts rather than at the level of the defensive behaviour – which always has the downside of the accompanying side effects – is often an eye-opener for the student.

In addition to providing insight into a larger pattern, revealing these steps gives students the hope that they can influence the way they think and, hence, the level of stress they feel. They feel less at the mercy of fate, and more that they can do something themselves. In this context, Rotter (1954) refers to having an *internal locus of control*. Persons with an *external* locus of control (where something outside of themselves determines what happens) appear to be more susceptible to depression. This is often described as *learned helplessness* (Seligman 1975). In my experience with making students aware of their thoughts, it is noticeable that many of the conceptions mentioned by students are related to the sense of '*being commanded by*' something that is larger than themselves. Perfectionists do suffer from their perfectionism, but they feel that it's their *job* to leave the big pile of work in front of them intact. In order to survive, they can therefore only push it a little further away. It is as though they do not feel *entitled* to assume *personal* control over how to deal with the situation.

3 Maintaining a relationship

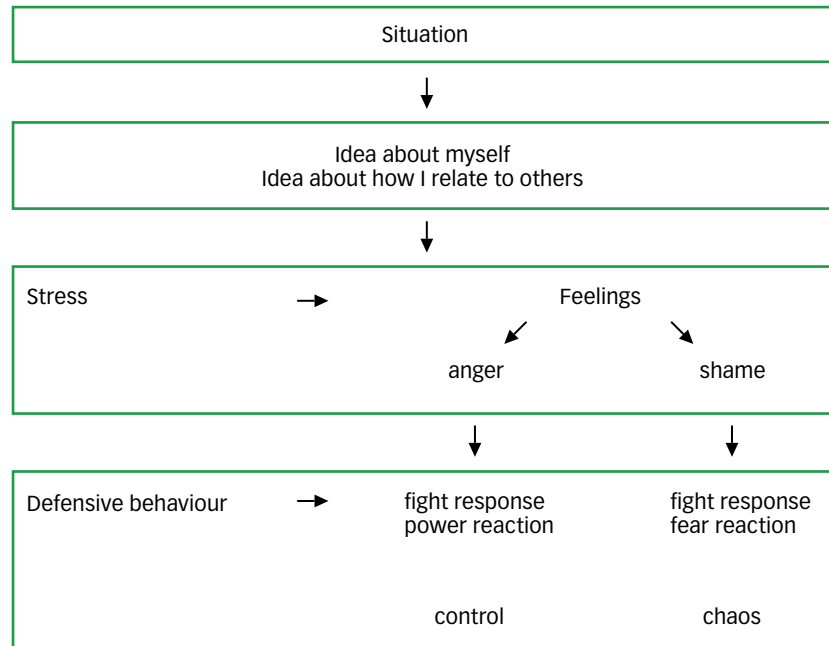
The internal model

When I was started as a student counsellor, I generally used the RET model and tried to get students to practice changing their thoughts at home by imagining the situation that created the stress. I encouraged them to consciously try to summon up the former (negative) thought and replace it with a more rational (positive) thought. Here are two examples.

- Negative thought, 'I want to do everything well and would preferably have seen results yesterday.'
- Positive thought, 'I can be satisfied by doing what is feasible.'
- Negative thought, 'I don't want to fail in front of others, I would go down in their esteem.'
- Positive thought, 'I am entitled to try to complete this course to the best of my personal ability.'

Nowadays, I use the model mainly to secure a mandate from students to explore their *internal models* with them. When students start examining their negative thoughts they often mention examples such as, 'I simply want to do it very well', 'I am my own worst enemy', 'others are better', 'I don't belong here'. It is often

noticeable that after further questioning ('why do you want to do it well?'), they mention thoughts such as, 'I am afraid I am not good enough', 'I feel inferior', 'the others are hoping to see me fail'. These thoughts can often be traced to how the student sees his *relationship* with his environment (teachers, fellow students, family) or ideas about his *personal identity* (Hargrave, Pfitzer 2003: 37). As a result, the focus shifts from having negative thoughts to how the student relates with his environment and, in particular, to his *internal model of what is needed to maintain relationships*.¹¹ This is the moment when a different version of the earlier model can help.



Building on the ideas in the RET model, one could argue that if students are able to alter their ideas about their relationships with others, they can shed their stress and the negative side effects of the defensive behaviour and so achieve their dream. RET is based on the idea that people are *themselves* to blame if they cling to judgmental thoughts.¹² This illustrates the *individualistic* approach of RET discussed earlier; it suggests that it is the individual himself who can or should decide to think differently. It is my experience that it is when students start trying to revise their thoughts that they encounter problems.

- 'I feel guilty because my parents are supporting me financially and I can't succeed with my plan.'
- 'I believe my father thinks that I have not worked hard enough.'
- 'I do not want people to think badly of me; I want my teacher to have a positive impression of me.'
- 'I can try that, but then I am afraid that I will lose them.'
- 'I am still afraid that I will disappoint people.'
- 'Have I not caused irreparable damage to their impression of me?'
- 'Then they will certainly not like me anymore.'

Changing the conceptions often seems like a *trick* that fails to work just at the crucial moment – during exams, for example. Moreover, changing thoughts often seems to invoke *feelings of guilt*. This all falls into place if we assume the possibility that we are not dealing here with the problem of an individual but of an *individual in a relationship*, where the relationship makes it impossible to *unilaterally* change the internal model. Students feel that they are under an obligation to the other – with whom they share a relationship (parents, teacher, friends) – to continue to bear the burden. It would otherwise – as Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1994: 15) put it – be *disloyal* to those with whom the student has a relationship. It often seems impossible to negotiate with the other to make the burden bearable. Consequently, the coping behaviour, with its negative side effects, is the only way of continuing in

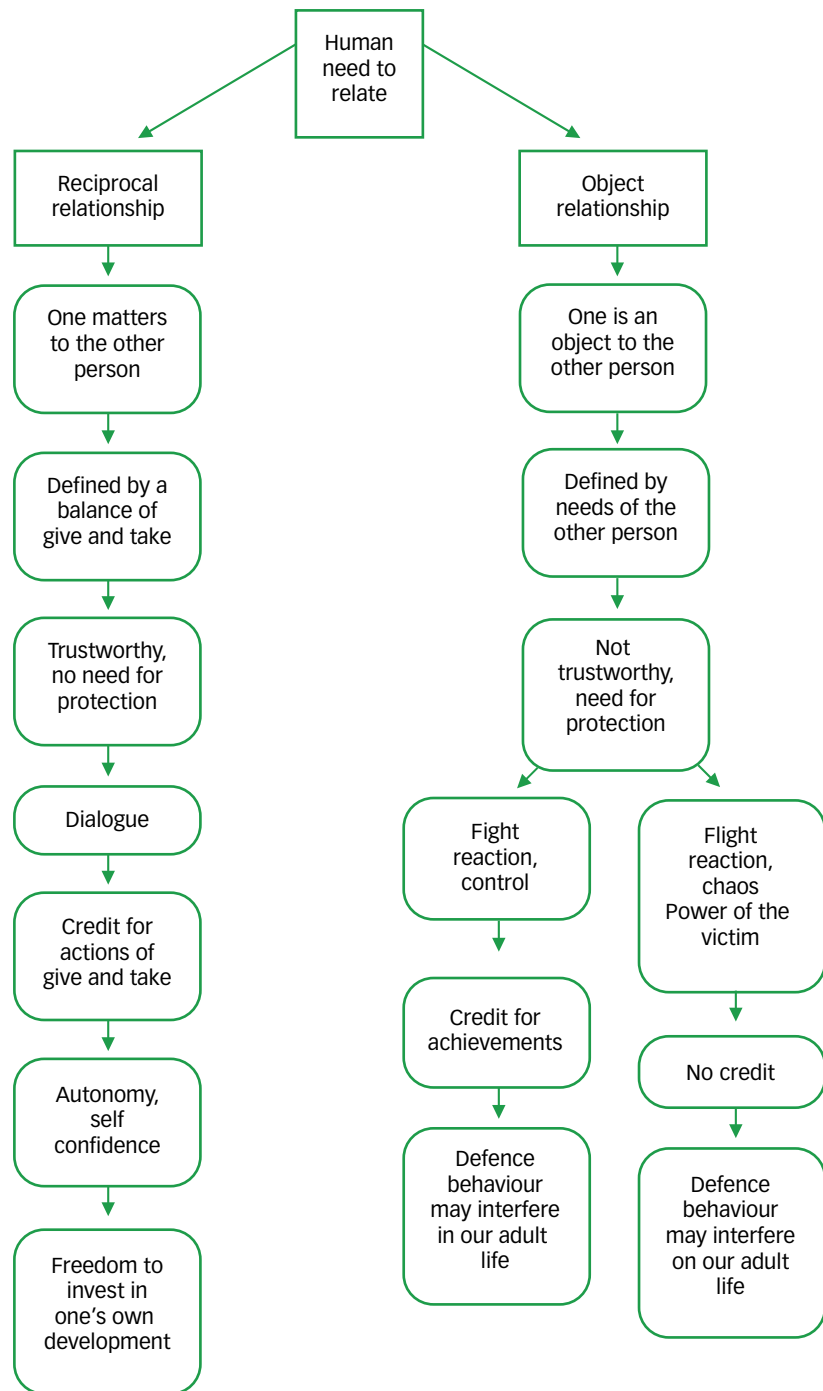
the relationship and still surviving. Having reached that point, the student will not be able to change disruptive thoughts simply by performing a few exercises, as though it was a question of deprogramming a bad habit (Mulligen, Gieles, Nieuwenbroek 2001). To change our internal model of how to maintain the relationship and the accompanying question of how fair the burden we bear in the relationship is (*being tasked*), there has to be *movement in the relationship*.

11. Attachment theory, formulated by John Bowlby, refers to an internal working model: 'An essential element of the working model of reality that everyone builds is the idea of who his attachment figures (the persons with whom he is in a relationship) are, where they can be found and how they are likely to react.' (Bowlby 1973: 203)

12. 'Because most people automatically and unconsciously rate themselves as well as their acts and often feel they must continue to do this. RET teaches these individuals that their rating had better depend solely on their aliveness and humanity. That is people can rate themselves as 'good', if they insist on rating themselves at all, just because they are alive and human.' (Dryden & DiGiuseppe 1990: 88)

The degree of reciprocity in the internal model

To get students to reflect on their internal model when it comes to being 'in relation to', I often present the following figure.



This shifts the focus of the interview to an exploration of which of the student's relationships, or to what extent a specific relationship, is a *reciprocal relationship*. Because we are willing to use a common language, we can share knowledge. As a result, we place language as an entity above us. The same thing happens with reciprocity: because we are willing to place our own interests and those of the other between us, and search for a fair balance in them, we can cooperate.¹³ Accordingly, fairness also becomes an entity above us. Empathy, mirror neurons, a common language, books and Internet all point in the same direction: we create a greater, stronger whole by sharing information and accepting the other with what he or she has to offer. The pattern in this is no longer at the level of the individual, but resides in the relationship. If two individuals bind themselves to a reciprocal relationship, a third party is created: the relationship. This relationship calls for a *dialogue* in order to reach a fair balance of give and take (Waal 2006: 85). Because each party to a dialogue is willing to consider the interests of the other party, that dialogue forms the lubricant for preserving a situation in which *both* persons continue to feel they matter (Sennett 2012: 14). Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1994: 57) go a step further and refer to an *ethical dimension* in interpersonal conduct. This dimension supersedes the parties and requires that conduct between people is fair, which means that the individuals concerned must be trustworthy.

Most relationships are reciprocal to a certain extent, but contain elements (to a lesser or greater extent) of an *object relationship*,¹⁴ in which the other is not looking

for fairness but is using us as a vehicle for meeting his or her needs. The coping behaviour or defensive behaviour mentioned earlier is an essential form of self-protection if the relationship proves to include elements of an object relationship. The other might, for example, try to manipulate us, dominate us or arouse our sympathy. That is not, by definition, right or wrong, but does compel us to protect ourselves adequately through behaviour that can often be traced back to fight-or-flight; we maintain a certain distance, we try to bluff, we shield ourselves, etc. The relationships that affect us most are those in life, in which reciprocity is necessary but where we nevertheless feel that we are an object to some degree or another. Sometimes previous experience will have taught us – and will therefore have had an impact on our internal model – that we should in any case act as though it is an object relationship, so that we will not be hurt or disappointed later. In juvenile social work, this is often the greatest stumbling block encountered in working with young delinquents.¹⁵

Central to the model depicted here is the *credit*, which provides the recurring evidence that we matter to the other. In other words, we have the benefit of the connection but the relationship *does not swallow us up*. The credit consists of recognition of *actions of give and take*, from which we build self-confidence and feel good about ourselves, since our needs are taken into

13. According to Frans de Waal people are programmed to watch for reciprocity, since it is a basic principle of society. 'Productive partnerships require a history of give-and-take and proven loyalty. Only then do we accomplish goals larger than ourselves.' (2009: 162)

14. I use the term object relationship, although it could be confused with object relationship theory (Fairbairn 1952), in which Fairbairn describes that events and persons are necessarily internalised as objects in the subconscious of children, and still determine the interactions with others in adulthood. Alva Noë (2009: 38) gives a description that corresponds with the meaning in my model 'It is possible to view a human being as a mere object, one that can be handled and manipulated to achieve whatever ends. [...] But once we take up the detached stance on the other, we give up any chance of understanding them.'

15. There are various examples in the literature in which the experience of violence in a relationship is translated into committing violence, warding off feelings of powerlessness by taking control of events [fight response]. (Dijkstra 1999)

account (take) and what we have to offer is apparently good enough because it is accepted by the other (give). With the accrued credit, we also feel entitled to rely on the other, to accept help, to welcome compliments (Boszormenyi - Nagy & Krasner 1994: 100). We ourselves dare to *receive*. The credit, from having our efforts recognised, also gives us the energy that enables us to return to work again the next day. Research has shown that poor academic performance and dropping out of studies are heavily influenced by the perception of a lack of positive emotional support from the family (Govaerts 2007: 182).

Credit, however, is also possible in an object relationship. We can even compel the credit if our coping strategy is to *fight* and we are able to win (cf. the lonely struggle). In that case, the other - although our opponent - must recognise our accomplishments and we therefore matter in that relationship. However, we do have to continue performing in order to be able to defend ourselves against the other, who will naturally still treat us as an object, and consequently might make us feel that we are not being acknowledged or seen. From the moment that we are no longer able to perform, the threat of the deep hole of a *burnout* is often lurking. If we choose the other tack - *flight* - there seems to be only one option for avoiding chaos (often reflected in addiction and depression) and that is to appeal to the sympathy of the other by invoking *the power of the victim*.

- 'I want to prove myself and amaze everyone.'
- 'Everyone at this school is concerned with themselves.'
- 'I am extremely critical of others; I don't dare discuss my problem with anyone.'
- 'My friends must not see me as vulnerable, but they do come to my exams!'
- 'I am constantly trying to keep all the balls in the air, but how long can I keep it up?'
- 'It seems as though those around me do not want to see that I am depressed.'

The place of the family in the internal model

The internal model is formed not only by the current relationships at school but also by other - and above all *earlier* relationships - (Mulligen, Gieles, Nieuwenbroek 2001: 15), particularly relationships such as friendships and family ties that are *intended* to be reciprocal in the interests of survival. The first relationship in this context is the relationship with one's *parents* (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner 1994: 224).

As children, we have an *asymmetric* relationship with our parents, which is a combination of a reciprocal relationship and an object relationship.¹⁶ In this situation there can't be a relationship that is based entirely on equal reciprocity. Not everything can be resolved via dialogue; parental responsibility compels parents to establish boundaries. With contemporaries, we often develop close relationships that allow for equal reciprocity, a *symmetric relationship*. This type of relationship can continue because both parties actively work to create a balance of

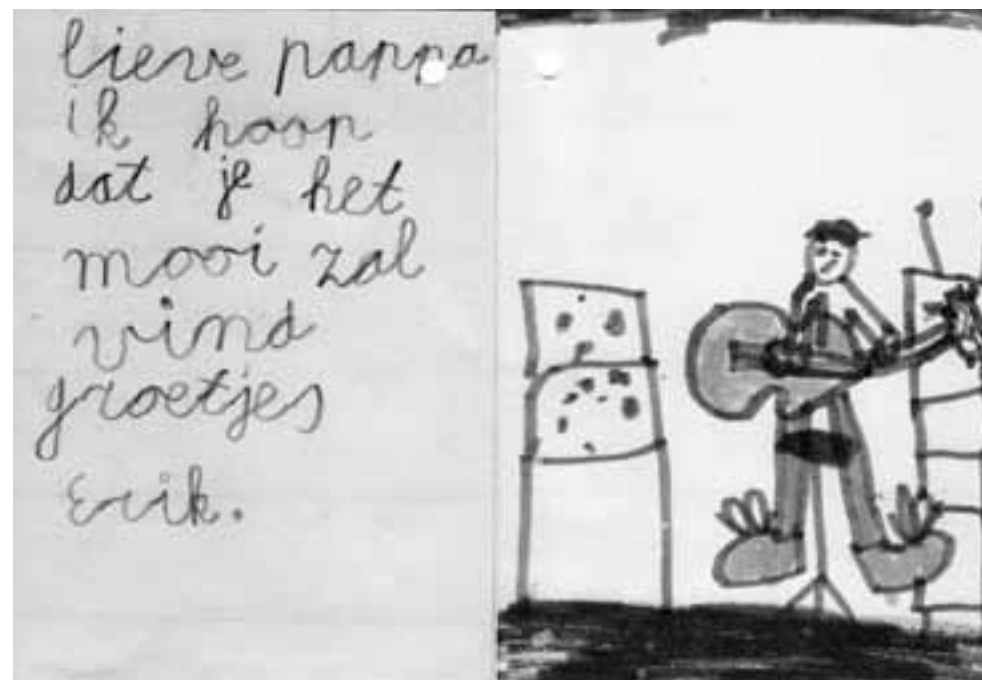
16. Willi, a pioneer in relationship therapy, refers in this context to a co-relationship that includes the healthy process of the mutual influence of personal development, and the opposite, collusion, where one person contributes the need to have his own desires fulfilled by the other and the other wishes to accede to those desires. In this case, the other meets the needs of this person. The terms fight or flight that I use for coping strategies in a collusion [object relationship], he calls the progressive (fight) and the regressive (flight) pole (Govaerts 2007: 153, 159).

17. 'This child had an amazing ability to receive and respond intuitively, that is, unconsciously to this need of the mother, or of both parents for him to take on the role that has unconsciously been assigned to him.' (Miller 1979: 8)

give and take (Boszormenyi - Nagy & Krasner 1994: 82). If the other does not give enough back in return for what we give, we feel exploited and the reciprocity (read: trustworthiness) suffers.

Children develop the internal model of what is needed to maintain relationships as they grow. By allowing their child to give in a manner appropriate to their position in the relationship, parents help their child to develop the capacity to play an active role in a relationship and receive recognition for it. As a result, the child feels that it matters and develops self-confidence. The child's internal model then informs it that what it gives is apparently good enough for the other to receive.

The following drawing by my own son Erik perhaps illustrates this. His desire, 'Ik hoop dat je het leuk zal vind' [I hope you will like it] also suggests 'I hope you will accept it'. If I do accept, Erik receives confirmation that he is significant to me. However, if my concern about my son's grammar wins out, I might say, 'Erik, you should say: 'Ik hoop dat je het leuk *zult vinden*'. At that moment I *give* expression to my concern, but also make him the *object* of my ambitions. That is not to say that it cannot be helpful to correct children. My son Erik might then decide to use the spell check whenever he writes another note (fight response) and become a perfectionist. Alternatively, he might decide not to show me any more drawings (flight response) and avoid the pain of connection. By the way, the fact that I kept the drawing may show that I accepted it.



The asymmetry in the parent-child relationship means that children are finely attuned to the *needs* of the parent.¹⁷ As a result, they easily give in to the parent and consequently easily assume an additional burden for themselves. The relationship can then easily tip over to the object side, although the child still wants to remain loyal (read: trustworthy). This produces an internal model for the child in which trustworthiness must be accompanied by self-protection against the other, which is simply essential in an object relationship. To maintain the relationship, therefore, the child must not allow *itself* to be seen, but the person who is giving in to the needs of the other. The child assumes an *obligation* in order to be able to feel good about itself. We often see a child's being obligated to his parents reflected in the following forms (Michielsen, van Mulligen & Hermkens 1998).

Needs of the parent	Obligation for the child
I need you to care for me	Caring child
I need you to care for	Must remain a child
I need you to do well	Perfect child
I need your failings to disguise my own pain	Scapegoat

Students often make comments that seem to point in this direction.

- 'I don't want to burden my parents because they already have enough problems. I should also not be angry at my brother because he is unhappier than I am.' (caring child).
- 'I still live with my parents and don't think I can take care of myself.' (child that must remain a child).
- 'My parents always said, "You can do anything". Everything has to go perfectly. I was in the class for young talent at the age of 12.' (perfect child).
- 'My parents are separated. They couldn't cope with me. Now I realise that I was responding to the tensions at home.' (scapegoat).
- 'I'm afraid that I disappoint my father. My father is an alcoholic, my mother takes her anger at him out on me and I have to help her.' (caring child).
- 'My parents are divorced and I had problems at school in the past.' (scapegoat).

Particular circumstances inside or outside the family can cause the relationship to tip over more extremely in the direction of an object relationship with its associated coping behaviours. A young child is unable *to express* that being loyal is a burden so he cannot start a conversation (the dialogue) to share that burden.¹⁸

- 'When I was a teenager I spent all my time in my own room.'
- 'I was angry about the things that happened at that time.'
- 'I snapped at her whenever my mother wanted to help.'

- 'I have regularly drunk too much since I was 14.'
- 'Because my sister was always causing problems, I tried to remain invisible.'
- 'I was jealous of my sister, who received all the attention because of her handi-cap.'

4 Child and adult

Feeling and doing

A child has *feelings* and expresses them, and by expressing them the young child secures the safety of closeness (crying, seeking protection, etc.). The resulting interaction with the parent gradually helps children to become aware of their own feelings and those of others.¹⁹ They learn that sharing feelings leads to being seen (in a reciprocal relationship), and where this does not happen, the child develops coping behaviours, which – in this phase – are usually a form of *doing* (in the sense of *actions*). Ausloos (1999: 42) refers to *acting-out* behaviour: 'Acting out what cannot be spoken internally.'

Our internal model – which, as explained earlier, is often determined by our relationships as a child and particularly those with our parents – forms the *blueprint* for what is needed to maintain a relationship in a new situation (at school, for example). In this way, certain situations in the present incite the acting-out behaviour from the past via our internal model. In that context, students say that the behaviour often seems 'bigger' than themselves, almost a *reflex*. Wallin (2007: 123) also stresses the reflexive and automatic aspects of this type of behaviour: we lose the adult's capacity to *reflect* on what has happened. It causes students to act in the present in a

way that interferes so much with what is expected of them that the behaviour becomes a problem. Running away is accepted more easily from a child than from an adult. Failing to appear for an exam is naturally criticised in a student.

Many of the side effects of the coping behaviour exhibited by students when dealing with stress arise from this acting-out type of behaviour. People who still cannot directly express their wishes or feelings in words have to express them in an *indirect* manner in order to be of significance: eating a lot, eating too little, being absent, working hard, remaining in bed, slamming the door, running away, withdrawing into isolation, hitting, breaking things, blocking, etc. These are also all examples of fight or flight responses.²⁰ For a child, they are the only options if a relationship is a burden. The reactions protect it against certain painful feelings, but the side effect is to distance the child from his feelings.²¹

18. 'A related situation is one in which a parent, having had a traumatic childhood, is apprehensive of being reminded of past miseries and so becoming depressed. As a result her children are required always to appear happy and to avoid any expression of sorrow loneliness, or anger. As one patient put it to me after a good deal of therapy: 'I see now that I was terribly lonely as a child but I was never allowed to know it. Most children are indulgent towards their parents, preferring to see them in a favourable light and eager to overlook many deficiencies.' (Bowlby 1988: 121)

19. 'This sequence [picking him up, holding him tenderly and releasing him to play] reflected a child of attuned communication that has been described as cooperative and contingent: One party signals, while the other answers with behaviour that says, in effect, I can sense what you're feeling and respond to what you need.' (Wallin 2007: 21)

Jan, a student of clarinet in the preparatory course, was afraid of making mistakes and would freeze up when playing in front of his teacher. He also had little energy and difficulty with organising things.

Jan wanted to go on to the first year. He was full of negative thoughts: 'I am afraid that they do not see what I can really do and that they will reject me. I have the feeling that I disappoint people. I do not deserve to succeed.'

Jan's teacher advised him 'to think more about yourself and less about those around you.'

In a later interview, Jan said, 'I can't really tell, but I think I have a sense of guilt. Actually, I feel sad, powerless, angry and critical of things that happened in the past. Shutting myself off from my feelings has an impact on various levels. I have problems concentrating, suffer from blackouts and feel depressed. My parents are divorced, and I have sided with my mother and have no contact with my father. My brother sided with my father. Now I don't see him either.'

Thinking and verbalising

Adults have an additional option: they can *think* and are able to *verbally express their wishes and desires*.²² They can find words for what was previously only physically tangible (Verhaeghe 2010). Words help us to be more *observant* about what we experience.²³ Main (1991: 134) refers in this context to *meta-cognitive knowledge*. We can ascertain that we are in a certain mental state at a specific moment ('I notice that I often feel insecure on stage') rather than simply *existing* in that state ('I can't do this'). The term *inner dialogue* (Krasner 1999) is perhaps the most apt in this context. When we are in a relationship with another, we can rely on the other to help us express what is in our head and so bring us closer to our own feelings, or even to change our points of view.²⁴ In that case, the dialogue with the other helps to set off the inner dialogue.

This assumes that the other is willing to adopt a position that permits the dialogue. The attitude taken by the other is very important in this regard. The other also bears the legacy of his or her earlier relationships together with the associated coping behaviour and has also usually learned this coping behaviour at a time when verbal expression was not yet an option. This shows the vulnerability of being a relational creature: the internal models of partners in a dialogue must *match*. In this respect, however, the adult has greater possibilities to play an active role than the child.²⁵ Consequently, if the relationship is out of balance, adults can exert influence to restore reciprocity or to ensure that the relationship can become reciprocal if he or she does not know the other sufficiently well. In contrast to what many soap operas suggest, to accomplish this adults have not only the indirect method of the child, but also the direct manner of the dialogue.

20. Govaerts (2007: 71) in fact mentions [like many others] freezing (immobilisation) as an option in addition to fight and flight.

21. 'In general, there is a complete lack of emotional understanding or serious appreciation of their own childhood vicissitudes, and no conception of their own true needs – beyond the need for achievement.' (Miller 1979: 6)

22. The musician, in fact, has an advantage in this respect, because music is a symbolic language that creates an extra option in addition to words.

23. The Mindfulness method describes the possibility of switching from a doing modus (appropriate for external problems) to a being modus (internal problems). 'I make a note of it and it is gone, there is no comparison or evaluation. This avoids frustration and stagnation.' (Bolmeijer & Hulsbergen 2009: 121)

The hourglass

If I try to integrate all this information into a single model, I arrive at the following conclusion: every person possesses *three* elements that play a role in how he or she reacts to the other. I will list them in chronological order of the sequence in which they appear.

- The *inner core*, our feelings, our intuition and spontaneity.
- The *protection* the child needs when the other cannot oblige that inner core entirely reciprocally, and hence introduces something (or slightly more) of the object relationship into the contact.
- The *adult*, who is capable of reflection and can therefore make *decisions* and *verbally express* his own interests or feelings, while maintaining the relationship.

The person with whom we are in a relationship also possesses these three elements. Where the relationship is based on a meeting of two persons, where their inner core is visible, we see the reciprocal relationship.²⁶ Where two persons encounter one another via their *coping behaviour*, we see the object relationship. In a relationship between two *adults*, both types of meetings are filtered through the third element, adulthood. They can give words to their needs and frustrations and so control the other two elements. However, under severe stress the adult loses control and the coping strategy in its child-like form takes over. Here we lose control and display the acting-out coping behaviour described earlier. Puberty is often a period of explicit experimentation with transforming acting-out behaviour

into giving-words-to, sometimes with intense discussions as a result. A child, who focuses entirely on the needs of the adult and who has not had the possibility of developing his powers of expression, will, as an adult, quickly lose control and fall back on coping behaviour, which will often interfere negatively in adult life, as we have seen. It is important to note here that rational thought is an additional possibility, but is not in itself *sufficient*. If rational thought is purely formal and not in direct contact with the inner core (the feelings), it is actually a new coping mechanism that avoids the need to make decisions by trying to reduce the decision to a logical step-by-step plan. In that sense, the choice becomes 'externally imposed' as it were – the individual concerned is placed in the position of a person who is acting on command. It is also precisely the *combination* of rational thought and intuition that is essential for the creative process as well.

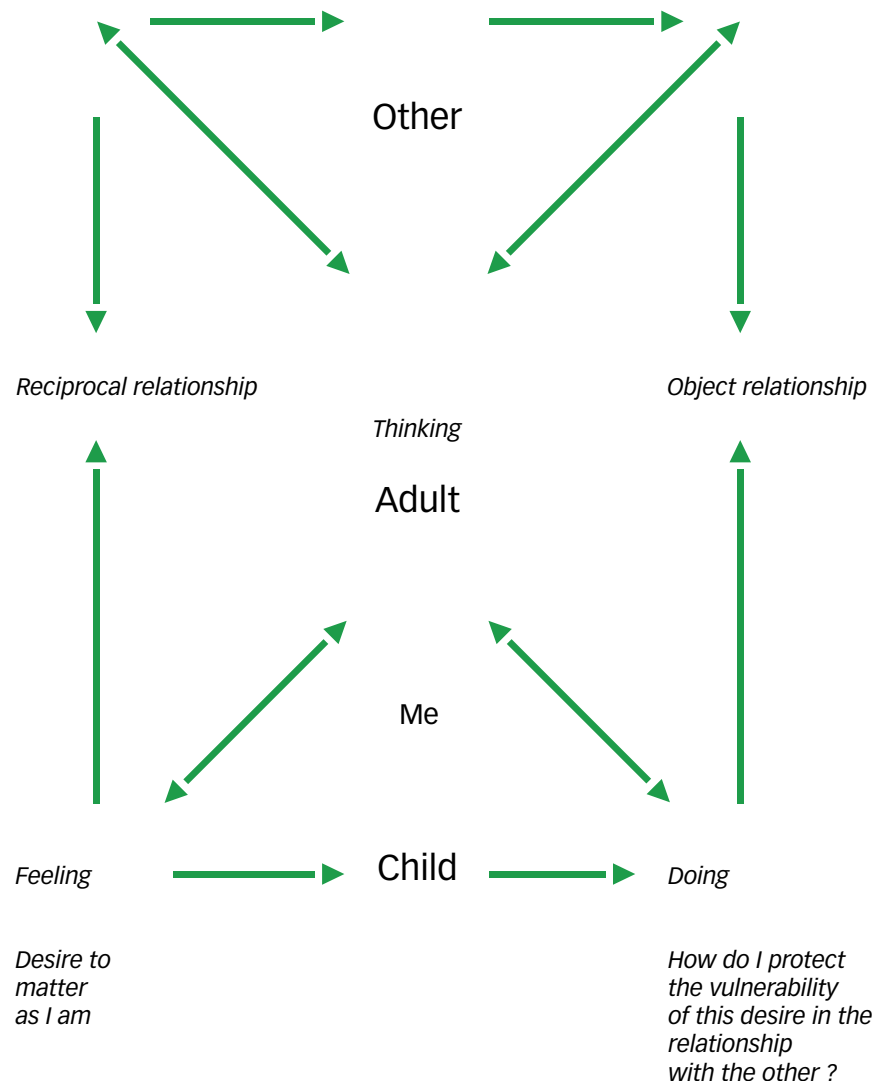
I have incorporated the three elements in the following figure, often described by students as *the hourglass*. Adults are in contact with their inner core and with their coping behaviour (symbolised by the arrows). Together, they form the triangle *feeling, doing and thinking*. What the figure tries to show is that the coping behaviour of the other almost *automatically* arouses coping behaviour in the I-person and hence makes the relati-

24. 'Critically feelings (and other mental states) that can be represented - especially by words - are more easily identified, shared, reflected on and modulated. Hence, the enormous significance in childhood and psychotherapy of affect-regulating relationships in which this ability to express feelings can be developed.' (Wallin 2007: 147)

25. For a relationship between two individuals to proceed harmoniously, each must be aware of the other's point of view, goals, feelings and intentions, and each must adjust his or her own behaviour in order to negotiate some alignment of goals. This requires each person to have reasonably accurate models of the self and the other, which are regularly updated by free communication between them. (Bowlby 1988: 147)

26. This is what the philosopher Martin Buber would describe as an I-Thou meeting; he describes the object relationship as an I-It meeting. In the I-Thou meeting, we take the other as he is, whereas in the I-It meeting we approach the other from the perspective of what he can do for us. (Buber 1958: 4)

onship an object relationship on both sides (the right-hand connector between the two individuals). The figure also shows that for a reciprocal relationship (the left-hand connector), it is essential for *both* persons to have the courage to abandon their coping behaviour. Where the situation provokes (childish) coping behaviour on the part of one of the persons, the other actually has no choice but to defend himself with his own coping behaviour. In this case, if the *other* is a teacher, he loses his coaching role and the student automatically becomes an object. On the other hand, a student who chooses the role of victim makes the teacher an object.



Returning to my role as a student counsellor, by trying to engage in a *dialogue* and show I am trustworthy I invite students in their adult position where they can *understand*, think and give words to what he or she feels. This places students in a position where they can make *decisions* or in which – without wishing to exaggerate my role in this – they can *accept* sadness or loss. Alice Miller (1979) stresses that we, as adults, have the possibility to *grieve*, which also allows us to expose ourselves to feelings from our childhood.²⁷ This also helps us to establish closer contact with our inner core (our feelings).

In addition to insight and the possibility of dialogue, I also offer the students the option of taking *action* by talking to the people around them. This is perhaps even more important, since my point of departure is that we cannot change except in relation to the other. I invite the student to play a *more active role* by talking to the other, negotiating, engaging in a dialogue. By acting in this way, students become better able to explain their interests and to invite the other person to do the same; in the other words, to stake out their position while maintaining the relationship. Students gain experience in trying to *express their needs* in their current relationships. The other in these relationships can be the teacher, a fellow student, a friend or a parent; in any case any relationship where loyalty can also be a burden.

By engaging in dialogue and taking action, students invest in the possibility of changing their inner model from:

being successful / satisfying the other → control over the relationship → assured of recognition,

to:

maintaining reciprocal relationships and securing recognition in them → autonomy → freedom to invest in their personal development and enjoy the success.

The remarkable feature of this latter version of the internal model is that the altered conception is the mirror image of the former.

27. 'We then realize that our entire lives we have feared and fended off something that can never happen again, because it has already happened, namely at the beginning of our life, when we were helpless. It is the same thing with creativity. A condition for that is the grieving process [...]' (Miller 1979: 102). Within the Mindfulness method, there is a similar conclusion: 'Am I willing to experience negative emotions and psychological pain? Am I willing to engage in situations that evoke these emotions?' (Bolmeijer & Hulsbergen 2009: 90)

5 The teacher-student relationship

The one-to-one-relationship

In an article in the Dutch magazine *Akkoord magazine* (Van der Kamp 2010), former students of conservatories were interviewed.

- ‘Conservatory students should learn to separate their self-image from their performance on their instrument. Teachers could help in this.’
- ‘My teacher was totally unaware that I went to every lesson in a cold sweat. I was making good progress, wasn’t I? It is also particularly difficult to discuss your doubts and fears with your teacher, since they could be used in your assessment.’
- ‘Naturally you have to work very systematically on certain things, but teachers also impose their own methods on students as the ideal ones, leaving little room for the student’s own input.’
- ‘I feel that every teaching situation starts with respect for the student and the normal rules of etiquette. That might sound strange, but I know of many examples where that was not the case. Teachers, who swear, say strange things... You wouldn’t believe your ears sometimes. Teachers sometimes forget that it is about the students and not about themselves. There are teachers who want to score with their students’ performances. That is totally the wrong approach. I have very seldom found that teachers considered the positive traits or strengths that you might also have.’

The fact that these quotes are from former students may have coloured the opinions expressed about their experiences with teachers. Many students I have spoken do feel differently or have had different experiences with their teachers.

The unique feature of a programme at a conservatory is that the students receive *personal* supervision in their craft – in their development as an instrumentalist/vocalist/composer – and in their artistic development. This occurs in a variety of lessons, but the *lessons in the main subject* are central. Those lessons are a moment of one-to-one contact, which take place every week throughout the course. This close cooperation gives the teacher the opportunity to challenge, inspire and guide students in a safe setting, before eventually letting them go again. The teacher plays various roles, including those of organiser, specialist, inspirer and supervisor of the learning process (Deneer & Smit 2005). Not every teacher has to be able to fulfil all of those roles, but each role requires specific skills. Sometimes the relationship is described as a master-apprenticeship relationship, emphasising the difference in the positions of the teacher and the student. Often, however, students and teachers also express the desire for the relationship to be something in the nature of a friendship.²⁸

28. ‘Teachers and students all viewed the one-to-one relationship as a vital part of instrumental/vocal learning. Teachers often focussed on the intensity of the relationship. Most commonly they described it in terms of friendship, a parent-child relationship, or a mixture of the two.’ (Gaunt 2011: 165)

29. ‘[...] There are some I-Thou relationships, which in their nature may never unfold to full mutuality if they are to persist in that nature. [...] I have characterized the relationship of the genuine educator to his pupil as being a relationship of this kind.’ (Buber 1958: 131-132)

30. ‘The present is dealt with in the same way as the past was dealt with. Things will happen in a relationship about which one could ask whether they might not usefully be connected with what is happening and has happened in other relationships.’ (Mattheeuws 1988: 202)

Transference and countertransference

In certain respects, the teacher-student relationship appears very similar to the parent-child relationship. Furthermore, it is parallel to the parent-child relationship (Mulligen, Gieles, Nieuwenbroek 2001: 76) and has the characteristics of an asymmetric relationship.²⁹ The teacher is the expert and assesses the student, but is also trustworthy and helpful. Consequently, there is a significant possibility that an internal model that the *student* has constructed earlier in the relationship with his parents will be used again in the contact with his teacher.

- ‘I become blocked in the vocal lesson; rather than explaining, I clam up. I cannot discuss things with her. It is the same with my mother. I had to be the adult.’
- ‘I do not want to disappoint my teacher. I have ADHD and secondary school was an enormous effort. I caused my parents a lot of worry.’
- ‘I take a lot of the things the teacher says as criticism. You have to put up a good front. My father is like that too. He is quite strict in that respect.’

This phenomenon is similar to what is referred to as *transference* in the world of therapy: what is happening now in the therapist-client relationship reflects what happened in other/earlier relationships. The accompanying coping behaviour also often comes from the earlier relationship.³⁰

Even without the legacy of the student’s earlier relationships, the dependency in the relationship with the teacher can be a burden for the student. *Teachers* also bring their own legacy from earlier relationships and might be guided by that legacy in how they deal with students. Teachers can also be suffering from the past, and the student can become the object of their own unsettled accounts. This phenomenon is known in the world of therapy as *countertransference*. If the predominant feeling is one of hurt, then the therapist is healed rather than the client. In that case, one follows Carl Jung in speaking of the *wounded healer*.

Like a child that focuses on the needs of the parents, the student can easily start focusing on the needs of the teacher. If the relationship between teacher and student is difficult, that will generally result in a student who has difficulty finding the *balance between representing his own interests and satisfying his teacher*. The following examples might perhaps illustrate this.

- ‘I want to give something back to him. I must play well.’
- ‘Because I never receive compliments, I think she does not believe in me.’
- ‘I’m afraid that my teacher will not stand up for me at the exam.’
- ‘It feels as though my teacher has certain expectations that I cannot meet.’
- ‘She treats me as a child, so I become blocked.’
- ‘I am afraid that our relationship will be damaged if I start negotiating with my teacher.’
- ‘I find it difficult to trust my teacher. I have the feeling he is attacking me. I should not take it personally, but he sometimes runs into a wall with me because of it.’
- ‘I discuss everything with my teacher. Sometimes we spend the entire lesson talking.’

The balance of give and take

To give an impression of how the student might experience the teacher-student relationship, I have tried to encapsulate statements made by students and cluster them in two categories that reflect the give and take in the relationship. This might help to make more concrete what is needed to create the balance of give and take in the relationship, which, in turn, can give an indication of the degree to which loyalty in the relationship might be regarded as a burden. Because my information is based on what students say, an important reservation has to be made here. The *teacher's* perception may be quite different. Moreover, this is a summary and not every student mentions every category. A number of the following statements appear in Gerda van Zelm's study: 'The teacher-student relationship in one-to-one tuition', linked to what students and teachers mentioned in the survey.

What do students take and give in return?

Taking:

- My teacher is an expert.
- My teacher inspires me.
- My teacher shapes my (musical) personality.
- It is a privilege to be taught by him.
- I need him for my self-confidence.
- My teacher determines my future.

Giving:

- I hope I can repay my teacher's faith in me.
- I do not want to disappoint him.
- I want to please him.
- I owe it to my teacher to stay.

What does the teacher give and take in return, according to the student?

Giving:

- I hope I can make a real contribution to his artistic development.
- I think I have something to offer him.
- I feel responsible for his development.
- I hope I can repay his faith in me.
- I want to help him stand on his or her own two feet.

Taking:

- I expect him to appreciate my lessons.
- He must be open to my approach.
- He must believe in me.
- I expect gratitude from him.
- He must repay my investment.
- He must not leave.

By taking things like *expertise* and *inspiration* (*he is an expert, he inspires me*), students might feel challenged to do their very best and give back that way in return. In the process, they impose high but realistic demands on themselves and see the feedback they receive from teachers as valuable information for getting ahead. If they meanwhile achieve certain goals, they see this as credit on which they can rely, so their feeling of autonomy and self-confidence increases. Failures are not immediately seen as a personal shortcoming.

If what the student gives back is in the direction of the statements *I hope I can repay his faith in me* or *I do not want to disappoint him*, loyalty can also be a burden that interferes with his development. In that case, we can speak of a *destructive burden*, which transforms studying from a learning process for the student into a recurring test of whether or not he is totally failing as a person. Mistakes are failures that seem to confirm that giving back at the required level is impossible. At the same time, the present might also reawaken earlier images that were characterised by a lack of recognition or a lack of trustworthiness. The students believe they have forfeited their credit and so fall back on coping behaviour, for example by withdrawing in shame and no longer playing an active role in relation to the teacher. Perhaps the idea that effort also deserves recognition and therefore earns credit is missing in their internal model. (See also Gerda van Zelm's study: 'The teacher-student relationship in one-to-one tuition'.)

As already discussed, a teacher can also carry a destructive burden from past experiences. This could lead to the expectation (presumed by the student): *I expect gratitude from him; he must not leave.*³¹ Students usually see their teacher as an authority on the instrument that they are trying to master themselves. They often also depend on the teacher for the network they need for a future career in an orchestra or elsewhere in the music world, which already places the teacher in a vulnerable position. If the teacher is carrying a destructive burden, this can

come on top of that and is often reflected in the form of an entanglement of the personal and professional. By analogy with the student, failure as a professional represents failure as a person. The teacher will try to win the recognition he did not receive earlier; victim becomes perpetrator. (See also section 7, *Seeking recourse elsewhere*.) Like children in a family,³² a student in the teacher-student relationship is an easy object for this.

A relationship in which a student or teacher loses sight of the reciprocity is to a certain extent one-way. The *monologue* lies in the fact that the teacher or the student is no longer willing to take the risk of starting a dialogue, but actually adopts a position in the relationship that constantly confirms his or her own truth (Michielsen 2000). Teacher: 'I need you to listen to me.' Student: 'I need your approval.' Where the student becomes an object in the struggle being waged by the teacher, the student inevitably feels the need to defend himself. Vice versa,

31. 'The gulf which some students perceive between themselves and their apparently outstandingly brilliant tutors and the tendency for some tutors on the other hand to bath in the reflected glory of their students.' (Gaunt 2011: 162)

32. 'Of the many other disturbed patterns of parenting that can be traced, in part at least, to childhood experience, there is one that happens also to be well documented in studies of abusing mothers. This is their tendency to expect and demand care and attention from their own children, in other words to invert the relationship. During interview they regularly describe how, as children, they too had been made to feel responsible for looking after their parents instead of the parents caring for them.' (Bowlby 1988: 20)

the same thing happens in the form of defensive mechanisms such as impatience, irritation, formality, etc. on the part of the teacher.

6 How does the student survive if loyalty is a burden?

Although the student's loyalty to his teacher or family is usually deserved and therefore correct, that loyalty also brings with it obligations (in order to create a balance of give and take). If the obligations feel like a command, but the student does not feel that the relationship allows for a dialogue, coping behaviour is the only solution for surviving in the relationship. However, this coping behaviour causes its own new problems, which – as I have tried to show earlier – usually lead to the student contacting me. Without wishing to mention every form of coping behaviour, below I have listed a number of familiar behaviours typical of students for whom loyalty is a burden. The coping strategies described are recognisable to me because I have frequently encountered them. Broadly speaking, they can be traced back to fight-or-flight responses.

Making an enemy of the other

- 'His approach irritates me. I've started to realise that we may simply be fed up with each other, but I can't say that to my teacher. I've been thinking of asking for another teacher.'
- 'It's as though my theory teacher deliberately allows me to stumble. I don't like him.'
- 'It's alright to feel uncertain sometimes, isn't it? Everyone has it in for me. I always have the feeling that I'm being picked on in this school.'
- 'I have doubts about the committee's competence and my teacher did not stand up for me.'
- 'My teacher does not realise the effort I make. She only criticises.'

If students have reached the stage where they have transformed their teacher into an enemy, this is often the immediate pretext for their visit to the student counsellor. If the school itself, or someone in the school, threatens to become your enemy, approaching a neutral figure in the school is perhaps the only option.

Students who leave a teacher after a few years often regard this as an act of *betrayal*. Although it is perfectly natural in the relationship between parents and children for children to eventually go their own way, students can feel trapped in the relationship with a teacher, who is also a role model and per-

33. 'A command cannot be discharged unilaterally: to resign you have to reach agreement with the person who gave the command.' (Ausloos 1999: 130)

34. 'Various defence mechanisms will help to justify this: denial of one's own suffering, rationalisation [...], displacement [...], idealisation [...], and more. And above all there is the mechanism of turning passive suffering into active behaviour. [...] It did me no harm, it prepared me for life, made me hard, taught me to grit my teeth.' (Miller 1979: 70)

haps wants to remain so. This type of situation often ends in a conflict that leaves a nasty taste in the mouths of both parties. By making their teacher an enemy, students do not have to feel guilty about abandoning him. You no longer have to show loyalty to an enemy. However, you do in fact need the other to help you make the break with him.³³

Another reason for making the teacher an enemy might lie in the student's incapacity to *look at himself*. The problem must be the fault of the environment; otherwise the students concerned feel that they themselves have failed badly. This sometimes affects other loyalties outside school that allow little movement. The following case suggests such a connection.

Veronica, a vocal studies student from Spain, lived with her mother in the Netherlands. Her mother had sacrificed everything for her daughter's career. Veronica was a perfectionist and had a fear of failure. The exposure of her doubts by an examination committee had led to a conflict with her teacher. Veronica had lost confidence in her teacher and felt that her talent was not sufficiently recognised. She contacted me because she wanted to change teachers

Negotiation is difficult once the other has been transformed into an enemy because the situation quickly leads to a win-lose situation, in which accusations and criticisms have to force a result. The following saying encapsulates a deeper wisdom: 'If you make people your enemies, you can only fight them'. The approach of 'making the other the enemy' usually leads to a search for a different teacher or a different school. A negative side effect of this solution is that the conflict leaves a bitter after taste from what is often a decisive period in a person's career. The fact that the teacher has actually given a lot often also leaves the student with a sense of guilt.

Demanding more of oneself

- 'I want people to think well of me.'
- 'That's not how I was brought up. We don't simply muddle through in our family.'
- 'I still feel guilty. Did I really do it well enough?'
- 'I always have to do everything perfectly.'
- 'I work too hard and take too little time to study in depth and let things sink in.'
- 'Everything has to be done quickly. I am impatient.'
- 'I set targets that are too high.'

By working harder, students can try to give back what they think the teacher or those around them expect. This can provide stimulation, but can also often be destructive.³⁴ In an extreme form, it can lead to *perfectionism*. We can only address the fear that the other will not accept what we have to offer by giving something when it is perfect, so that we do not face the risk of the other rejecting it and thus being confronted with the fact that we do not count if we only offer ourselves: 'the person' that we are.

Michel studied sonology and the previous year the stress he had suffered earlier in his life returned. In primary school Michel skipped a year, but later had to repeat a year. The negative thoughts had returned again because of the exams and the break-up of the relationship with his girlfriend. 'I can't do anything. I'm not good enough. I expect more from myself than they expect from me at home. I now feel I have to be brilliant. I know that I should grant other people their success, but I find it difficult. I feel the competition. I find it difficult to trust other people. They seem trustworthy, but often they are not. You have to be able to accept recognition, but I can't, not even from my parents. Parents always think their children are good.'

Making oneself more dependent

- 'My teacher is worried that I try too hard to please others.'
- 'I am going to be punished for making my own choices.'
- 'During performances, I always watch the expression on my teacher's face.'
- 'My mentor advised me to talk to you. I hope my teacher thinks it is a good idea.'
- 'I consult my teacher about everything, but I am also afraid of her.'
- 'I find it difficult to trust my current boyfriend, but I am afraid of being alone. I have always had a relationship. I am incomplete on my own.'

By treating teachers as essential for their development, students might get the idea that they have more control over the relationship. For the teacher, this behaviour could be seen as a form of recognition, which might make the pitfall even greater. The students often pay the price later, when they have left school and have to stand on their own two feet again. Interestingly, students can often refer to experiences of this type with their former teachers, but less easily with their current teacher. The possible parallels with earlier relationships – such as the relationship with parents – can play an important role in this.

Marianne played violin and had already changed teachers twice. Her new teacher had told her she was 'too dependent.' 'I feel she wants to have control, so I try to adapt. I find it difficult to trust a teacher.'
'My parents were divorced when I was 10. My father was never around and I blame him for that. It is not fair on the children. My mother helps enormously. She accompanies me on the piano during performances. Sometimes I think my mother finds it difficult to let me go.'

Ignoring situations that disrupt the ideal image

- 'I don't have the discipline to work. I am a procrastinator: putting things off and then working hard.'
- 'I avoid classmates and don't ask anyone for help. I should not need any help.'
- 'I panic at solfeggio and have therefore not been to any classes for a month.'
- 'If I've prepared something it has to work, and I want to show that, whatever the cost.'
- 'I don't want my parents to think badly of me. I want them to have a positive

impression of me, so I don't tell them what is happening to me now.'

- 'I didn't even hear the feedback from the committee, never mind discussing it with my teacher.'

One way of keeping the ideal image intact is to ignore or avoid negative information that interferes with it. I described this coping strategy earlier in the introduction. The student no longer goes to lessons or avoids taking a turn during group lessons. He avoids occasions where feedback is given, such as recital evenings [studio classes] and discussion of the examination committee's assessment with his teacher. In this way, the student's ideal image is not disturbed, but in the longer term major problems arise that cause the feared images to emerge as a *self-fulfilling prophecy*. Ultimately, through their coping behaviour students do precisely what they were so afraid of doing: they fall short of their expectations.

Sometimes the evasive behaviour takes the form of adopting a *double agenda*, where the other only receives the information that fits in with the ideal image. In this way hiding part of the information lightens the burden of being loyal. However, if the double agenda comes to light, the student will be accused of *untrustworthiness*, which will sometimes lead to embarrassing situations with the teachers or close friends who have been kept in the dark for so long.

Jos studied harpsichord and told me that he would have problems with the theory subjects at the end of the year. Jos always studied in an ad hoc fashion and had always been able to survive in that way. He had got through secondary school in the same way.
He finally talked to his wife and discovered that emotions played a role in his behaviour. 'It feels like weakness if I ask for help. I live in my own head and survive from day to day.' Jos decided to seek help from a psychologist outside the school.

Making excuses

- 'I was not able to do anything last year and then the doctor diagnosed Pfeiffer's disease. Now I can't manage again.'
- 'They think I am lazy, but they should know how badly I sleep.'
- 'I never get around to working. I always have something else that is more important at that moment.'
- 'With all the tension at home, no one could see that I had chronic fatigue syndrome.'
- 'I don't want them to have admitted me out of sympathy, but nobody here seems to be interested in finding out what is wrong with me.'
- 'Should I tell my teacher that I am dyslectic?'

By making excuses, students can hide their sense of falling short. In that case, they often use the mechanism of *power of the victim* mentioned earlier. At the same time, students find behaving like a victim repulsive. They do not want to receive a grade out of sympathy, where others had to work hard for it. Hesitating for a long time before accepting help can often be traced back to this phenomenon. Although

understandable, expressing pity is therefore often unhelpful with students who are struggling with a situation that makes them appear *weak* (i.e., pathetic). Physical (psychosomatic) complaints are often the only excuse that students will accept as a reason for submitting to the burden, and even then they will often retain intense feelings of guilt and failure.

Els studied singing and contacted me on the recommendation of her teacher. 'She feels that I should look at myself more closely and show more of myself.' 'What my teacher cannot see is that I don't feel well. I am absent-minded, feel nauseous, my intestines are playing up and I have heart palpitations. The doctor can find nothing wrong with me and has advised me to take things easier. I am now trying to sleep with earplugs and I'm taking homeopathic medicine.' 'I must not fail. My mother has cancer and consequently gets irritated quickly. She treats me like a child and I'm always scared of not meeting her standards or of also becoming sick.'

Devaluing others

- 'The standard of many Dutch students at this school is actually too low, but they are still given precedence in the projects.'
- 'I always dismiss the compliments I receive from other students in the group lessons. I also never give compliments.'
- 'Everyone is always so afraid of falling from their pedestal.'
- 'I am always very critical of others. I also have an enormous fear of failure.'
- 'I think that my final exam could be above average, but I can't get a note down on paper.'
- 'I do not hide my impatience because I have been placed in a group whose standard is too low.'
- 'I place myself above the others and therefore cannot admit to any weakness.'

By describing fellow students as inferior and by referring to their failings, students can make themselves feel less vulnerable. This is in fact the defence mechanism known in psychoanalysis as *narcissism*, in which a lack of reciprocity (the capacity for empathy) plays an important role (Vandereycken, Hoogduin & Emmelkamp 2000). In fact, students *compete* directly with their fellow students. The price that students pay for their critical attitude is that they can trust nobody in their immediate circle, and consequently develop a fear of failure in group lessons and on performance evenings – which are attended by fellow students. This sometimes makes it difficult for them to attend group lessons and to *receive* – in the form of feedback, compliments or support – from fellow students.

Rudolf was a German student of jazz guitar. He found the education in the Netherlands far too soft and also felt that the students at the conservatory spent all their time chatting in the canteen and going to sessions. He said: 'You either do it well or you don't do it at all.' He had a great deal of difficulty with the feedback from the examination committee saying he played too much from his intellect. He

felt that other students only studied half as hard as he did and got away with it. He felt that other students avoided him and was considering stopping.

Isolating oneself

- 'I am afraid of making mistakes. I retreat into myself and avoid others as far as possible. I also never had rows with my parents when I was a teenager.'
- 'I don't know if I am the person I would like to be. A person should not be dependent.'
- 'My parents are worried and want to know everything. A bad decision is unforgivable. I really want to try doing things for myself.'
- 'My father calls every evening, but I never tell him of fail grades.'
- 'I come from Russia and have no one to talk to. In fact, I never used to have anyone before either.'
- 'I used to be unhappy, but I did not tell my parents. I have to be perfect and nobody can help me in that.'
- 'If I'm too open I'm afraid I will say too much. I can't sleep, because then my feelings, the things that happened earlier, come to the fore...'

Students repeatedly mention that they have the feeling of being totally alone. They are fighting a lonely battle. They retreat within themselves and cut themselves off from the nourishment provided by others.³⁵ Remarkably, this initially makes students feel freer and stronger, like the main character in the film *Into the Wild*. They don't need anyone. The flight from meeting others leads to introversion. Some students even isolate themselves from themselves. They no longer feel anything. Their feelings are too closely linked to the pain of complex object relationships and, just as they freed themselves from those relationships, they can free themselves from the associated feelings. The negative side effect of this is that it sometimes doesn't work in situations where you have to be able to act on feelings – in making music, for example. In other cases, expressing feelings still seems to work when making music.

John, a student of piano from the US, seemed to be struggling badly with himself. 'I have no energy left. Nothing I do is good enough. I am always comparing myself and quickly feel others are treating me unfairly. I therefore have the tendency to isolate myself. I see my fellow students as little as possible. Because I am from abroad, I feel even more alone. If I am not practising, I feel I am nothing, a dirty beast. I increasingly have the feeling that I cannot keep all the balls in the air. I am very demanding of my girlfriend; I have no patience with her. She feels that I put too much pressure on her as regards her career.'

35. 'On the basis of Bowlby's theory, children with a safe attachment will be confident that others will support them if they are in need, sad or fearful. In this way, the individual builds a sense of self-worth and confidence in their ability to ease negative feelings and make them bearable.' (Govaerts 2007: 85)

John's mother is a piano teacher and was very strict. It emerged later that he had problems with technique because of his mother's lessons, but she could not acknowledge that. As a result, he had stopped playing for a while. 'I never practised at home. It took other people to tell my parents how

Control

- 'I work hard and try to plan everything: eating, studying, leisure. This worked fine at secondary school. Now the committee says that I think too much. That doesn't seem fair.'
- 'I have an enormous capacity to persevere and that will help me to squeeze through this exam.'
- 'I am not allowed to play for a month because I have strained my left hand.'
- 'I do not find improvisation to be a useful subject, as though there are no rules when performing.'
- 'My teacher says that I listen too much to my own voice and should let go more.'

One of the effects of the alarm reaction to stress (Selye 1974) is that the fight-or-flight response brings with it a need for something to hold on to, for control. The connection between (social) fear and the need for control is well known. Playing music implies being (more or less) in control of your instrument/voice, but at the same time daring to *trust* the automatic actions to do their job during the performance (see section 2), since that means our concentration can shift to more general areas of attention such as musical lines. Stress creates setbacks in the learning process, as it were, and controlling the details again becomes the most important tool, as it was in the initial phase of learning. This often works for the first eight bars of the music but then starts interfering.

Anna studied jazz vocals and came to see me because she had a solfeggio exam the following week and was very concerned about it. Her teacher had often said that she exercised too much control of her voice when she was singing. At various times, the teacher had also suggested that she should discuss it with the student counsellor, because she felt she was not getting through to Anna. The immediate reason for Anna's visit was her panic about the exam itself, however. During the meeting, she said things like: 'I am stubborn. I want to do it myself. I want to be the best and prove that I can do it.'

'My parents used to worry about me until it I was found to have dyslexia and started to receive extra help in primary school.'

7 Connecting actions

Seeking recourse elsewhere

Where reciprocity is missing from a relationship for an extended period – while the relationship is and must remain a close one – another phenomenon, in addition to the coping strategies mentioned earlier, occurs in the relationship. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy calls this *destructive entitlement* (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner 1994: 66). Not being sufficiently seen, being placed under an obligation, feels unjust and gives the victim the 'entitlement' to take back what he or she feels is owed. Loyalty to the person in the relationship (for example, the parent) often prevents one from settling scores directly with that person, so victims *seek recourse elsewhere*, making the person concerned an *object* in the process. This 'sense of entitlement' is reflected in the fact that the person seeking recourse elsewhere usually feels no guilt about doing so. A feeling of being trapped at home often causes children to start bullying at school, for example. If, years later, they are asked what they did, they often no longer even recall what happened. If adults seek recourse elsewhere, they often do so in relationships that easily allow a new form of unfairness: with the partner, their own children or persons who are in a dependent position (Miller 1979; Bowlby 1988). In this situation, a *victim* in an earlier relationship often becomes the *perpetrator* (the one who causes the unfairness) in new relationships. Boszormenyi-Nagy refers to this as the *revolving state*.

Students also seek recourse elsewhere for unfairness in earlier relationships, for example in their family. My experience as a student counsellor is that the revolving state often plays a role in the behaviour of students who make the other (a fellow student, a teacher) an enemy or adopt a harsh attitude towards that other. Teachers can also seek recourse from their students (see also section 3). Recognising destructive entitlement in oneself can produce a breakthrough in this pattern of dealings with the other.

The phenomenon of destructive entitlement plays an interesting role in artistic expression. In the introduction, I mentioned the connection between pathology and art, and the fact that art can be a safe expression of pain. Artists are able to conduct a dialogue with the other through their art; Buber (1958: 9) refers to the actual meeting with the other via the work of art. Along with this the artist also has the opportunity to express his or her destructive entitlement.³⁶ In fact, this often gives greater depth to the work of art. However, in the process, the viewer is transformed to some

extent into an object. In the book *Breakfast with Lucian*, Geordie Greig (2013) portrays the destructive life of Lucian Freud, whose nudes are raw and confrontational, 'I am really interested in them as animals' (Greig 2013: 177). But at the same time, one of his sitters notes that 'paint' was also 'pain' for Lucian (Greig 2013: 143). Lucian often sees and treats his sitters as objects, but they also meet his need for a genuine meeting in the form of a – usually brief – relationship. Lucian's own children knew how they could get him to see them: 'His children were hungry

36. 'Ingmar Bergman, however, had other possibilities, apart from projection and denial, for dealing with his suffering – he could make films. It is conceivable that we, as the movie audience, have to endure those feelings that he, the son of such a father, could not express overtly but nevertheless carried within himself.' (Miller 1979: 72)

for his attention. Sitting for him was really the only guarantee of seeing him' (Greig 2013: 184).

There are plenty of examples in pop music where destructive entitlement was also a source of inspiration, sometimes being presented to the public directly in the form of literal destructiveness. Examples from the pop music world include the *auto-destructive art* of The Who (following the example of Gustav Metzger). The Who's guitarist, Pete Townshend, believes he was abused as a child (Townshend 2012), which might be connected with his destructive acts on stage. His rock opera, *Tommy*, however, is simultaneously another expression of *saying what could not be said*. The example of Amy Winehouse illustrates how the destructive gradually makes a genuine meeting impossible. She focused the destructive on herself. In a certain sense, Winehouse's early death prevented a phenomenon that already seemed to be occurring around her; the manner of her presentation in her later performances made many of her fans conscious of the fact that they were being made objects, eventually causing them to lose interest and abandon her. Shortly before her death, some of Winehouse's fans vented their disappointment on YouTube.

There are also numerous examples in the jazz world. The destructive life of alto saxophonist Charlie Parker – including a life full of object relationships – was described in detail in *Bird lives* by Ross Russel (1976). Jackie McLean, who had a heroin addiction for a long time, said, 'The music became a way to be both beautiful and angry at the same time' (Freeman 1985). McLean is a person who illustrates yet another possible effect in this respect. In wanting to copy a celebrated model (in his case, Charlie Parker), the associated destructiveness (the addiction) might also be copied. The remark, 'To play like Bird, you had to go by Bird' (Russel 1976: 285), expressed a view that was common in the jazz world in the 1950s. The fact that Charlie Parker was eventually no longer allowed to perform in Birdland, the club named after him (Russel 1976: 332), also shows the gradual transition of loyal fans who eventually give up because they feel they have been turned into objects.

The phenomenon is less evident in the world of classical music because classical music leaves less room for direct destructive expression. Perhaps composers are an exception to this, but even conductors and performing musicians often struggle at some point with destructive entitlement that interferes with their career. Articles and biographies about individuals such as Carlos Kleiber (Sachs 2004) and Maksim Vengerov (Clark 2012) suggest they do. In an article entitled *Drugs and musical performance* (West 2004), a connection is made between the use of stimulants like alcohol, caffeine and nicotine, but also anti-depressants, beta-blockers and narcotics, and the stress the profession of performing musician brings with it. In the conclusion (West 2004: 285), the role that psychiatric problems can play in this regard is mentioned. I myself would like to add – as a cause of the destructive use of drugs mentioned in the article – the expression of destructive entitlement.

37. 'The situation is similar in regard to creativity. Here the prerequisite is the work of mourning [...] and many artists believe that analysis (the mother) would 'take away' their creativity.' (Miller 1979: 101)

38. 'I was sixteen and angry at the world. My father had divorced my mother three years before and had blamed me for it. I had difficulty accepting my stepmother as my second mother. I had to repeat the second year of secondary school and was expelled from three schools. I ran away from home to live in a squat in the center of The Hague and the year before I had spent three months in prison for attempted manslaughter of a police officer during the riots to protest against the cost of the renovation of Queen Beatrix's palace, Huis ten Bosch.' (Kousbroek 2013: 20)

This all raises the question of whether it is not a necessary evil that artists are *damaged* individuals. Must the most talented students also have built up destructive entitlement through complicated object relationships during their lives in order to have a source of inspiration? Another question that follows automatically from that is: who am I as a student counsellor to deprive them of that source of inspiration?³⁷ This question is especially relevant because for several years I have also been a student counsellor of the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. As I have discussed briefly above, with visual artists the possible destructive element is less hindered by the medium of their work. I have no clear answer to the question of whether it is a necessary evil for artists to be damaged individuals. Nor can I say whether, and if so how, destructive entitlement should be a source of inspiration for art. I feel it is important to recall in this context that with students who get stuck, it is generally the *side effect of their coping behaviour* that interferes in their development rather than the expression of destructive entitlement in their art. To me, therefore, it is essential for the *control* always to remain with the *student*. It is the student who is stuck and wants to do something to become unstuck. I am, however, convinced that recognising and improving one's ability to cope with destructive entitlement can help in finding a better balance as a person and, in that way, being able to continue one's (artistic) development.

Speaking the unspeakable

As already mentioned, the insights discussed in this study often give the student an extra option, namely the position of the adult; the person who can observe and reflect, the person who can relate to the other by expressing himself and give expression to who he is. In this way, students may be able to *recognise previously acquired destructive entitlement* and accept that this plays a role in their current adult life. They can then go a step further and decide to surmount their destructive entitlement and decide to *say what was previously unspeakable*. Their artistic talent allows them to say what could previously not be said through music or image. The recently published graphic novel *Kousboek* by Gabriel Kousbroek (2013) illustrates how being able to give words (and images) to his accumulated destructive entitlement helped him to bear the pain of the past with his parents and come to terms with himself.³⁸ The adult in him allowed him to decide that he did not want revenge on his parents but that he could speak freely: 'That was what I longed for, a compliment from him [his father]', Gabriel mentioned in a review in a Dutch news paper (Rijghard 2013).

Relinquishing the obligation

The *insight* of being able to adopt the adult position that is in contact with, and can give expression to the two aspects of the child in them – the inner core and the necessary coping strategies –, provides a release for students and gives them a better understanding of themselves and their context. They often find that they deserve recognition for more reasons than they had previously believed. Shame is replaced by acceptance. They can 'relinquish the obligation.'

- 'I must take better care of myself. I am actually quite lonely.'

- 'I notice that I have always tried to be a person without any problems.'
- 'I have written down my thoughts so that I can calmly read them through.'
- 'By looking at the pain of being bullied, I can also feel again.'
- 'I only realise now how much effort I have always made, which also deserves respect from myself.'
- 'I have decided to stop for six months in order to work on myself.'

This change usually leads to *action*: the student emerges from the isolation he has adopted as a survival mechanism – sometimes for years. Where it interferes with his life, the student can try to abandon his destructive entitlement and look for more fairness in his current relationships.³⁹ He can finally summon up the courage to seek help outside school or talk to his teacher. Because he can relinquish the obligation and come more to terms with himself, his artistic expressiveness can grow.

- 'I am going to seek help outside school.'
- 'I am going to discuss instead of criticising.'
- 'I would like a meeting of the three of us (with the teacher).'
- 'I am going to discuss that I can't cope with the rehearsal at the moment.'
- 'I am going to choose the people I can really trust and ask them for help.'
- 'I have written down my plans and will discuss them with my teacher.'
- 'I am going to take my turn in the group lesson.'
- 'I am going to consult my teacher about stopping for a while.'
- 'I have to talk to my husband about his addiction.'
- 'I am going to try to stop wanting to convince my audience, but keep things close to myself.'

The student might also decide to engage in a *dialogue* with those originally responsible for the unfairness, for example the *parents*. In that case, it is important for the student to abandon his former method of displaying loyalty in order to try to achieve more fairness from a better bargaining position, which will permit a more adult form of loyalty. Accusations, reproaches or reprisals are obstacles to the dialogue. If the dialogue works, it will often produce *recognition* of the fact that being loyal was also sometimes a burden.

- 'I am going to ask my mother whether she feels I am doing well.'
- 'I have written a letter to my parents. I'm trying to decide whether to send it.'
- 'I have thanked my divorced parents for coming to my recital together.'
- 'I told my father when he visited that I cannot reach him.'
- 'I am going to tell my parents that I want to leave home.'
- 'My mother would like to accompany me to the meeting.'
- 'My mother has told me what is wrong with her.'
- 'I would like to meet my biological father.'

What can the teacher do?

The unique nature of the close one-to-one relationship with their students gives the main subject teacher a number of possibilities that are not available to the student counsellor or

39. 'Once the process has started he begins to see the old images (models) for what they are, the not unreasonable products of his past experiences or of what he has repeatedly been told, and thus feel free to imagine alternatives better fitted to his current life. By these means the therapist hopes to enable his patient to cease being a slave to old and unconscious stereotypes and to feel, and to act in new ways.' (Bowley 1988: 158)

anyone else who is less close to them. A number of the potential pitfalls that automatically arise for someone in that position could perhaps be avoided with the help of the insights and strategies mentioned in this paper. I will list a few possibilities for the teacher here.

Didactic strategies

Teachers can help by employing didactic strategies that help their students to be reflective (take an adult position). On this point, also see the chapter 'Reciprocity: The two studies combined'.

- Be clear about what is expected from the student.
- As well as rewarding the results, give recognition for the effort or the process.
- Focus on the benefits rather than on shortcomings.
- Emphasise feedback rather than judgment.

Insight and reflection

Teachers can foster an awareness of aspects such as loyalty, transference and countertransference in the relationship with their students. These insights could help them to be more reflective about what is happening in the teacher-student relationship.

- Try to consciously mention any irritations and other emotions that could lead to censure of the student and then explore what needs to be done to eliminate them.
- Try not to see things like evasiveness or stubbornness as negligence or hostility towards yourself personally, but as a coping strategy that suggests that loyalty is also a burden for the student.
- Consult with others (such as colleagues). A teacher can also sometimes experience teaching as a lonely struggle. Talk to others who are reliable and invite them to express their emotions; intervision can produce tips for dealing with irritations or delicate issues.

Investing in reciprocity

Teachers can actively invest in reciprocity in the relationship with their students. On this point, also see the chapter entitled 'Reciprocity: The two studies combined'.

- Invite students to put forward their interests for discussion.
- Leave room to experiment.
- Try to be reliable and transparent, which does not mean being guided by pity. Students do not want to be tolerated out of pity (as a victim). They do not see that as a virtue.
- Offer recognition besides expertise or advice. Of course, the teacher is an expert, but this expertise also emphasises the power relationship, in which advice seems the most obvious way of helping.
- Pursue a dialogue, a genuine willingness to meet the student, accompanied by

an initial lack of comprehension and a desire to understand. This overlaps with educational subjects like differentiation in teaching, which is very much in vogue at the moment. With the one-to-one relationship, the teaching at the conservatory provides additional opportunities to meet the individual learning needs of the student. Taking the subject of learning styles⁴⁰ as an example, we often see that a teacher's personal learning style is also his or her teaching style. Teachers often use their personal experience to help the student, projecting their own method of working onto the student. Sometimes the student has a different learning style but will usually not attempt to discuss it with the teacher. Students feel they are seen if the teacher is willing to accommodate them in the way they learn. Asking questions (showing interest) and conducting a dialogue do help in this.

40. According to Kolb (1984), everyone has a favourite method of learning new things, which means that everyone wants to choose his or her own point of departure in the various steps in the circle of experience – observation – analysis – experimentation (which in turn yields a new experience). Moreover, not everyone devotes the same level of attention to the different steps. Accordingly, he arrives at the following learning styles: dreamer, thinker, decider, doer, in which the learning style is always a combination of two successive steps in the circle.

Conclusion

First, I hope that this study has provided a clear impression of how I work as a student counsellor. Being able to help students by inviting them to express their doubts, thoughts, concerns, fears, feelings of guilt, irritation, anger, happiness is gratifying work. If in this way I can help overcome stagnation in the student's personal and artistic development, it gives me a great sense of satisfaction. Naturally, the possibilities at my disposal within my mandate as a student counsellor are limited. Besides that I want to stress that this is not the only method of counselling. I have tried to present an element that in my view deserves more attention: the effect on the student's *identity* and *self-confidence* of being in a *relationship*.

My paper is also a plea for good counselling for students who are challenged to stretch themselves to their limits. In that context, stress is not a sign that there is something wrong with the programme, but an indicator of the imbalance between the challenge and the possibly destructive effect of the context that causes stress. I am not so keen on the word *coaching* in this context: the analogy with the world of sport is too tenuous in that respect. In my view, athletic performance is focused too much on narrowing what is to be measured in order to turn it into a win-lose game. Naturally, there are also competitions in the music world, but for me the elements *displaying oneself* and *connecting* via music are difficult to reconcile with the term *contest*. At the same time, I am aware that competition is a reality that students have to contend with.

This paper might give the impression that the path that students have chosen by studying at a conservatory is complex and is asking for problems. This is partially true, but in my view it is negligible compared with the fact that, in the world of the conservatory, the student and teacher dare to take up the challenge of working together on the student's artistic development. It is, after all, a development in which both the student and the teacher can be confronted with themselves. This takes *courage*!

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The teacher-student relationship in one-to-one tuition

Gerda van Zelm

Introduction

Music education has a long and cherished tradition of one-to-one tuition in the main subject for instrumentalists, vocalists and composers. At the beginning of their studies, the student and teacher enter into a partnership aimed at developing the student's musical and artistic skills. The survey described below was conducted in 2013 to assess how teachers and students at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague felt about their cooperation during the one-to-one lessons. What factors are important for the success of the relationship between the teacher and the student and what are the features of such a relationship? Which aspects of the teacher-student relationship enhance the cooperation and the results it produces? What do students and teachers expect from one another? What are the pitfalls that could affect the cooperation? The following remark by a student in response to the survey illustrates the positive effects that can ensue from a good student-teacher relationship.

...My teacher has a very good balance between professionalism and communication or attitude with the students which makes me feel open to experiment without fear of mistakes, and be positive and patient during lessons and study sessions. I feel that the teaching of my teacher has a huge impact on my improvement, but also feel more able to solve technical and musical problems on my own, by following advices from my teacher and adapt them to new repertoire.

This study was carried out by means of a survey of all the main subject teachers and students who took part in one-to-one tuition. Before discussing the findings from the survey, I will briefly refer to a number of earlier studies carried out in this field. That is followed by a description of the content and the methodology of the survey, together with an account of the responses. Finally, I will present some conclusions and make a number of recommendations for further improvements that might be made in the individual lessons in the main subject at the Royal Conservatoire.

Background and objectives

Various researchers have explored the subject of one-to-one tuition in the last few decades. In her study of instrumental education, Susan Hallam (1998) advocated a student-centred method of teaching:

'Most of the evidence indicates that instrumental teachers operate within models of teaching which are at the teacher controlled end of the continuum. There is some evidence that pupils enjoy their lessons more and progress more quickly if they are given more control in their lessons.' (Hallam 1998: 246)

According to Hallam, if students have more control over their own learning process, they will assume greater responsibility and their performance will improve. This does not mean that students should determine the progress and the content of

the lessons (since they do not have sufficient expertise), but it does mean that the teacher's approach should be to seek the student's views and opinions. To increase the involvement of their students, teachers could:

- Consult the students about what should be learned, and how and when;
- Ask questions about how the students have progressed with their studies: what went well and what they found difficult;
- Involve students in decisions about exams and public performances;
- Listen to their views;
- Try not to make all the decision themselves. (Hallam 1998: 248)

In an article entitled 'Student Learning in Higher Instrumental Education: Who is Responsible?' Harald Jørgensen (2000) asked the question of who is responsible for what students learn in higher music education.

'The issue of students having influence and responsibility over their instrumental learning is a complex question. Based on research, this article discusses three questions. First, the relationship between teachers and students in instrumental lessons; second, the role of the students as practitioners: how independent and responsible their practice behaviour is; third, an institution's role in students' learning. Both teachers and students work in an educational institution. The institutional responsibility for students' learning is the most neglected area of students' learning generally.' (Jørgensen 2000: 67)

Jørgensen's observation that the educational institution also plays a role is noteworthy. Jørgensen argues that the results of education, such as independence and responsibility, should not be seen as individual goals of teachers and students, but as official goals laid down by the institution itself. According to Jørgensen, many educational institutions ignore their responsibility for students' development as independent, learning musicians. He recommends that educational institutions should remain conscious of their core values and act accordingly.

Carole Presland (2005) conducted a study based on interviews with 12 piano students at an English music academy. She reached the following conclusions:

- Every relationship between teacher and student is unique. Students also differ in the extent to which they seek practical support or personal commitment from their teachers.
- The music academy concerned devoted a lot of time and attention to creating good matches between teachers and students, taking into account factors such as the students' technical skills, musical development, independence, age, nationality, proficiency in languages and personality. This led to a high degree of satisfaction among the students about their relationship with the teacher of their main subject.
- In the absence of the teacher – the teachers in this case were guest lecturers - greater use can be made of video recordings of concerts that can later be discussed with the student.
- Students said they were interested in collaboration with their fellow students, in

the form of both group lessons and peer assessment.

- In contrast to what the researcher expected, some students had no problem at all with the fact that their teacher was often unable to attend public performances. They felt it was liberating.

Students also said that the disadvantages of working with a guest lecturer (frequent absence, not living close to the conservatory) were more than outweighed by the benefits (a feeling of independence in both musical and personal terms). (Presland 2008: 245-47)

Helena Gaunt (Gaunt 2008, 2009) conducted a survey among 20 teachers and 20 students at an institution of higher music education in the UK. In the article 'Understanding the One-to-One Relationship in Instrumental/Vocal Tuition in Higher Education: Comparing Student and Teacher Perceptions' (2011: 162), she wrote:

'The appeal for both students and teachers of the one-to-one student-teacher relationship in music is easy to appreciate, and may be perceived [...] as having a certain mystique. It is clear, however, that such relationships have the potential to generate particular tensions, for example in establishing where the responsibility for the success of a student lies [...] and in nurturing the student towards artistic and professional autonomy. Over-dependence on both sides is a risk, and may result, for example, in a reluctance of students to value other relationships and interactions as significant.'

Gaunt stresses the importance of the quality of the one-to-one relationship between teacher and student, arguing that in such a relationship the student's progression to professional and artistic autonomy can be impaired if the teacher assumes too much responsibility or if the mutual dependency of teacher and student is too great.

Methodology of the study

The present study was carried out in the form of a survey of all the students and teachers that take part in individual lessons in the main subject. The survey encompassed four departments: Classical Music, Early Music, Jazz and Composition. The printed questionnaire was left in the mailboxes of the teachers and the students. On request, the respondents could also receive and complete the survey by email. In a covering letter, the purpose of the study was explained and the respondents were assured of anonymity when the results were being processed. The questions in the survey were designed to generate information about the intentions, experiences and expectations of teachers and students in relation to the individual lessons in the main subject. Accordingly, no information was gathered about what actually happens during in a lesson, since that would require observing and analysing lessons, something that has been done in other studies (Koopman et al. 2007). The questions in the survey were based, among other things, on an internal document entitled *KC-competent*, which was produced by *The teacher of the 21st century* research programme at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague in May 2005 (Deneer and Smit 2005). That document described the competences regarded as necessary for teachers of main subjects at the Royal Conservatoire. It described

four main roles of the main subject teachers: the teacher as specialist, pedagogue, organiser and inspirer.

The survey was distributed to 491 students and 114 teachers. The questionnaire took the form of a series of propositions, to which the respondents could say whether they agreed or disagreed with them or whether or not they applied to them on a five-point scale. There were separate forms for teachers and students, but both the teachers and the students were asked the same questions, adapted to their respective perspectives. For example:

Table 1

	Teachers form	Students form
3.2	The course of the lesson is determined by the questions the student brings to the lesson.	The course of the lesson is determined by the questions I bring to the lesson.
7.3	As teacher, I feel a great responsibility for my students' development.	I think that my teacher feels responsible for my development.

Results of the survey

In the following sections, the main results for each element of the survey are described, together with appropriate comments and interpretation. Each element is introduced with a paragraph explaining the focus of the specific question. An initial remark that needs to be made is that the students' responses were generally from the perspective of a single teacher, while the teachers' responses encompassed a number of students. The responses of the teachers are also based on years of teaching experience, while the students' responses are usually based exclusively on their current studies at the conservatory. Consequently, the responses by the teachers will more often have contained a 'sometime yes, sometimes no' element and have been more general. The students had only to express their own opinions in their responses. This affects the results of the survey. The teachers and students who completed the questionnaire are not necessarily teachers and students who work together, which could also have affected the findings.

One can find the complete results of the survey on the website of the Royal Conservatoire: www.koncon.nl/en/Research/

1. General information

General information: age, instrument, department, year of study or number of years of experience in teaching, nationality, type of appointment (teachers).

The response rate to the survey was generally quite low. Of the 605 questionnaires that were distributed, 115 were returned (see table 2 and table 3). The highest response rate was among both teachers and students of the early music and classical music departments. Interestingly, not a single teacher in the jazz department completed the survey,⁴¹ while the response rate was also low among students of composition and jazz. This has to be borne in mind in interpreting the data and the conclusions and recommendations.

Table 2.

Students	Distributed	Completed
Composition	37	2 (5.4%)
Classical	241	52 (21.5%)
Jazz	87	9 (10.3%)
Early music	136	22 (16.1%)
Total	491	85 (17.3)

Table 3

Teachers	Distributed	Completed
Composition	8	1 (12.5%)
Classical	56	15 (26.7%)
Jazz	16	0 (0%)
Early music	34	11 (32.3%)
Multiple departments		3
Total	114	30 (26.4%)

The vast majority of the participating teachers had more than 20 years of teaching experience. The questionnaire was completed mainly by teachers with a permanent contract. Among the students, the response rate was highest in the third and fourth year of the Bachelor programme and the first year of the Master programme.

41. One questionnaire was in fact completed by a teacher in the Jazz department, but it was returned so long after the deadline that it could not be included in the processing of the data.

2. Pairing of teacher and student

How are the teacher and student paired? For example, do the students take trial lessons to assure themselves that they will be able to get on well with the teacher? Do teachers have any influence over which students will be studying with them?

The respondents were asked to give the reasons why a student chooses a particular course at the Royal Conservatoire or opts for a particular teacher. There was a noticeable discrepancy between the responses of the teachers and those of the students. Teachers agreed significantly more often with the propositions presented to them than the students. More teachers than students believe that students base their choice of teacher and institution on the teacher's reputation as a musician or teacher or the reputation of the Royal Conservatoire or of a department within the institution. There are possibly also other reasons why students choose for the Royal Conservatoire or a particular teacher.

In reply to the question of whether students took trial lessons before choosing a school in order to assess the chemistry between themselves and the envisaged teacher, 51% of the students said they had not worked with the envisaged teacher before the course began, while 15% of the students actually said they regarded the question as inapplicable. Elsewhere in the survey, respondents were asked about the importance of a good chemistry between teacher and student (proposition 7.1). The responses to that proposition show that both students and teachers regard it as very important. You might therefore expect a larger number of students to take trial lessons to learn more about their future teacher. This raises the question of whether students are aware of the possibility of taking trial lessons.

Asked about the extent to which they can decide for themselves which students they will work with, 47% of the teachers replied positively and 43% neutrally, which could suggest that sometimes they can and sometimes they can't. In many cases, the pairing of students to teachers is partly a question of consultation with the management of the department, and the kind of contract of the teacher (expressed in FTE) will ultimately also be a factor. Whether and, if so to what extent, substantive considerations play a role was not clear from this study, but that might be a subject that deserves attention in designing entrance exams.

3. Content of the main subject lessons

Who determines the content of the lesson? How is the course of the lesson determined, for example? Are other subjects covered that are important for the student's development? Are students encouraged to take part in projects and is that discussed during the lesson? Are students encouraged to bring recordings of their work to the lesson to discuss them with the teacher?

As regards the frequency of lessons in the main subject, more students (92%) than teachers (77%) said they have a weekly lesson in the main subject. The discrepancy

in the replies can be explained by the fact that a relatively large number of teachers in the early music department completed the survey. Teachers in that department are usually guest lecturers who give regular lessons at the Royal Conservatoire in their area of specialisation, but often not every week. One of the teachers wrote:

Teaching adults coming here after a diploma in modern violin is not the same as teaching to young people: they don't need a lesson each week, and my students play concerts in order to be able to pay their studies here. So that I work with people between 20 - 35 years old who come from all around the world bringing as many different experiences and I try to provide them with a background - both cultural, technical and musical - in the field of XVII-XVIII century music.

There is considerable similarity in the perceptions of the students and teachers in the responses to the proposition 'The course of the lesson is determined by the questions I bring to the lesson' or 'The course of the lesson is determined by the questions the student brings to the lesson'. The proposition was applicable to them, according to 43% of the teachers and 45% of the students. At the same time, this means that more than 50% of the teachers and the students do not feel that the students' questions determine the course of the lesson. Fifty percent of the teachers gave a neutral response to this proposition, which could be due to the fact that they are talking about a group of students. Students (77%) feel more strongly than teachers (50%) that the pieces of music they are studying form the basis of the lesson, which raises the question of what resources the teacher uses to give the student more control over and responsibility for his learning process.

Forty-three percent of the teachers confirmed that it is the teacher who decides what subjects to cover in the lesson, while 50% gave a neutral response. Among the students, 34% replied that it is the teacher who decides, 32% gave a neutral response and 29% replied that it was not the teacher. All things considered, there is no clear outcome! The question is whether teachers and students think in these terms; in other words, to what extent are the subjects to be covered expressly mentioned.

On the question of whether students' experiences during participation in projects, master classes, internships, etc. were discussed during the lesson, 97% of teachers said they were, but only 69% of students, i.e. significantly fewer. It is possible that the teachers do generally discuss students' experiences outside the lesson with their group of students as a whole, but that the individual student does not feel this is the case to the same extent. Another possibility is that although the teacher intends to discuss the students' experiences, in practice he does so less often than he believes or does so in such a way that his efforts are not recognised by the student.

The replies to the proposition 'My teacher encourages me to select my own repertoire within a particular style' (70%) and 'I encourage my students to choose their repertoire within a particular style' (80%) were fairly similar, although slightly more students said they were not encouraged to choose their own repertoire. Once

again, the question is whether the teacher makes his intentions sufficiently clear or puts them into practice. Another question is whether the students are given sufficient resources to choose their own repertoire.

The majority of teachers (83%) were convinced that public performances are prepared during lessons. There is obviously a difference in perception, because far fewer students felt this was the case (55%). Twenty-seven percent of the students also said their teacher seldom if ever attended when they performed in public, and the responses suggested that audio and video recordings of concerts at school or elsewhere do not really play a major role in the main subject lessons. Since the course is geared to performing for the public and the final exam is structured accordingly, that gives pause for thought: What are the skills needed to perform before an audience? Do teachers and students think the same way about it? Is explicit attention devoted to how students feel when they appear on stage during the lesson? Are public presentations evaluated afterwards during the lesson and does such an evaluation form the point of departure for further development? Finally, is the individual lesson the most suitable method for developing and training all skills needed for public appearances?

The difference in the responses to the proposition that 'The teacher discusses my options in the (changing) professional practice with me' were striking. Only 41% of students said that their teacher discussed their options with them, compared with 93% of the teachers. This raises various questions: Is the teacher explicit enough? What tools does the teacher use to develop the students' insight into professional practice and their possibilities in it? Do the students recognise that their identity as a musician is connected with their prospects in professional practice?

There was quite a difference between the responses of the teachers and students to the question concerning the influence of what is taught in elective subjects such as *Effective studying*, *Practising in Flow* and *Alexander Technique* on students' performance. More teachers (57%) than students (28%) confirmed that influence. Similarly, 63% of teachers felt that they made the link with what was taught in theory lessons, but only 27% of the students confirmed this. It is legitimate to ask how explicit the teacher is, or should be, to make that link clear to the student. A possible factor is that the students are so focussed on their instrument when they come to the main subject lessons that they do not look beyond the moment. It is also possible that although teachers intend to cover these aspects in the main subject lesson, they do so less than they believe, or in a manner that the student does not really recognise.

More teachers than students (85% compared with 45%) answered the question of whether the teacher of Master's degree students was aware of the subject of the student's Master's research project and whether they tailored their main subject lessons to it in the affirmative. From the positive replies by the teachers, it can, in any case, be concluded that their intention is to remain aware of their students' research. The question therefore is how they demonstrate their interest and make the link with the research in practice.

Eighty percent of the teachers said they wanted to follow the various learning styles of their students. Students were more neutral in their replies to this question (65% said the teacher did so). It is possible that students are less aware of what is meant by learning style or have not really thought about what their personal learning style is. Another possibility is that students do not notice if the teacher consciously chooses different teaching styles for different students, since a student generally does not see the teacher working with other students. It is also possible that teachers do try to adapt to the different learning styles of students, but in practice do so less than they believe.

Sixty-eight percent of the teachers said they used contacts in the music world to help their students find work. This was confirmed by 30% of the students. A possible factor in the replies to this question is the very fact that students are still students, while the teachers perhaps based their answers on their experiences with students who have already graduated. One student had a very outspoken opinion on this point, which reflects major expectations of the teacher and of the relevant department.

I feel that (especially in Early Music) it is the teachers' role to ensure there are adequate work opportunities. By this I mean advising on people to contact, and especially recommending you to people for work. I think this is one of the only ways historical wind players get professional orchestral work, which is so rarely auditioned for. This can be done more, it seems, by EM department.

4. Opinions and comments on the individual lesson in the main subject 1

Opinions of students and teachers about what is important in the main subject lesson (for example what the result of a lesson should be), about group lessons and about the student's personal input in the lesson.

The majority of students and teachers feel that in the lessons the learning process is more important than the result. But 18% of the students said that their teacher disagreed and they might therefore feel under pressure to perform during a lesson. An equally large number of students (not necessarily the same ones) said that for them the value of a lesson did not depend on whether they performed optimally. More teachers (93%) than students (66%) agreed with the proposition that students learn different things in group lessons than in the individual lessons.

Teachers and students both seem certain that during the lesson students learn how to study at home. The question that remains unanswered is how the teacher verifies this. Koopman et. al. (2007) explored this subject. The conclusion of that study was that while students generally know what they should do, they often do not know how to go about it.

Students did not always seem certain in their responses to the proposition that they make most progress if they can decide for themselves what they wish to learn or have to learn. More teachers (68%) than students (53%) endorsed this proposi-

tion. It is possible that students rely on the teacher's expertise and perhaps find it difficult to assume responsibility for what they have to learn. In this respect, the challenge for the teachers is to persuade the student to accept co-ownership of the learning process.

A small majority of teachers (51%) agree with the proposition that students can learn a lot by giving lessons themselves, although a large number (39%) were 'neutral' in their reply to it. At the same time, only 31% of the students said they were encouraged by their teacher to teach. These are noteworthy figures, since it is often assumed that a good way of gaining an understanding of something is to explain it to someone else.

5. Opinions and comments on the individual lesson in the main subject 2

Statements about the position of the student in the main subject lesson, such as personal initiative on the part of the student, learning on the part of the teacher, group lessons.

The need for a weekly lesson in the main subject was endorsed by 74% of the teachers and 85% of the students. While the outcomes are close, the difference could suggest that students feel more dependent than the teacher feels is necessary. Group lessons - in addition to individual lessons - are regarded as valuable by 94% of the teachers and 83% of the students. Shared enthusiasm for the profession is important for both teachers (97%) and students (95%).

The teachers were presented with the proposition, 'I find it important for the student to learn to take the initiative during the lesson'. The proposition for the students was, 'I find it important to be encouraged to take the initiative during the lesson'. Teachers (97%) and students (85%) responded positively to these propositions. Teachers appreciate it when their students show initiative and students want to be encouraged to take the initiative. Explicit encouragement by the teacher makes it clear to the student what is expected of him and gives him resources and a 'green light' to take the initiative.

All of the teachers said that teaching students to make their own musical choices was an important aspect of their lessons. Many students confirmed this, although 18% disagreed with the proposition. It is possible that students do not recognise the freedom they are being offered in this regard, but it is also possible that teachers need to be more explicit in encouraging students to make their own musical choices.

Teachers do not unanimously agree with the proposition that a lesson is not a good one if they do not learn something themselves during it: 35% were neutral, 25% disagreed with it. A majority of students (88%) agreed with the proposition that both the teacher and the student will learn something from a good lesson. This is a noteworthy finding. Apparently, students are pleased if they feel that their teacher is open to new insights and ideas.

6. Mutual expectations

What do the teacher and student expect from each other in terms of general (musical) development, taking part in projects, learning to study or to organise the working week, working with other main instrument teachers?

The majority of teachers (94%) said they felt students themselves are personally responsible for broadening their artistic and musical horizons, while 75% of students said they expect to be encouraged by teachers to broaden their horizons. The teacher can play an active role in this process by referring students to recordings, concerts, literature and developments in the arts. All of the teachers consider participation by their students in projects, internships and concerts to be important, and 80% of the students said they received sufficient encouragement from their teacher to take part in projects, etc.

Some teachers and students (fewer than 50%) consider working with more than one main subject teacher to be a way of enabling the student to develop greater independence. In that context, it is noticeable that elsewhere in the survey (see no. 10) 70% of the teachers said that it can be useful for students to work with one or more other teachers of the main subject. As regards learning to organise the working week, 55% of the teachers said they helped their students to do so, while 64% of the students said they could ask their teachers for advice about it.

7. Teacher-student relationship

How important do teachers and students consider a good relationship to be for the results of their work? For example, how important do they regard a relationship of trust? Who is responsible for what? What scope do students have to do things their own way? What if the student wants to switch to a different teacher?

The majority of teachers (77%) and students (82%) disagree with the proposition that a good chemistry between teacher and student has no effect on the results that can ultimately be achieved. All of the teachers said they feel a great sense of responsibility for their students' development and 76% of the students recognise this sense of responsibility in their teachers. This could also have the effect of making a teacher feel responsible if a student fails, which could put pressure on the relationship. Teachers (97%) feel it is important to give students room to do things in their own way and students (80%) appreciate the room they are given.

Great importance is attached to the existence of trust in the relationship between teacher and student by both teachers (94%) and students (99%). At the same time, some teachers find it difficult to be honest with their student if their development is not proceeding according to expectations (29% agree, 45% neutral). However, 99% of the students said they greatly value honesty in the teacher's assessment of their progress, even if it is not proceeding as expected. The majority of students (65%) therefore have no problem if their teacher is also their assessor during tests

and exams. However, 15% of the students said it was difficult to completely trust a teacher who is also their assessor and 33% of teachers believe that the relationship of trust could be undermined if they were also their students' assessor.

Some teachers (29%) have difficulty with requests by students wishing to change to another teacher of the main subject. The large number of neutral answers to this question might suggest that the circumstances are important. Seventeen percent of the students said they had experience of teachers finding it difficult if they wanted to switch teachers. Teachers possibly hide the fact that they have difficulties with a request to work with another teacher from students. One question was whether there were clear rules for changing teachers within a particular department. The replies from the teachers and students varied greatly, from which it can be concluded that the rules are not always clear. For students, one factor could be that they are not really aware of the rules until they actually want to change teachers and need to know them.

8. Personal characteristics that positively influence the cooperation

In the survey, the teachers and students were presented with a list of personal characteristics that could positively influence the cooperation between them. The respondents were asked to identify the five most important characteristics.

Both teachers and students said the most important characteristics of a teacher that could positively influence the cooperation were *expertise*, *inspiration* and *encouraging*. Students often also mentioned *critical*⁴² as an important characteristic of the teacher. The most important characteristics of a student that could positively influence the cooperation mentioned by both teachers and students were being *proactive* and *studious*.⁴³ It is noteworthy that the teachers and students made almost precisely the same choices from the lists presented to them, thus reflecting a large degree of agreement between teachers and students in what they hope to find in one another. If these mutual expectations are clearly expressed, it can help establish a fruitful cooperation. This calls, in particular, for teachers to find ways of placing the student in a position to use his initiative and eagerness to learn.

9. Personal characteristics that negatively affect the cooperation

A list of characteristics of teachers and students that could negatively affect the cooperation between teacher and student was also presented.

Characteristics of the teacher that could negatively affect the cooperation that were mentioned by teachers and students

42. Complete list of characteristics of a teacher that could positively influence cooperation: able to give advice, trustworthy, complimentary, confrontational, expert, empathetic, humorous, inspiring, critical and encouraging.

43. List of characteristics of a student that could positively influence the cooperation: trustworthy, able to trust the teacher, empathetic, humorous, proactive, inspiring, critical, studious, reflective, self-confident.

44. Characteristics of a teacher that could negatively influence cooperation: authoritarian, untrustworthy, impatient, boring, sarcastic, sloppy, negative, overly critical.

45. Characteristics of a student that could negatively influence the cooperation: negative, untrustworthy, impatient, passive, boring, sarcastic, sloppy, overly critical and too submissive.

were *negativity* and *untrustworthiness*, while the students also mentioned *impatience*.⁴⁴ *Negativity* and *passivity* were mentioned as characteristics of the student that could negatively influence the cooperation, while the students also mentioned *untrustworthiness*.⁴⁵ Here too there was a remarkably large degree of correspondence between the responses of teachers and students as regards the characteristics that could have a negative impact on the cooperation, with *negativity* and *untrustworthiness* being mentioned by both teachers and students.

10. To what extent do teachers feel part of a team

A number of propositions relating to being part of a team were only submitted to the teachers.

A majority of the teachers (69%) said they felt they were part of a team that shared responsibility for the students within their department; 10% did not feel part of a team and 21% gave a neutral response. Interestingly, there was no difference in the responses of the teachers from the Classical Music department and the Early Music department, although the Early Music department has a relatively larger number of guest lecturers. Several of the reactions from teachers showed that they feel the need to cooperate and share expertise.

Answering this survey brings up my own dissatisfaction and frustrations regarding the impossibility of collaboration within my department. In over 20 years of teaching at the KC there has been no structure or opportunity or invitation to share views or expertise within my department. I have never been invited to a staff meeting (to my knowledge there has been none).

Teachers sometimes find their own solutions to meet this need for cooperation.

While we have not worked as a team in my section and department up to now, there has been growing cooperation between myself and one particular colleague. I have greatly appreciated it and in my view the positive impact it has had on all our students (his and mine) is obvious.

If students can choose to work with more than one main subject teacher during their course, at the same time or interchangeably, it could say something about the openness within a team or about the degree to which students can make choices. Seventy percent of the teachers confirmed that it could be useful for students to work with one or more other teachers during their studies. Since the one-to-one tuition takes place in a fairly private setting, it can be important for teachers to discuss issues relating to the student's development with colleagues. Most teachers (80%) said they discussed problems in a student's development with one or more colleagues and 90% said they referred students to the student counsellor or to another expert if there were problems. A measure of the cooperation between teachers and the degree to which the institution regards this cooperation as important and facilitates it, might be the degree to which teachers are willing to participate in

permanent education programmes, for example in the form of intervision. Fifty-two percent of the teachers said they were willing to take part in intervision sessions for main subject teachers if the school offered them; a large proportion of the teachers (41%) gave a neutral response on this point, which could mean that although they would be interested in permanent education they do not really know what intervision involves, or that it might depend on the facilities provided by the Royal Conservatoire.

Conclusions

Response

The survey was completed by 30 teachers and 85 students. The responses from teachers and students in the Early Music and Classical Music departments provided sufficient data to explore a number of subjects in more detail. Some conclusions can be drawn and some recommendations can be made, although, particularly in view of the responses of the students, only with a certain degree of circumspection. The response rate from the Jazz and Composition departments was remarkably low. The question is why. Possibly there is a difference of culture in terms of completing printed questionnaires for a survey or teachers and students of these departments genuinely have little interest in this type of survey. It is also possible that the subject matter of the survey did not appeal to the teachers and students in these departments.

The teacher-student relationship

The questions in the survey related to the teacher-student relationship in the context of one-to-one tuition. The study has shown that trust, trustworthiness and honesty play a major role in that relationship. Personal characteristics of the teacher that were mentioned by both teachers and students as making a positive contribution to cooperation are expertise, inspiration and encouragement, while students also regard the teacher's ability to offer criticism to be important. The most important characteristics of students that were mentioned were initiative and studiousness. The study showed that students like to be encouraged to show personal initiative and would perhaps sometimes like more incentives in that direction. A good match between the teacher of the main subject and the student has a positive effect on the student's well-being during his studies (Presland 2005), but only half of the students seemed to have confirmed that there was a good match with their teacher prior to commencing their studies.

Control over the learning process

Students assume more responsibility and perform better when they have more control over their learning process (Hallam 1998). There are a number of ways in which teachers can give students control (choosing their own repertoire, finding their own solutions, making their own musical choices, deciding for themselves what to learn). The study revealed a disparity between the degree to which teachers believe they do this and the degree to which students experience that

the teacher is doing it. This means that the teacher probably needs to express his intentions more clearly to the student. The following two reactions from students in the survey show that asking students explicit questions increases their self-awareness.

What I like about this survey is that it requires students to consciously think about what they expect from the teacher and the learning process and to reflect on those expectations.

Another wrote:

Some of the questions of this survey have been useful for me to think about my position as student and my attitude towards my teacher. Also about my own role as private teacher...

Preparation for professional practice

Students do not always feel that they are being properly prepared for playing to an audience during lessons and do not have the impression that the teacher discusses their possibilities in professional practice with them. This represents a challenge for the main subject teachers and for the programme as a whole. The question is how the student's development as a musician can be linked to their prospects in professional practice in the one-to-one teaching situation.

One-to-one tuition versus group lesson

Group lessons can be a valuable complement to individual lessons when it comes to subjects such as learning to perform in front of an audience, learning to express ideas about music, learning to present and communicate, etc. Group lessons also provide an opportunity for students to learn from each other. However, giving group lessons does demand different skills from the teacher than giving individual lessons.

Integration of other subjects

Although teachers say that they make a link with other subjects (theory lessons, Master's research, electives like Effective Practice) during their lessons, this is significantly less apparent to students. It seems that students are less inclined than teachers to feel they have an overview of the entire course. Here too, teachers should apparently be more explicit, and perhaps there is also a task here for the programme as a whole (Jørgensen 2000).

Team players

Although 69% of the teachers said they felt part of a team, some teachers also said they would like more cooperation and consultation within their section or department. A majority of teachers take a positive attitude towards duo-teaching and intervision, for example.

Recommendations

- Formulate and advertise a transparent, and perhaps stimulating, policy within the Royal Conservatoire with respect to trial lessons.
- Create facilities for main subject teachers to develop forms of cooperation with one another, for example through intervision.
- Reflect with main subject teachers on whether and, if so how, they can integrate public performance and preparation for professional practice in lessons in the main subject.
- Create a better match between Master's research and the lesson in the main subject by asking students more questions about their research and by using more main subject teachers as research coaches and in research examination committees.
- Where necessary, provide additional training for teachers to equip them with methods of working that provide added value in group lessons.
- Encourage students to give more lessons themselves. This might be a task for the education department.
- The institution should formulate clear assessment criteria. This helps to avoid undermining the relationship of trust if the teacher is also an assessor.
- Reflect on the composition of examination committees, particularly the question of whether student's own teachers should sit on them.

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Reciprocity: The two studies combined

Paul Deneer & Gerda van Zelm

This chapter analyses the overlap between the studies by Van Zelm and Deneer. Whereas Van Zelm's study explored the one-to-one teacher-student relationship in general, Deneer investigated the relational basis for stress in students.

Deneer's study, 'Making Music: Being heard and seen', shows the importance of the *degree of reciprocity* in the teacher-student relationship. Based on the findings of that study, we have selected eight aspects of the teacher-student relationship that we feel are connected with reciprocity, and compared them with the results of Van Zelm's study.

1. *The importance attached by teachers and students to a relationship of trust.*

As Deneer's study describes, *trust* is perhaps the most direct indicator of the degree of reciprocity in the teacher-student relationship, where trust can be both a condition for and a consequence of collaboration.

In their responses to the question in the survey that asked directly about the importance of trust in the relationship between teacher and student, teachers (94%) and students (98%) overwhelmingly endorsed its importance.

The degree of trust in the relationship can also be reflected in the *honesty* desired in the relationship. Whereas students greatly value honesty on the part of the teacher (99%), 39% of the teachers found it difficult to be honest with students who were failing to develop as expected. That is a telling finding.

The fact that the teacher is sometimes also the student's *assessor* can influence the trust in the relationship. The majority of the students (65%) did not consider it a problem that the teacher was also an assessor. Perhaps students are less conscious of the potential problems that could arise from the teacher's dual role as supervisor and assessor. In fact, 33% of the teachers felt that their contact with students could be influenced by the fact that they were also an assessor.

2. *How give and take play a role in the teacher-student relationship.*

In his study, Deneer argues that the balance of give and take (of credit and compliments, for example) is decisive for the degree of reciprocity that exists. If the give and take between teacher and student is not in balance, one of the parties will be in debt to the other, which can upset the relationship.

According to the survey, what students want to 'take' is their teacher's *expertise*. To reach a reasonable balance, the student has to give something in return. The teachers themselves provide a possible answer, since what they want to 'take' is *pride* in their students. This conceals a possible threat: it could be interpreted by the student as an *obligation* to the teacher, who might sometimes put more pressure on the student and make it more difficult for the student to leave (i.e., to stop studying or to change teachers).

Expressing *criticism* can also be seen as a form of 'giving', and it is noteworthy that students regarded receiving criticism as more valuable than receiving compliments.

3. The degree to which the teacher-student relationship is regarded as a power relationship.

Deneer describes the power relationship as an example of an object relationship, in which the teacher occupies a position of power. Teachers might consciously take on that position or it might be delegated to them by the student or the institution.

The student's high *expectations* of the teacher place the teacher in a position of power that he or she might not want. Sixty-seven percent of the students agreed that the teacher could teach them almost everything, and that they had high expectations of the teacher. Forty-five percent of the teachers agreed with the same proposition. The high expectations of the students are also reflected – as discussed in point 2 – in the great value that the students attach to the teacher's expertise.

The power relationship can also be reflected in the fact that the teacher is the person who determines the *subjects* to be covered in the lesson. The survey showed that students were less inclined to feel that it was the teacher who determined the subjects to be covered, in contrast to what the teachers believe. It is possible that students do not regard their teachers' position of power as a problem.

4. The degree to which the student feels dependent.

The fact that the student feels dependent can easily place him or her in an unequal (i.e., not reciprocal) position. This dependency can further disrupt the balance in the relationship.

The student's dependency can be reflected in the need for *confirmation* via the weekly lesson in the main subject. Having a weekly lesson is rated highly by students and slightly less highly by teachers.

Students can also be made dependent by their high expectations of the teacher's *expertise* (mentioned in point 3), since the survey shows that students often choose a teacher for his or her expertise.

More teachers (68%) than students (53%) agree that students learn better if they can *decide for themselves what they have to learn*. Apparently, students attach less value to their being able to decide what they will learn than teachers do. Perhaps students do not regard the possible dependency that might result from this as negative.

On the question of whether students become more independent if they work with *more than one teacher of the main subject*, surprisingly, the majority of teachers

and students said that the student does not become more independent.

5. The degree to which the student assumes an active role.

Assuming an active role helps students to express their interests better. Only then can a situation arise where both the teacher and the student communicate in a manner in which each feels they count. Holding the teacher in too great esteem can be an obstacle to the student playing an active role.

Teachers feel that it is important for students to show *personal initiative* in the lesson: 97% of the teachers said it was important for students to learn to take the initiative during lessons. Students appreciate it when teachers encourage them to take the initiative. Both expect something from the other in this regard.

All of the teachers said that *learning to make personal musical choices* is an important component of their teaching, while 18% of the students said they did not experience that. Apparently, students are not always aware of the teacher's intentions.

Passivity is a trait that is frequently regarded as having a *negative* influence on the student's learning process, while both teachers and students regarded *taking the initiative* as an important trait in students.

Fewer than 50% of teachers and students felt that *questions* from the student formed the *basis* of lessons. Furthermore, 77% of the students agreed with the proposition that the *pieces* they played formed the basis of the lesson. This raises the question of whether the teacher's desire for the student to play a more active role always corresponds with how active the student actually is in determining the content of the lesson.

6. The degree to which cooperation is experienced by teacher and student as a joint responsibility.

If the teacher and student share a sense of joint responsibility, the gap between the two is narrowed and the dialogue between them is facilitated. This joint responsibility can be reflected in the extent to which the teacher discusses things with the student.

Teachers generally (100%) felt responsible for the development of their students. Students who were asked whether they believed that the teacher felt responsible for their development largely agreed, but almost 25% did not. This outcome can also be interpreted in a positive sense, since it could mean that these students do not bear the weight of the teacher's responsibility on their shoulders.

As discussed in point 3, students often indirectly assign responsibility to the teacher because of their *high expectations*. Teachers who are aware of this might

choose to make the student jointly responsible. One option for delegating part of the responsibility for their learning process to students is to *allow them to choose their own repertoire*. The responses to the question about the choice of repertoire were fairly similar, but 20% of the students said they did not feel they were encouraged to choose their own repertoire. This raises the question of whether teachers always make their intentions clear or put them into practice. It is also possible that they do not give the students sufficient resources to choose their own repertoire. On the other hand, it is possible that the student does not *recognise* what the teacher expects.

Another strategy for creating a sense of joint responsibility for the student's development is to discuss the student's *options in the changing professional practice*. There was a significant difference in the responses of teachers and students on this point, with 93% of the teachers saying they discuss the possibilities in professional practice with their students, while only 41% of the students said that their teacher discussed it with them. This raises the question of how teachers raise the subject with their students and how explicit and/or specific they are in doing so. Given the large number of teachers who answered this question affirmatively, it would be interesting to investigate further precisely what teachers mean when they say they discuss the student's possibilities in professional practice.

Finally, *allowing the student to personally decide what he or she will learn* is an indicator of the degree of shared responsibility. More teachers (68%) than students (53%) agreed with the proposition that students make the best progress if they can decide what they want to improve for themselves. This suggests that teachers feel that the student's joint responsibility is important for the learning process. Whether and how the teacher is able to get the student to assume this role was not clear from the information from the survey.

7. The personal interest shown by the teacher in the student

Enquiring about students' experiences in their studies and about their personal circumstances is an example of showing a personal interest in the student, which gives the student the feeling of not being purely an object and thus influences the degree of reciprocity.

Both teachers and students consider the quality of their relationship to be important. This is reflected in the importance attached to *good chemistry* between the teacher and the student. The importance of good chemistry is endorsed by both teachers (77%) and students (82%).

Teachers (90%) felt it was important to *enquire about the student's personal circumstances*, and 74% of the students confirmed that the teacher does so.

Teachers (97%) demonstrate their interest by *asking questions about participation in projects*, etc., but students (69%) do not always recognise that. It is possible that

students are either not aware of the teacher's intentions or they regard the question not as a demonstration of interest but, rather, a means of control, for example.

8. The degree to which the teacher adapts to the student's learning style.

Wanting to adapt to the student's learning style can be seen as a way for teachers to indicate that they are at the student's service - taking the student as he or she is. This is a two-way process in the relationship, again reflecting a willingness to seek reciprocity in the relationship.

In reply to the direct question on this point, teachers expressed the belief that they adapted to the student's learning style, but the students did not entirely agree.

It does not seem important to all students to *know in advance whether there is a click with their teacher* (does the teacher's style of teaching match my style of learning?). It is possible that they simply take it on trust that they will click, but it is also possible that they are being naïve. Again, it can be the student who forces the teacher into the role of being the person who makes decisions on the learning process. The high expectations mentioned in point 3 perhaps play a role in this.

As mentioned in point 4, a large number of both students and teachers said that students do not gain greater independence if they *work with more than one teacher*. The potential benefit of working with multiple teachers – and thus having a greater chance of a match between teaching and learning styles – does not seem to be considered.

It is possible that students are not able to decide whether the teacher is adapting to their learning style and/or stage of development because they cannot yet recognise the *larger learning curve*, including the specific path within it that works best for them.

Summary of conclusions and recommendations

Both students and teachers attach great importance to a relationship of trust between them. Students seem to have great faith in their teachers; they do not even regard the fact that the teacher is sometimes also their assessor as a major problem. Honesty, even about disappointment in the student's performance, is greatly appreciated by the students. Teachers seem to have a certain fear of losing the trust of students if they have to discuss their disappointing progress or results with them. It might be helpful for teachers to realise that students greatly appreciate the teacher's honesty. Whether feedback can be sincere (i.e., honest) is also connected with the benchmark that is adopted. Setting lower targets for the student makes it easier to show enthusiasm (with a compliment, for example).

By discussing learning objectives, it is easier to identify mutual expectations. If these expectations remain implicit, it can lead to conduct that neither party

actually desires. The data regularly suggest that students are less inclined to think at *meta level* (the broad strokes of the learning process). This might be related to the student's high expectations, which force the teacher into a particular role and prompt them to leave decisions to the teacher out of respect. In that case, the explicit encouragement by the teacher not only makes it clear what is expected of the student, but also gives him or her a "green light" to take the initiative.

It repeatedly became clear that teachers want their students to play an active role and want to adapt to their learning style. What the survey did not really show is what *didactic tools* teachers use to put their intentions into practice and whether they are sufficiently aware of the fact that they can only verify whether their intentions and actions are recognised by the student and are having the correct effect by *asking for feedback* from the student. This touches on the subject of whether teachers themselves want to learn. Discussing learning objectives could in fact also be a tool in this respect.

Biographies

Paul Deneer has a background in Clinical psychology and after that studied Jazz guitar at the Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts The Hague. Since 1985 he is working as a teacher Jazz guitar and - until recently – he was teaching several pedagogical subjects at the Royal Conservatoire. In 1997 he also started working as a student counsellor at this school and since 2008 he became a student counsellor at the Royal Academy of Art as well. To further develop his expertise as a counsellor he recently had training as Contextual therapist. Paul combines his work for the University of the Arts with an active career as a musician.

Gerda van Zelm, after a study in Social Work (CICSA, Amsterdam), decided to become a professional singer. She studied voice in Alkmaar and Utrecht. After completion of her voice studies she was a singer in the Dutch Radio Choir and the vocal ensemble Femmes Vocales. As a soloist she performed in Art Song, Oratorio and Opera performances. Since 2008 she is involved as a vocal coach in a yearly opera community project in France (Opéra Mosset).

Gerda van Zelm has always had an interest in teaching and vocal pedagogy. She was a voice teacher at the Conservatoire of Arnhem from 1990 to 1995. In 1992 Gerda van Zelm became a voice teacher and teacher of methodology of singing at the Royal Conservatoire, University of the Arts The Hague, and currently she is also research coach for a number of master students. From 2004 to 2014 she was the head of the voice department at the same institution.

Colophon

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