

Multiple teachers: multiple gains?

Elizabeth Haddon

Music Department, University of York, Heslington, York

liz.haddon@york.ac.uk

This paper explores the concept of instrumental/vocal learning when studying the same instrument or voice with more than one concurrent teacher. In this context, teachers may be working as a team, or one or both teachers may not know of the other's contribution to a student's learning. Qualitative data from music students and teachers at the University of York sheds some light on this often hidden learning context. This paper examines students' reasons for studying with more than one teacher; their views on negotiating teacher demands; teacher–student–teacher dynamics; and assessment of the success of this context for learning. Teachers' views are considered through discussion of their attitudes to this context, and their evaluation of its effect on their teaching. Findings suggest that although there may be problems for students regarding issues of teacher loyalty and dealing with conflicting advice, there are also many benefits including exposure to a greater range of musical and technical ideas and added pedagogical insight. There are also potential benefits for teachers if they are working as a team.

Introduction

Research literature on instrumental and vocal¹ teaching and learning has tended to focus on the dominant contexts of one-to-one or group tuition, referring to the master-apprentice model (Jørgensen, 2000), and the mentor-friend model (Lehmann *et al.*, 2007) to describe the teacher/student relationship. However, a further context exists where a student may have multiple concurrent teachers for the same instrument or voice. Within this context there is scope for considerable variation: a student may have extra occasional lessons or regular ones with another teacher with or without their main or 'official' teacher's knowledge; or the teachers may collaborate, each teaching the student on a one-to-one basis but discussing progress and working as a team. The situation may be initiated either by the student or by the teacher, and raises issues relating to student/teacher dynamics, teacher roles, and learning outcomes, particularly in relation to 'hidden' rather than 'open' contexts. These may be less accessible to researchers, who need sensitivity towards student/teacher relationships when examining them.

References to this framework within the instrumental teaching literature are scarce. Gaunt (2006) briefly considered the implications of officially studying with more than one teacher for conservatoire students. She concluded that the students 'benefited from the diversity' of working with more than one teacher (2006, p. 182) although potential difficulties could emerge, particularly for first-year students, concerning conflicting

advice and information overload. However, more mature students who possessed greater autonomy enjoyed the variety of approaches. Gaunt noted later that 'breadth of understanding through experiences with different teachers and learning environments' (2008, p. 221) would contribute to the development of student independence and autonomous learning. However, none of the 20 teachers in her survey appeared to deliberately suggest that students could also study with another teacher, although one advocated attending other student's lessons and those given by another teacher (2008, p. 235). Further investigation of this teaching and learning context is clearly overdue.

Parallels can also be observed in higher education where institutions are moving away from a single supervisor for PhD students towards the use of a supervisory team (Taylor & Beasley, 2005; Cryer, 2006; Wisker *et al.*, 2008). This has benefits for both student and supervisors: the student has access to wider expertise and has support in place should one supervisor be unavailable or leave the institution. The structure is particularly beneficial for new supervisors who can be mentored and initiated into the supervisory role. However, co-supervision presents the potential for problems regarding issues of 'disagreement and divergence' (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 71) similar to those in the instrumental learning context. Phillips & Pugh (2006) note that the student should take the initiative in managing these potential issues by negotiating clear roles for each supervisor, agreeing on different areas of responsibility and not playing off one supervisor against the other (2006, pp. 94–97). In fact, many experts advocate that the delineation of roles should extend towards the identification of one primary supervisor and a supporting one (Eley & Jennings, 2005; Wisker *et al.*, 2008), and these roles could be further defined with the principal supervisor possessing academic expertise and the second one contributing a 'research management' or 'critical friend' role (Eley & Murray, 2009, p. 55). Delamont *et al.* suggest that strategic planning should be provided by the primary supervisor, who also advises the student and supporting supervisor on the 'appropriate scope and standards expected' (2004, p. 104). This division of practice may also be appropriate for students in managing their instrumental learning.

Sports performance training also supports a context in which the issue of multiple teaching is recognised. In representative squads, the potential for conflict between the club coach and the representative team coach is acknowledged.² This may concern personalities and 'territory' as well as technical and tactical approaches. Although Cross (1999) noted that athletes in national teams may have more than one coach and that this 'may be detrimental to the potential performance of some or even all of the players' (1999, p. 177), the 'national' coach is more likely to be concerned with 'performance preparation' rather than basic skills or technique training.

In team sports, a coaching team is the norm. Where collaboration does occur, for example, between coach and assistant coach, each tends to have a different focus: Solomon *et al.* noted that 'head coaches offered more mistake-related feedback while assistant coaches offered more reinforcement and encouragement' (1996, p. 44). Here, the assistant coach, who is often closer to the players in age and experience, exercises a 'release' mechanism and enhances communication.³ The coach also tends to have a dominant role when collaborating with support personnel, whose roles have been described by Lyle (1999, p. 10) as 'supporting' or 'replacement'. In the supporting role 'the relevant expert provides data which are subsequently incorporated into decision making and delivery by

the coach' and in the replacement role 'the expert substitutes for the coach in this particular aspect of the coaching process' (1999, p. 10). In these circumstances the coach and other personnel tend to be specialists in different areas so there is less potential for conflicting advice than in the instrumental teaching context. The coach retains power and control, as 'co-operation between sports scientists and athletes is best co-ordinated by the coach. It is the coach who will assimilate information, analyse the effectiveness of the programme, construct specific training sessions and co-ordinate and supervise these' (Maile, 1999, p. 92). In practice, the current situation may be far from ideal, as most coaches 'operate in relative isolation, and with only partial support from a series of support services' (Lyle, 1999, p. 10). This is a situation that directly parallels that of many instrumental teachers. Lyle's vision of a future model: 'the network approach' might also apply to instrumental teaching, 'in which the coach (or might we begin to call this person the 'performance manager'!) co-ordinates a team of specialists ... The coach in this instance will require strong skills of planning, integrating and co-ordinating' (1999, p. 10).

Within other domains such as business management, corporations are increasingly utilising joint leadership, and there are obvious parallels with multiple collaborating teachers in instrumental learning particularly in relation to issues of role management, communication and negotiation. In mentoring, the utilisation of a 'constellation' of developmental relationships (Kram, 1985) has been linked to career progression (Higgins & Thomas, 2001), and in education, teachers and students have responded favourably to co-teaching (Nevin *et al.*, 2009). However, the above are all 'open' contexts. How does learning with more than one concurrent teacher for the same instrument work when, for example, a student has a main teacher and another teacher unknown to the primary one? This hidden area of teaching and learning may be of considerable value to students but is not often acknowledged or openly discussed. This research explores how undergraduate music students at a British university perceived learning from multiple concurrent teachers, including both open and hidden contexts, and how their teachers viewed this situation.

Participants and method

A questionnaire was devised and sent to undergraduate music students ($n = 173$) at the University of York, UK. This sought to discover students' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of studying with multiple concurrent teachers and the attributes of students who might benefit from this. Responses were received from 33 students (19%), of whom 16 (studying piano, flute, violin, cello and voice) had experience of lessons on the same instrument from more than one concurrent teacher. Two students identified a separate focus: one simultaneously studied modern and baroque versions of a string instrument, and the other took piano and jazz piano lessons. The rest of the sample did not have such clearly defined areas of study with their different teachers.

A second questionnaire was sent to those students with experience of this situation, investigating the circumstances that led them to this means of learning; the student/teacher relationship, including teacher roles, demands and collaboration; and assessment of the context. A third questionnaire was sent to 33 instrumental teachers to discover more about their experience of this context, its effects on themselves and their students, and its advantages and disadvantages. Replies were received from seven (21%) teachers. The

responses were collated and analysed by hand, and, despite the limitations of the sample sizes of this small-scale survey the responses produced rich data for analysis.

Questionnaire 1 – analysis of the views of students on the context of multiple concurrent teachers

The advantages of having multiple concurrent teachers

Students who studied with multiple teachers outlined a range of benefits. Some of these, such as increased practice, may have simply resulted from having more lessons. However, students also felt that they gained a wider range of tips for effective practice, and that increased feedback raised the level of their work. Playing to different teachers improved their confidence in performance, and the exposure to different methods was deemed productive: 'the chances are that the more approaches you see the more likely it is you will find one you can easily relate to'. Awareness of needing to understand reactions to divergent ideas and to developing flexibility of thinking and learning was widely expressed: 'you learn to think for yourself more, as you can question particular ways of doing things'. This was felt to be particularly effective when students witnessed different interpretations of the same piece of music. The input of a second teacher was likened to that of a doctor, confirming or disputing a diagnosis and giving a 'greater depth of insight' into a musical work, and new ideas were felt to be particularly helpful in the pre-performance period 'where a fresh approach to over-practised pieces can be all that is needed'. Gaining a wider perspective on interpretation motivated students to study with multiple teachers, but there was perhaps a perception that teachers possessed narrower musical interests and preferences and more rigid thinking than students would have liked. It also appeared that students saw it as their responsibility to change their attitudes towards learning rather than as the teacher's responsibility to change their teaching methods.

Those students who had not experienced multiple concurrent teachers also thought that studying in this way would enable learners to gain experience in evaluating working relationships, and that observing and considering different teaching methods would improve pedagogical understanding. Just one student made no mention of any advantages, referring instead to a potential disadvantage of divergent opinions.

The disadvantages of having multiple concurrent teachers

Both groups of students thought that the main disadvantage would be confusion created by receiving conflicting advice. One student felt that: 'there is no disadvantage when a student is intelligent enough to judge tutors' comments critically . . . students do not have to one hundred per cent obey them'. However, students may feel that they should be able to identify the 'correct' method but cannot, and then feel obliged to switch from one state to another in order to show each teacher that they are following their advice:

If teachers' ideas are *very* different, which they often can be, especially in technical work, it can be hard to decide which person to listen to, for example, one teacher tells

you to place your lip high up on the mouthpiece . . . and the other tells you to keep it down.

Divergent approaches relating to technique are harder to deal with than conflicting musical advice. Here, students 'should be forming his/her own point of view of the pieces so different opinions should help this'.

Adjusting to different teaching styles and personalities might be equally problematic: 'it can also be confusing having two teachers with completely different approaches to teaching'. This might cause a loss of momentum through 'having to adapt to each teacher's style from lesson to lesson'. Slower progress might result from 'less continuity between lessons and practice' and, as well as the expense involved, the perceived 'double workload for one instrument might be hard to stay motivated for'. Issues of divided loyalty could arise: 'you will directly compare the two teachers so will end up finding the one a chore and the other brilliant, just because they are in direct comparison' and 'there could be political problems: one teacher may not want their students to be seeing another at the same time'. There was also the 'risk of a teacher getting offended/frustrated if the student is contradicting their teaching due to advice given by another teacher' and the possibility that teachers may feel threatened. One student speculated that 'multiple teachers affect students perhaps more on a personal, relationship-wise level than instrumentally' and that it would be harder to establish a good rapport with more than one teacher. In order to avoid these difficulties, 'the two teachers should 'work together' in teaching someone and not just be two separate teaching programmes, which do not bear any overall structure'. Some students suggested that the ideal situation was to have one official teacher plus extra consultation lessons and masterclasses, and that 'changing teachers relatively frequently can, for many people, be very beneficial'.

What sort of students might benefit the most from this context?

Students felt this way of learning would be problematic for younger learners and unsuitable for beginners but useful for advanced (post-Grade 8) performers. However, it was noted that a student who 'isn't particularly musical' would gain greater musical understanding and that 'any student would probably benefit from a change once in a while'. There was general agreement that a student needed to be hard-working, and 'confident and strong-minded' to be able to be 'creatively stimulated by the experience of different ways of doing things'. Open-mindedness was seen to be important, but this needed to be balanced by knowing 'what they want from a teacher/situation' and having a 'clear enough view on their playing to take all comments successfully on board'. This might suit a student 'who is already a skilled technical performer and can therefore benefit more from general guidance rather than structured progression'. Several students thought that it would aid a student whose teacher was failing to meet their needs in some way, for example, 'a student wishing to pursue in depth a work/composer/area that their teacher is not a specialist in' or someone 'who is getting 'bogged down' in a piece with current teacher's comments not proving remedial'. One student with two teachers mentioned the student/teacher relationship, saying that the student would need to be 'someone who can cope with the pressures of keeping somebody else happy!'.

Questionnaire 2 – analysis of the views of students studying with multiple teachers

Reasons for having two or more teachers

Just two of the 16 students with experience of multiple teachers said that their current teacher recommended an additional teacher. One student whose mother taught her received extra lessons while at secondary school and another had two teachers while at university. This student's teacher suggested extra lessons with his own teacher, an international vocal pedagogue, and the student enjoyed 'tuition from a teacher who teaches the same methods and techniques – there is no conflict, only benefit'. The remaining 14 students had decided independently that they wanted another teacher. Three had two teachers at secondary school to help reach examination goals and generally improve their performance. Of the 11 students who had multiple teachers while at university, two were learning related styles (baroque/modern string instruments and classical/jazz piano), and several had decided to have a second teacher as a result of productive masterclass experiences. Three students chose to continue studying with their teachers from home as well as with the teacher allocated to them by the music department. Many students arrive at university expecting to continue to have weekly lessons but then find that various factors such as their academic workload, availability of teachers and practice facilities and possible part-time employment mean that having lessons once a fortnight or less frequently is more realistic. Continuing contact with a teacher who knows the student may make the period of transition from school to university easier. External tuition could also provide a 'reality check': 'to have something outside of this place just makes me think about different things and doesn't maybe make you compare yourself to who else is here'.

Teacher roles

All but one of the students felt that their teachers had different roles and also gave them an implied hierarchy. Some regarded their teacher at home as their main teacher, whereas others considered the university teacher to be their primary teacher and took extra lessons at home to help motivate them during the holidays and for additional input, particularly prior to an important performance or examination. One student preparing for a diploma examination noted that 'my regular teacher had the role of steadily helping to improve my technique from a more long-term perspective' whereas 'the second teacher had the role of bringing fresh, minor comments that I would be able to take on board in a few days'. Several students attributed different roles to their teachers depending on their expertise and interests, for example: 'My new teacher is far more competent with technique, whereas my old teacher is more interested in expanding my repertoire'. Just one student described working on the same material with both teachers in a progressive manner, 'starting pieces with my first teacher, and then when I was confident with them, I would take them to the new teacher to be polished'. This student made it clear to both teachers that this was his/her preferred way of working. Although the teachers knew about each other, they did not discuss the student or work as a team. It seems that it suited the student, although it may not have suited the teachers.

Conflicting or complementary demands?

Eleven of the 16 students felt that their teachers made conflicting demands on them; five felt they were complementary. Conflicting demands were created by different technical and interpretative suggestions, which could result in students playing 'one way for one teacher and differently for another'. One student thought that 'different people have different interpretations and the most important thing for me is to research the right style'. However, the concept of 'right' could be limiting; perhaps realising that there are many possibilities could be more helpful: 'overall this is a good thing because I have to take what I want from each teacher and come to my own personal decisions about style etc.'. Even when teachers are aware of each other, the student may find it hard to reconcile different approaches: one student noted that problems were created by one teacher's lack of flexibility, compartmentalising classical and jazz styles, whereas the other teacher extrapolated ideas from both genres. Studying baroque and modern instruments also proved problematic: the student in this case noted that the different playing styles were 'too much for me to deal with at once . . . even though the teachers were working together and aware of what I was learning with each'. The student subsequently gave up the modern instrument to focus exclusively on the baroque one.

When teachers are not working together, students can be overwhelmed by conflicting technical demands. One student described the problems encountered when studying with teachers with completely different approaches to technique:

When starting with a new teacher it has often been the case that he or she would want me to take a few steps backwards before going forwards in order to iron out things such as technical flaws that they consider to be a hindrance. Having been with *x* in London, this initial stage had been covered and I was making rapid progress . . . When I had my first lesson with *y* they wanted to do the same thing. Unfortunately, the ideas the two of them had about technique could not have been more conflicting . . . I felt that *y*'s tuition was the opposite to *x*'s . . . and was conflicting with it, causing me to feel like my playing was actually going backwards rather than forwards . . . my playing got noticeably worse when I was with *y*.

When teachers are aware of each other, these issues can perhaps be negotiated through prioritising technique with one teacher and interpretation with the other. This was a strategy used by the five students who felt that their teachers were complementary. These students appeared to view learning in terms of their response to it (seeing the need to become more independent learners) rather than as conflicting demands created by the teaching.

Teacher–student–teacher dynamics

Although seven students said their teachers knew that they also had another teacher, only three of them thought their teachers worked as a team to help them learn, discussing progress and reinforcing ideas. Five said their teachers talked to each other, although this could be on a general level rather than specifically about the student. One student thought that although her teachers knew about each other, their uneven status created problems: 'One teacher felt secondary to the other and felt she couldn't teach in her own way if it contradicted anything my other teacher was saying. I felt a bit awkward sometimes talking

about what one teacher had said in front of the other'. However, most students were keen to keep their teachers separate. Serious consequences could arise from being 'found out' such as destroying the student's rapport with one or both teachers, or perhaps even losing a teacher. The situation creates an interesting power dynamic: by keeping the teachers separate, the student creates a structure in which they hold the balance of power. This is unlike the learning structure that most students experienced as children, with the pupil-parent-teacher relationships usually established in such a way as to leave the pupil with less power than the combined teacher-parent parties. When learning with more than one teacher (especially if the teachers do not consult with each other) the student can take more control of the learning situation, play one teacher off against the other, manipulate the situation to leave both teachers uncertain of their role, and can undermine the efficacy of the teaching by leaving both teachers in the dark as to how their ideas and suggestions have effected improvement. However, if the teachers are collaborating this may be less likely to happen, with a balance of power remaining with the teachers rather than with the student.

Ten students, most of whose teachers did not know of the existence of the students' other teacher, did not notice any changes to the teacher/student relationship as a result of having another teacher. One student noted an improved relationship with both teachers resulting from 'an increased respect for both of their different teaching styles, help and expertise'. However, another student noted that 'I did not have such a close working relationship when I had two teachers. Since deciding to learn with only one teacher, this has greatly improved and I now feel like I have far more support from my teacher'. Although the teacher/student relationship is often viewed as central to learning (Kingsbury, 1988; Manturzewska, 1990; Campbell, 1991; Hallam, 1998; Presland, 2005) it needs to be a productive working relationship, but not necessarily a close relationship. Viewed alongside the array of other musical learning contexts within and outside the music department in which students participate, learning through instrumental lessons is only one aspect of instrumental development, and perhaps some consideration needs to be given to how this relationship works in higher education and the degree to which teachers might encourage student dependency or actively promote learner autonomy.

Student assessment of the success of learning with multiple concurrent teachers

Four students stated that this context did not work for them and outlined problems concerning continuity of learning, conflicting advice, uneven progress and unbalanced development of technique and repertoire. It seems that students who felt that they did not benefit from this situation may have struggled to balance the demands of two conflicting and possibly very dominant teacher-personalities. They may have also sensed a lessened commitment from one or both teachers. Two students felt that this context worked but only because it was short-term, leading to an examination or performance. Those with long-term experience described their openness to new ideas, emphasised the importance of being musically inspired in multiple ways and noted enjoying reacting to other people's personalities and valuing other people's opinions. This way of learning was seen as crucial to developing critical understanding, pedagogical and musical awareness: 'teachers should

teach students how to explore their styles, their musicianship rather than teaching them how to play'.

As noted above, the power can lie with the student rather than the teacher, and in this situation, learning can become student-managed rather than teacher-led. This is potentially beneficial, as long as students understand their own learning processes, and can identify goals and consider how they might anticipate achieving them. These findings correlate with those of Gaunt, who noted that conservatoire students learning in this context 'had to be more responsible for their own progress, choice of repertoire and structuring of work' (2006, p. 182). Yet perhaps this context would be equally appropriate for a student who was not interested in performance, who might want a more lateral development and who could then explore learning in a variety of ways. In order for the student to gain maximum benefit from this way of working and for the teachers to be able to teach as effectively as possible, communication between all parties involved, perhaps resulting in a collaborative approach would seem to be the most positive way forward.

Questionnaire 3 – analysis of the views of instrumental teachers

The questionnaire was sent to 33 instrumental teachers at the University of York, of whom seven (21%) replied. One teacher gave no answers, stating that he/she did not do concurrent teaching, only occasional consultation lessons. However, this teacher might have been in a situation where this was happening without his/her knowledge. The other six all had varied experience of the situation. The questionnaire sought to discover how teachers felt about this context: how it had arisen, whether they discussed it with the student and/or the other teacher, and how it affected their teaching and their relationship with the student.

Teacher attitudes and student–teacher discussion

The two vocal teachers showed a more positive attitude towards multiple concurrent teaching than the others, stating, for example, that 'I am always happy to work alongside other teachers and always encourage students to use resources even if that resource is another teacher'. All teachers could see a range of advantages for the student, including gaining expertise through exploring different perspectives and assessing contrasting playing and views on performance. One teacher felt that

No one teacher is likely to have in-depth knowledge, training and understanding of every playing style a student may wish to experience. Different ways of explaining or demonstrating the same area may help to consolidate an aspect of technique, and some styles of teaching suit one person and not another, so with two teachers there is more chance of finding what works for the student.

However, this teacher felt that it was viable only if the teachers focused on different styles or related (modern or baroque) instruments. Most teachers had reservations, feeling that students needed to be 'emotionally mature enough to deal with (sometimes vastly) different points of view', and therefore this was more appropriate for postgraduate students than undergraduates. They also felt that it might be more difficult to predict a student's performance in an examination or concert, and that it could be harder to evaluate and

monitor progress as it may not be apparent whether improvement resulted from their input or from that of the other teacher. As the teachers noted that this was the first time they had considered the situation in depth, it could be surmised that discussion of this context is rare, so when a student informs a teacher that they are having additional lessons elsewhere the teacher can easily feel threatened, particularly if the student is using the teachers for the same area of study. One teacher described his/her reaction to being told that a student was also having additional lessons elsewhere:

I was initially disappointed and hurt that the student had organised this without discussing it first, especially as the student originally just wanted more lessons, which could have been arranged. Then I felt that I had to support them . . . if that was what they wanted to do then we had to find a way to make it work for them.

Another teacher mentioned similarly feeling 'upset and threatened' and was also worried about consequences to his/her reputation. Although all six teachers said they discussed the situation with their students only one elaborated, saying that the student told the teacher about his/her reasons for seeing another teacher but made no attempt to find out how the teacher felt about the disclosure. Perhaps the student was scared of the consequences, or perhaps did not care about the teacher's feelings. In this context, the original teacher's view was that the student chose to see another teacher partly because they did not want to develop a close working relationship, and also because they seemed to seek continual affirmation rather than the challenge of engagement with new ideas.

It appears that students might not be fully aware of the effect of the situation on their teachers, and perhaps the teachers made an effort to mask their feelings to minimise revealing how they were affected. Perhaps if communication between student and teacher is improved, many of the problems occurring in both one-to-one and multiple-teacher contexts would not be encountered. Also, previous models of teaching experienced by the student may have been dictatorial, suggesting that the pupil's function is to comply with and not question the teacher, creating a subordinate role for the student. In a higher education setting, learning can be viewed as a process towards autonomy, requiring the student to learn to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning (Boud, 1988). Perhaps the nature of instrumental learning in a university context could be made more explicit to both teachers and students, emphasising that in order to gain the most from the experience both parties need to communicate very effectively, especially as teacher-student contact may be less frequent than that previously experienced during the school years.

Teacher-teacher discussion and collaborative teaching

Teachers involved in arranging additional tuition for a student would discuss the student with the other teacher, but when organised by the student the teachers were unlikely to communicate with each other. Only the vocal teachers taught collaboratively, and they were also likely to work with specialists outside their own domains, for example in other musical genres and with speech therapists. One teacher reported that their student thought that his/her teachers worked collaboratively because 'we achieve results between us, reinforcing/expanding on each other's advice'. However, the advice may not have been complementary, and was not given in a collaboratively-structured fashion.

Students learning with collaborating teachers should be encouraged to manage their teachers and be responsible for both their own work, and for creating effective communication between all parties, as well as monitoring their own long-term as well as short-term development. Phillips and Pugh (2006), discussing team supervision for PhD students, advocated open and regular communication and student responsibility for organising regular meetings with both supervisors, practices which can translate to instrumental learning. They also noted the importance of delineating staff roles otherwise 'there is the clear likelihood that each supervisor will regard the other as taking the lead and having more of the responsibility. Even if this feeling is only subconscious . . . it acts to reduce the commitment of both of them' (2006, p. 95). One teacher observed this happening with a student who 'became increasingly over-confident in terms of ignoring advice' which led to the teacher feeling progressively redundant, describing how they 'let go' of the student to an extent: 'I just thought that x had made a choice and that almost the responsibility had lifted – not my problem, so much'.

As in joint PhD supervision, teachers need to acknowledge diversity, be interested in other values and approaches, willing to discuss and modify their views, recognising the implications for the student (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 77). It also helps to identify 'key points of agreement or disagreement' and to negotiate their 'agreed roles and responsibilities' (Taylor & Beasley, 2005, p. 80), discussing the compatibility of their approaches and how responsibilities will be shared. Comparison can also be made with business co-leadership where the potential exists for a variety of approaches to role definition and management, relating to issues of leader status, expertise, interests and availability (Wyman, 2005; Miles & Watkins, 2007). Wyman stated that co-leadership could accelerate the individual development of the leaders (2005) and Staman noted that 'it creates an internal dynamic in which the leaders constantly challenge each other to higher levels of performance' (cited in O'Toole *et al.*, 2002). This could be beneficial for the instrumental student and teachers providing that the process is goal-directed through negotiated vision and practical application within a collaborative rather than competitive culture.

Effects on the teacher

Four teachers thought there were no changes to the way they taught the student or to the teacher/student relationship and suggested that they were comfortable with the situation, gaining 'a greater understanding of the student and of my own teaching' and 'a broader understanding of what my students are doing elsewhere, musically and vocally'. One teacher became more prescriptive, which benefited the student: 'once she felt that I was giving her instructions rather than asking her to explore for herself, she was much happier and less defensive'. Understanding the context could become easier with experience:

In earlier times, such moves by students to another teacher would have been threatening. But as I've become more experienced I've realised the enormous benefit and enrichment for the student. This is especially true if both teachers have at least one opportunity to work together at the same time with the student. I've learnt a lot myself in this situation from the other teacher.

The views of two teachers struggling to come to terms with this context on their own demonstrate that teachers could benefit from collaborative teaching and/or from a mentoring system where they could explore their responses to the situation. One teacher experienced feeling 'annoyed, depressed, felt like I was being compared and found wanting', and unwanted comparison was also mentioned by another teacher: 'it is also difficult to think that the student may be comparing my teaching unfavourably or favourably with that of the other teacher whilst I am teaching them, which can be distracting'. Comparisons will inevitably be made, whether consciously or unconsciously, which may result in the teacher changing their teaching and/or behaviour: 'I was careful not to undermine the other teacher's technical work, and held back from suggesting any major changes, concentrating instead on interpretation, with a few suggestions of suitable exercises for specific areas'. This teacher described feeling 'more cautious when teaching in this situation' and was less inclined to be experimental or to 'undertake long-term developments, which may appear to have short-term disadvantages'. In this instance, the teacher's work was modified by the context, which leads to the speculation that if both teachers took this approach, the student could end up in a situation where nobody was pushing for progress.

The teacher who had experienced a range of emotions in response to the situation described feeling 'much less inclined to give my all – because there's someone else, I felt as if [the student] had taken away my responsibility'. This teacher seems to have adopted a deferential role in relation to the other teacher, and, to an extent, towards the student, suggesting that as the student had made the decision to experience this kind of learning, he/she had to deal with the consequences. While the student felt that his/her relationship with the teacher had changed, it was defined in terms of improved lesson structure, whereas the teacher's perception was that the student brought an agenda to the lesson of points requiring affirmation and these were all that the student would engage with. Attempts by the teacher to offer additional insights or to encourage a more open and questioning style of learning were rejected by the student, which in turn made the teacher feel rejected and redundant.

These comments raise the issues of trust and ownership. For example, students commencing a period of long-term technical change which might result in a temporarily lessened facility need to trust the teachers' judgement and ability to help them achieve this. Some students might engage in learning with multiple teachers precisely in order to avoid subjecting themselves to long-term change, perhaps preferring to have more short-term goals and feel more in control of their learning. One teacher noted that 'a lot of students have an idea that, as their principal study teacher, you 'own' them, and that learning something valuable elsewhere would be disloyal'. This point could be made in reverse: that perhaps many teachers feel that they 'own' their students, having invested a considerable amount of intellectual and emotional energy in working with them. And, as freelance teachers, every pupil has financial implications. The master/apprentice teaching model easily promotes the idea of student dependency on the informed expert. The multiple teaching context promotes greater student independence alongside greater student control over the teachers when the teachers do not collaborate. When teaching as a team, the degree of student control is reduced but the teachers also benefit from the collaboration, a point noted by only two of the teachers.

Discussion

Although there are limitations to this research arising from small sample sizes, the perspective of students with experience of learning with multiple concurrent teachers suggests that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The benefits included:

1. Easing the period of transition from school to university.
2. Extending students' range of practical skills and approaches (for example, through utilising a greater diversity of input from teachers relating to technique, interpretation and practising skills).
3. Encouraging a greater amount of practise and raising their standards to meet teacher demands.
4. Framing student learning by enabling comparison with performers external to the department, particularly in relation to reassuring students as to their level of ability rather than developing competitiveness.
5. Developing students' pedagogical understanding and critical assessment of teaching (for example, through comparison of a range of approaches to teaching and through reflective analysis on their response).
6. Developing views on learning and facilitating learner autonomy (for example, through creating an agenda for lesson content, becoming more comfortable with creating and questioning one's own ideas as well as the ideas of others, developing greater independence and resourcefulness as a learner, and dealing with feedback).
7. Developing increased confidence in performance situations as a result of playing to more teachers.
8. Encouraging greater analysis of relationships in learning and through this gaining understanding of the students' view of self (for example, as perhaps a primarily compliant or challenging student) and developing awareness of the balance of power in the relationships involved, perhaps resulting in a stronger sense of the student's own identity.
9. Lessening the likelihood of teacher-dependency by objectifying the student/teacher relationships, but at the same time having a greater structure of support in place than present in normal one-to-one teaching relationships.

The main disadvantages were those created through trying to meet the demands of both teachers, especially when their advice conflicted. Some students felt that they sensed a reduced commitment from their teachers; the student could also avoid commitment to either teacher, or, indeed, to themselves. There could also be a greater likelihood of focusing on short-term goals at the expense of long-term ones unless the teachers were working together. Both teachers and students felt that the situation would only benefit a student with considerable autonomy, maturity and commitment to their development. If teachers were collaborating, difficulties regarding disclosure, confidence, conflicting advice and progression were reduced.

Managing the dual-teacher situation could be made easier by defining roles for each teacher, for example, through using one primarily for technique and the other for interpretation, or through teacher collaboration, which could promote greater equality in the relationships and minimise the possibility of conflicting demands. In this context the

teachers would also be more aware of which factors created improvement in the learner, thus being in a better position to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and thereby potentially gaining a greater understanding of teaching as well as of student learning. From the comments made by teachers, several recommendations could be made:

1. Teachers could be more proactive in generating and using a greater range of ideas relating to interpretation, technique and the teaching of skills such as practice techniques. This could include working with other teachers, thereby developing their own self-understanding as well as pedagogical skills.
2. Teachers could explore more ways of relating to students, avoiding any temptation to encourage student dependency and being open, honest and flexible.
3. Teachers need to regularly reflect on and refresh their views in order to avoid rigid thinking relating to their own musical preferences, preferred means of teaching and expectations of the learner. A mentoring scheme and opportunities for discussion would be beneficial.
4. Teachers need to be aware of their teaching and the student's learning in relation to the wider contexts of higher education and lifelong learning, actively seeking to promote learner independence and autonomy.

Conclusion

Within the context of the university music department, the 'tradition' of one-to-one lessons has led to a generally unquestioning attitude as to the efficacy of this learning context. The fact that students are seeking alternatives should alert those in charge of organising instrumental tuition to question whether different learning contexts could be formally provided, or even made compulsory for students. In this way, the experience would be facilitated without the inherent difficulties making it likely for teachers (particularly those with little experience of this situation, or those who have only recently started teaching in the department) to feel threatened or under-valued, or to make judgements as to the loyalty and commitment of their students. The notion of student 'ownership' which appears to be actively fostered by some teachers, and which the three-year one-to-one relationship encourages, would also be lessened. In academic learning students experience a range of lecturers and teaching styles, meaning that they continually adapt to different teaching methods. However, one-to-one instrumental tuition can result in a lack of flexibility from both parties, with an acceptance of the status quo perhaps leading to tension between teacher and student when both realise the limitations of the other, and a less comprehensive coverage of repertoire, technique and interpretation (one teacher cannot be all things to every student). Outside the department, students are experiencing a wider range of relationships and learning to be increasingly responsible. Yet the one-to-one context can result in students becoming increasingly teacher-dependent. Those against students experiencing multiple teachers might argue that within the undergraduate years every student needs an adult who has a mentor-like role in their lives. However, this role is already provided by the student's supervisor and is structured through regular meetings each term.

From the perspective of the teacher, who may only visit the department once a fortnight, it can be easy to feel out of touch with course requirements, other staff and

the general ethos of the department. This can result in a narrow focus on the work being done with the student which negates the possibility of progression towards a higher goal of learning, such as autonomy, or developing the learner's understanding of learning. In the context of higher education teachers can easily focus on the attainment of performance targets which not only create specific learning goals for the student, but also produce a system of verification of the efficacy of the teaching. However, in the overall context of higher education musical learning, it could be argued that the student's awareness of the process of learning is more important than the product, as it is this understanding that will enable the student to be a lifelong and independent learner. If multiple teaching is to be a part of the student learning experience, teachers need to have a clear understanding of the aims of learning in a university context, and they need the support of other teachers to develop a wider, less subjective perspective. Insights from PhD supervision and business co-leadership could be applied to enable a wider range of collaborative approaches to instrumental teaching, particularly relating to role management issues.

Although instrumental learning should primarily have the learner's interests at heart, rather than the teacher's, perhaps one way of mediating between these diverse expectations is to construct a greater formal flexibility within the instrumental teaching structure, perhaps along the lines of Lyle's 'network approach' (1999, p. 10) and including open discussion of the aims for the student's learning and long-term development. Many students suggest that their perceived ideal learning context is to have one-to-one lessons with regular extra sessions such as masterclasses and/or one-off lessons with other teachers, which can then provide a stimulus for further development. This may initially be easier for both teachers and students to manage than a multiple concurrent teaching context. Perhaps when there is the possibility of experiencing a wider range of learning contexts within an open and discursive environment students may feel that they can arrange to study with multiple concurrent teachers without fear of repercussion, and a greater number of students, and teachers, may benefit.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to music students and instrumental teachers at the Department of Music, University of York for taking part in the research, and also to Dr John Potter and Professor John Lyle for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this article. The author would also like to pay tribute to Professor John Paynter, who was an inspiring Head of Department at the Music Department, University of York during the author's time as an undergraduate student.

Notes

- 1 The term 'instrumental' will subsequently be used to refer to both instrumental and vocal studies.
- 2 Personal communication: Professor John Lyle, March 2010.
- 3 Personal communication: Professor John Lyle, March 2010.

References

BOUD, D. (1988) *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*. London: Kogan Page.

- CAMPBELL, P. S. (1991) *Lessons from the World*. New York: Schirmer Books.
- CROSS, N. (1999) Individualization of training programmes. In N. Cross & J. Lyle (Eds), *The Coaching Process: Principles and Practice for Sport* (pp. 174–191). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- CRYER, P. (2006) *The Research Student's Guide to Success*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- DELAMONT, S., ATKINSON, P. & PARRY, O. (2004) *Supervising the Doctorate*. Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education.
- ELEY, A. & JENNINGS, R. (2005) *Effective Postgraduate Supervision: Improving the Student/Supervisor Relationship*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- ELEY, A. & MURRAY, R. (2009) *How to be an Effective Supervisor*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- GAUNT, H. (2006) *Student and teacher perceptions of one-to-one instrumental and vocal tuition in a conservatoire*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.
- GAUNT, H. (2008) One-to-one tuition in a conservatoire: the perceptions of instrumental and vocal teachers. *Psychology of Music*, **36**, 215–245.
- HALLAM, S. (1998) *Instrumental Teaching: a Practical Guide to Better Teaching and Learning*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- HIGGINS, M. C. & THOMAS, D. A. (2001) Constellations and careers: towards understanding the effects of multiple developmental relationships. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, **22**, 223–247.
- JØRGENSEN, H. (2000) Student learning in higher instrumental education: who is responsible? *British Journal of Music Education*, **17**, 67–77.
- KINGSBURY, H. (1988) *Music, Talent and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- KRAM, K. (1985) *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life*. Glenview: Scott, Foresman.
- LEHMANN, A. C., SLOBODA, J. A. & WOODY, R. H. (2007) *Psychology for Musicians: Understanding and Acquiring the Skills*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- LYLE, J. (1999) The coaching process: an overview. In N. Cross & J. Lyle (Eds), *The Coaching Process: Principles and Practice for Sport* (pp. 3–24). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- MAILE, A. (1999) Applied physiology in sports coaching. In N. Cross & J. Lyle (Eds), *The Coaching Process: Principles and Practice for Sport* (pp. 91–112). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- MANTURZEWSKA, M. (1990) A biographical study of the life-span development of professional musicians. *Psychology of Music*, **18**, 112–139.
- MILES, S. A. & WATKINS, M. D. (2007) The leadership team: complementary strengths or conflicting agendas? *Harvard Business Review*, April, 90–98.
- NEVIN, A. I., THOUSAND, J. S. & VILLA, R. A. (2009) Collaborative teaching for teacher educators – what does the research say? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, **25**, 569–574.
- O'TOOLE, J., GALBRAITH, J. & LAWLER, E. E. III (2002) When two heads are better than one: the promise and pitfalls of shared leadership. *California Management Review*, **44** (4), 65–83.
- PHILLIPS, E. M. & PUGH, D. S. (2006) *How to get a PhD*. 4th edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- PRESLAND, C. (2005) Conservatoire student and instrumental professor: the student perspective on a complex relationship. *British Journal of Music Education*, **22**, 237–248.
- SOLOMON, G. B., STRIEGEL, D. A., ELIOT, J. F., HEON, S. N., MAAS, J. L. & WADYA, V. K. (1996) The self-fulfilling prophecy in college basketball: implications for effective coaching. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, **8**, 44–59.
- TAYLOR, S. & BEASLEY, N. (2005) *A Handbook for Doctoral Supervisors*. London: Routledge.
- WISKER, G., EXLEY, K., ANTONIOU, M. & RIDLEY, P. (2008) *Working One-to-one with Students*. London: Routledge.
- WYMAN, O. (2005) *Designing Effective Co-leadership*. Delta Organization & Leadership. www.oliverwyman.com/ow/pdf_files/Designing_Effective_Co-Leadership_WP.pdf (accessed 27/2/2010).

Appendix 1. *Questionnaire 1, sent to all students*

1. What do you see as the advantages of having more than one teacher for the same instrument at the same time?
2. What do you see as the disadvantages?
3. What sort of students might benefit from this the most?

Appendix 2. *Questionnaire 2, sent to those students with experience of studying with two or more concurrent teachers*

1. Please describe how you came to have two or more teachers – did one teacher suggest it, or was it your idea? Why do you need two?
2. Do or did the teachers have different roles for you? Please describe.
3. Do you/did you feel that you have conflicting or complementary demands from your teachers? If so, how does this affect you?
4. Do/did the teachers know about each other?
5. Do the teachers talk to each other?
6. Do the teachers work as a team to help you learn?
7. Have you noticed any changes in your relationship with your teachers that you think results from having two teachers?
8. Does having two teachers work for you? If so, what are the elements that make it successful? (For example, your and your teacher's personalities, attitudes to work etc.) Or, if it doesn't/didn't work, why not?

Appendix 3. *Questionnaire 3, sent to instrumental and vocal teachers working with students at the University of York*

1. Have you ever been in a situation where one of your students has also had lessons from another teacher on the same instrument, at the same time?
2. If so, who arranged this – the student, the other teacher or yourself?
3. If you didn't arrange it, how did you feel about it?
4. Did you talk to the student about having two teachers?
5. Did you talk to the other teacher involved?
6. Did you work as a team to teach the student?
7. What were the effects on your student of having two teachers?
8. What were the effects on yourself?
9. Did it change anything about the way that you taught them and the relationship you had with them?
10. What do you see as the advantages of having more than one teacher at the same time?
11. What do you see as the disadvantages?