

Developing a dialogue between the conservatoire, the “near society”

A Design Thinking Workshop

Organised by SMS WG1 on the role of higher music education institutions in society

Date: Tuesday 3rd November, 14:30 CET

Delivered by Philip Harfield, Senior Lecturer in Design Thinking and Innovation, and Professor Jonathan Deacon, from the University of South Wales Many thanks to Anna Dent External Engagement Manager

The workshop utilised the Miro online whiteboard

Miro link - https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_ki_edGA=/

Abstract:

Design Thinking is a process for creative problem-solving which uses group thinking and human-centred approach to understand problems. It helps us to uncover new ways of approaching complex challenges which deliver on our promises for our organisation.

Through this process, participants will be encouraged to reflect and work creatively on how their institution can develop a more dialogic relationship with their local communities and engage more extensively and deeply with societal needs.

This may involve, for example, coming up with ideas for:

- Audience engagement and participation, being a resource within the local community, embracing diversities and championing inclusion
- Partnerships, and working collaboratively across disciplines and professional fields
- Curriculum development and future programs

The workshop is meant for students, staff and leaders of higher music education institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Design Thinking provides a framework for looking wide for preferred solutions and a focus for possible problems. It is human-centred, seeking shared understanding of the needs of others (empathy) as the building block for solving problems.

As design thinkers, our mindset is:

- We understand a preferred state is out there
- We see a complex web interrelated issues
- We seek human perspectives to guide us.

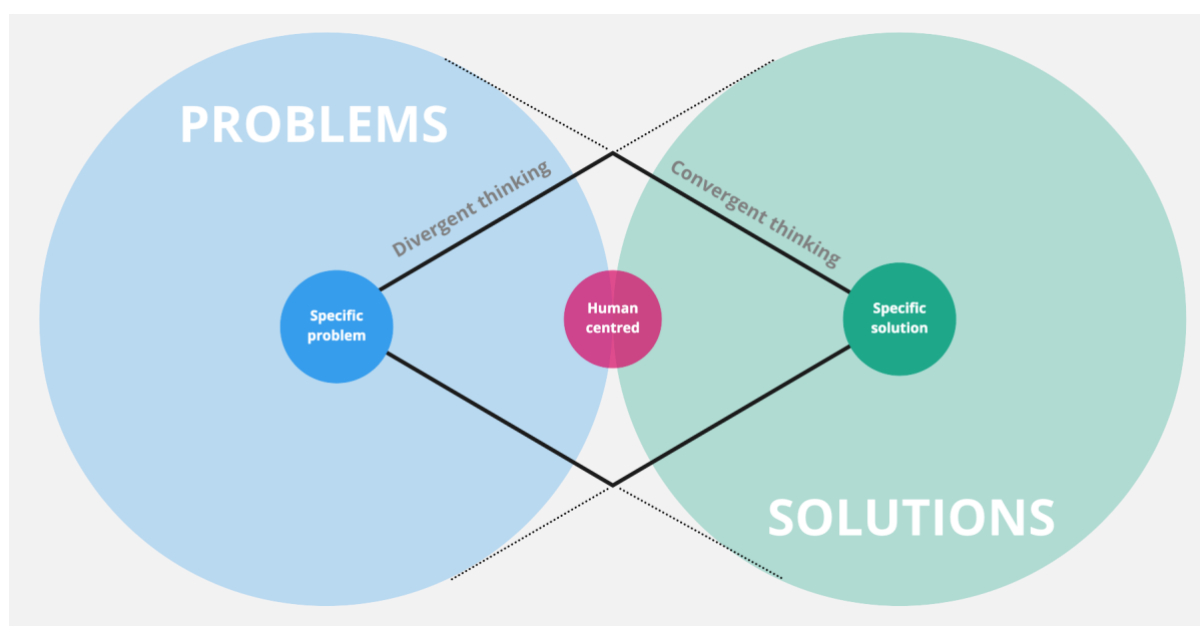


Figure 1: Design Thinking as a human-centred approach to problem solving visual (Philip Harfield)

ACTIVITY 1 - 'WHERE DO YOU STAND'

Two questions were pitched to participants, in order to 'find where you stand' through positioning on the four fields

Q1) Artistic practice works for the good of society when it: UNITES.....DISRUPTS

Q2) Artistic practice creates dialogue when it: EMPATHISES..... CONFRONTS

Introductory questions raised:

- Why bias disruption? - do we need to jolt the audience, in order to invite them to the problem?
- Why bias unity? - Does disruption make us uncomfortable?
- Why bias Empathy – Is shared experience how we define our practice?
- Why bias Confrontation – Do we have a confrontational (ACTIVIST) voice?
- Does your stance (position) reflect the flavour of innovation you seek?
- Are you comfortable with this badge?

ACTIVITY 2 – THREE PERSPECTIVES

To explore three (human-centred) perspectives in facilitated break-out groups:

BREAK-OUT GROUP 1- THE PERSPECTIVE of a potential (pre-application) student:

An 18 year old 'potential' student has just search for courses to study next year, and excited by the prospect of starting an undergraduate course in music, has found your institute online.

Describe your **empathy** with their experience of the next few minutes as they explore your world? Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what they SEE, HEAR THINK & FEEL , SAY & DO as they experience your way!

FACILITATOR PROMPTS: Channels (online), do peers hold more influence than family? What do they hope to find most? What fears do they have, and are they part of this experience?

THE PERSPECTIVE of a potential (pre-application) student:

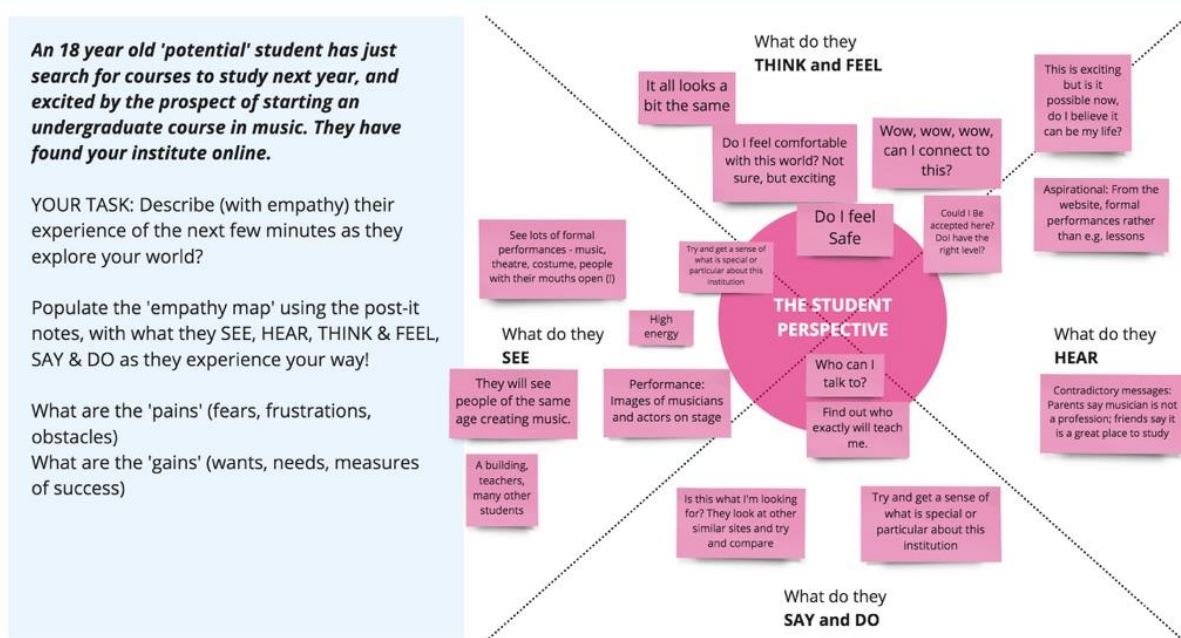


Figure 2: Student perspective empathy map

BREAK-OUT GROUP 2- THE PERSPECTIVE of the new audience:

A family is looking to attend a live performance, and is debating what a shared entertainment experience means to them.

TASK: Describe (**with empathy**) as they discuss alternate in ways to perform and consume. Express your vulnerability when reaching out to new audiences. Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what the family SEE, THINK, SAY, DO as their conversation unfolds!

ACTIONS: Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what they SEE, HEAR THINK & FEEL , SAY & DO as they find their new way!

FACILITATOR PROMPTS: Has the sector changed? What factors are at play: convenience, cost, competition, availability, opinions within family, exposure to, What barriers exist?

THE PERSPECTIVE of the new audience:

A family is looking to attend a 'live performance', and is debating what a shared entertainment experience means to them.

YOUR TASK: Describe (with empathy) their emotions as the conversation unfolds. Their attitudes towards alternate ways to experience a 'live performance'.

Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what they SEE, HEAR, THINK & FEEL, SAY & DO as their conversation unfolds!

What are the 'pains' (fears, frustrations, obstacles)
What are the 'gains' (wants, needs, measures of success)
You should reflect on your vulnerability when reaching out to new audiences.

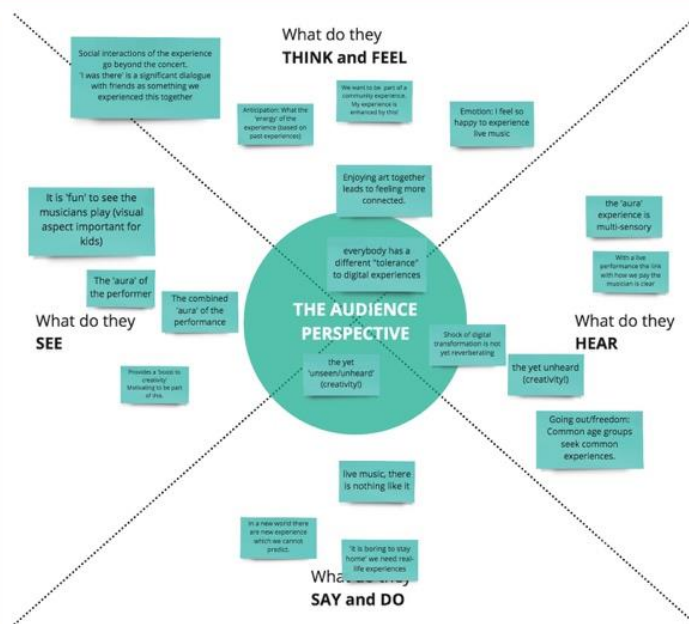


Figure 3: Audience perspective empathy map

BREAK-OUT GROUP 3 - THE PERSPECTIVE of the industry:

Opening back up for the first time in 7 months is an emotional prospect for the owner of a small performance venue. They face instability and financial uncertainty.

Describe (with empathy) their experience of getting back to business, and their reflection on how 'the skills they need now are different'. Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what they SEE, HEAR, THINK & FEEL, SAY & DO as they find their new way! FACILITATOR PROMPTS: Has their audience (or expectation) changed? Disrupted plans and long-term thinking?

THE PERSPECTIVE of the industry:

Opening back up for the first time in 7 months is an emotional prospect for the owner of a small performance venue. They face instability and financial uncertainty.

YOUR TASK: Describe (with empathy) their experience of getting back to business

Populate the 'empathy map' using the post-it notes, with what they SEE, HEAR, THINK & FEEL, SAY & DO as they find their 'new normal' way!

What are the 'pains' (fears, frustrations, obstacles)
What are the 'gains' (wants, needs, measures of success)

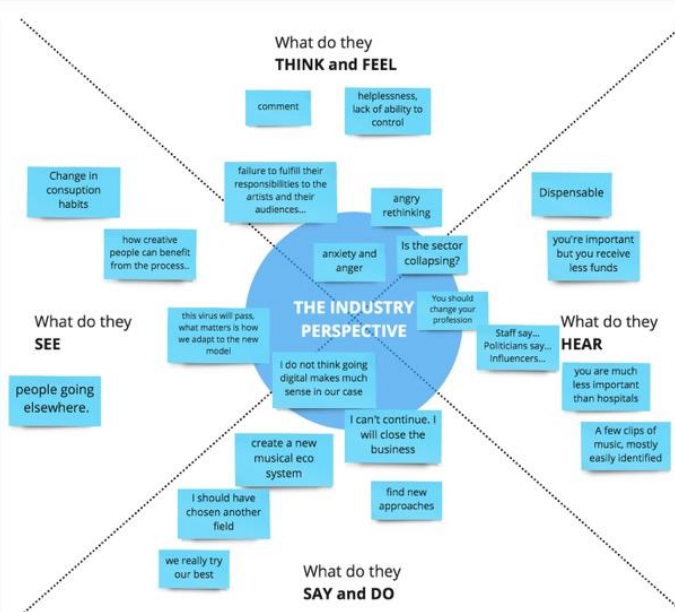


Figure 4: Industry perspective empathy map

BRING THE PERSPECTIVES TOGETHER

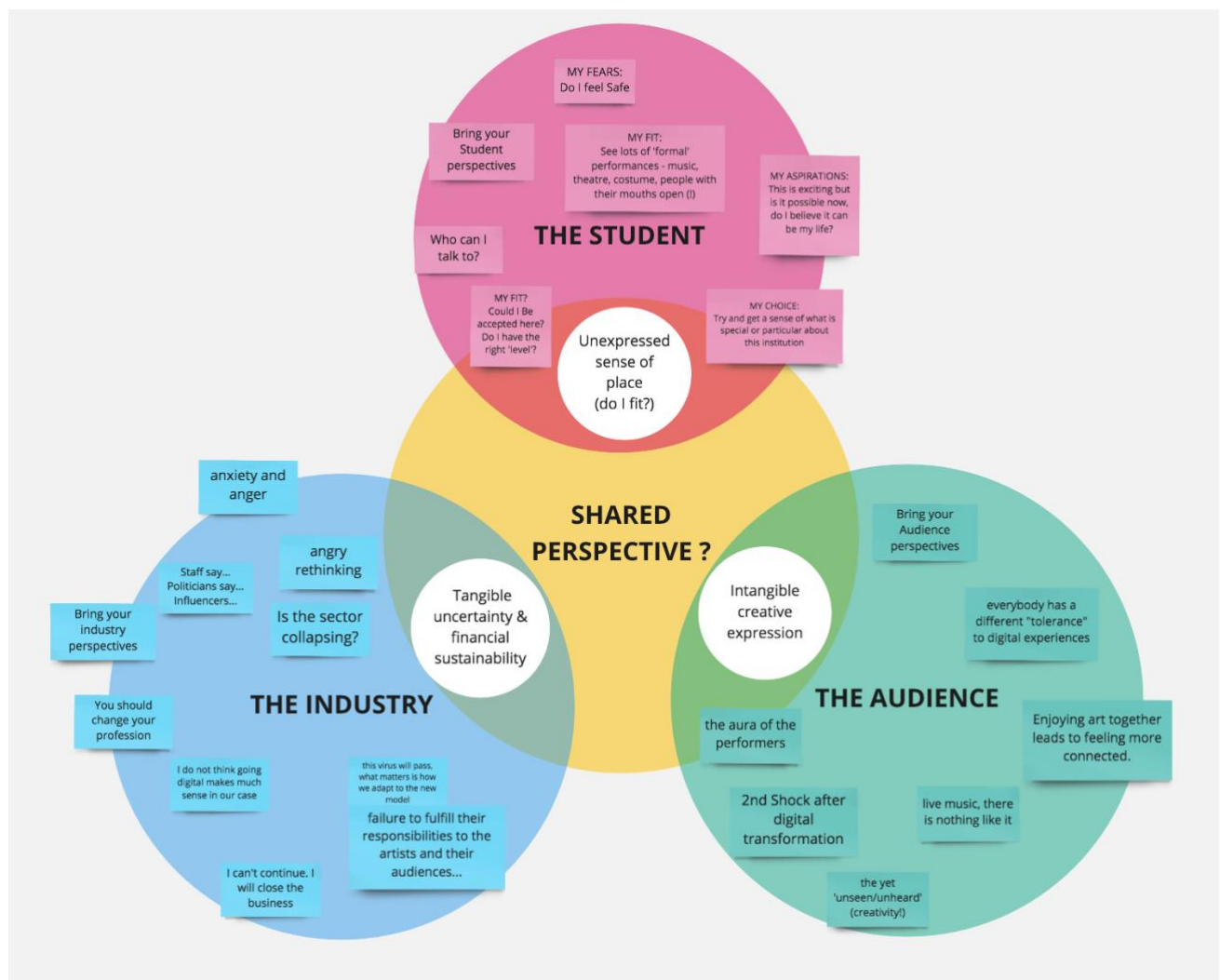


Figure 5: Key perspectives mapped and themes identified

Rationale to drive broad field of questions regarding gaps in understanding of alternate perspectives?

- Where they disagree (diverge)
- Where they agree (converge)
- What are the shared concerns (overlaps)?
- Why do they exist?
- What as an organisation do we not see?

OUTCOMES: Key perspectives

- **STUDENT – Vulnerability in recognising a sense of place (do I fit?)**
- **INDUSTRY - Uncertainty in the face of tangible challenges (is this sustainable?)**
- **AUDIENCE – Transition in light of the intangibility of creative expression (is this experience emotional?)**

ACTIVITY 3 – THREE PROVOCATIONS (25 Mins)

Participants break-out into 3 groups again; each group has a different ‘provocation’ which frames conversations around: Radical Transformations | Shared Journeys | New dialogues

GROUP 1 PROVOCATION TOWARDS RADICAL TRANSFORMATION:

No other field demands specialist performance excellence as an entry requirement to education (outside elite sport)

How might we ‘Radically Transform’ our ‘excellence criteria’ as an entry requirement?

Here we redefine our admissions criteria for success. Do they respond to new contexts? Do they revisit the question who gets to train now.

Facilitator Notes: Is a direct parallel to elite sport fair?

Can admissions criteria be weighted for passion + integrity + ambition....not ability?

Is the following anecdotal evidence (from ABRSM forums) a fair reflection?

- *‘Many teachers have never had a pupil with an A+ which really means exceptional in all aspects and virtually error free at auditions’.*
- *‘Distinctions at higher grades, especially at grade 8 and Diploma levels, are rightfully hard to attain and can only happen as a result of many conditions being met.’*
- *‘You need a support system to condition student to perform consistently at high level e.g. Performance classes, masterclasses, festivals, etc.’*

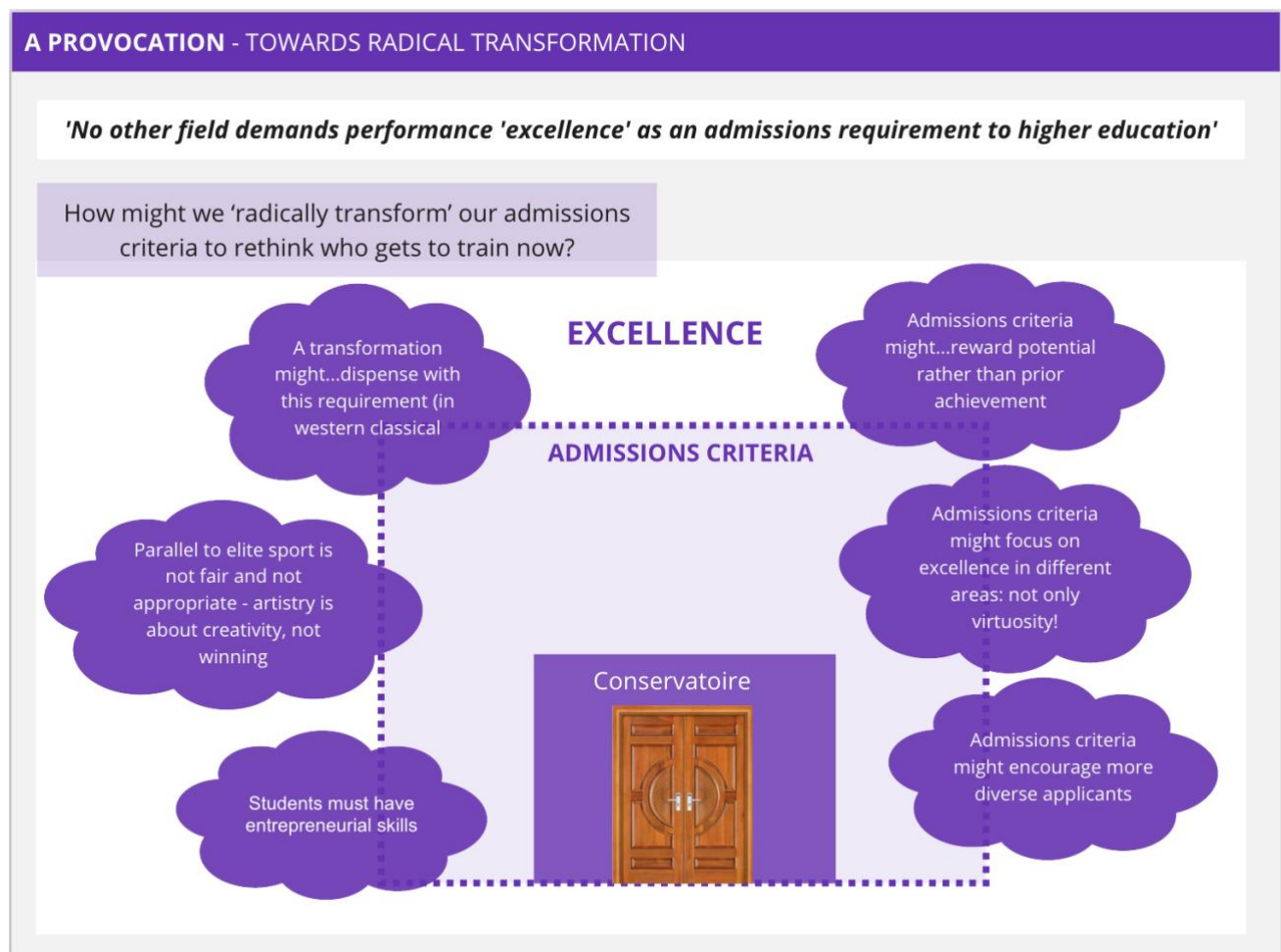


Figure 6: responses to transformative provocation

GROUP 2 PROVOCATION TOWARDS COLLABORATIVE JOURNEYS:

'I play but where does it pay' becomes a demand informed by the post Covid landscape, which is disrupted and dynamic.

How might we provide a new journey to professionalism for this new normal?

Here we reflect on the emerging professional marketplace.

Facilitator Notes:

What are alternative professional pathways - self-taught professional which bypass HEI?

At what point does the public purse stop?

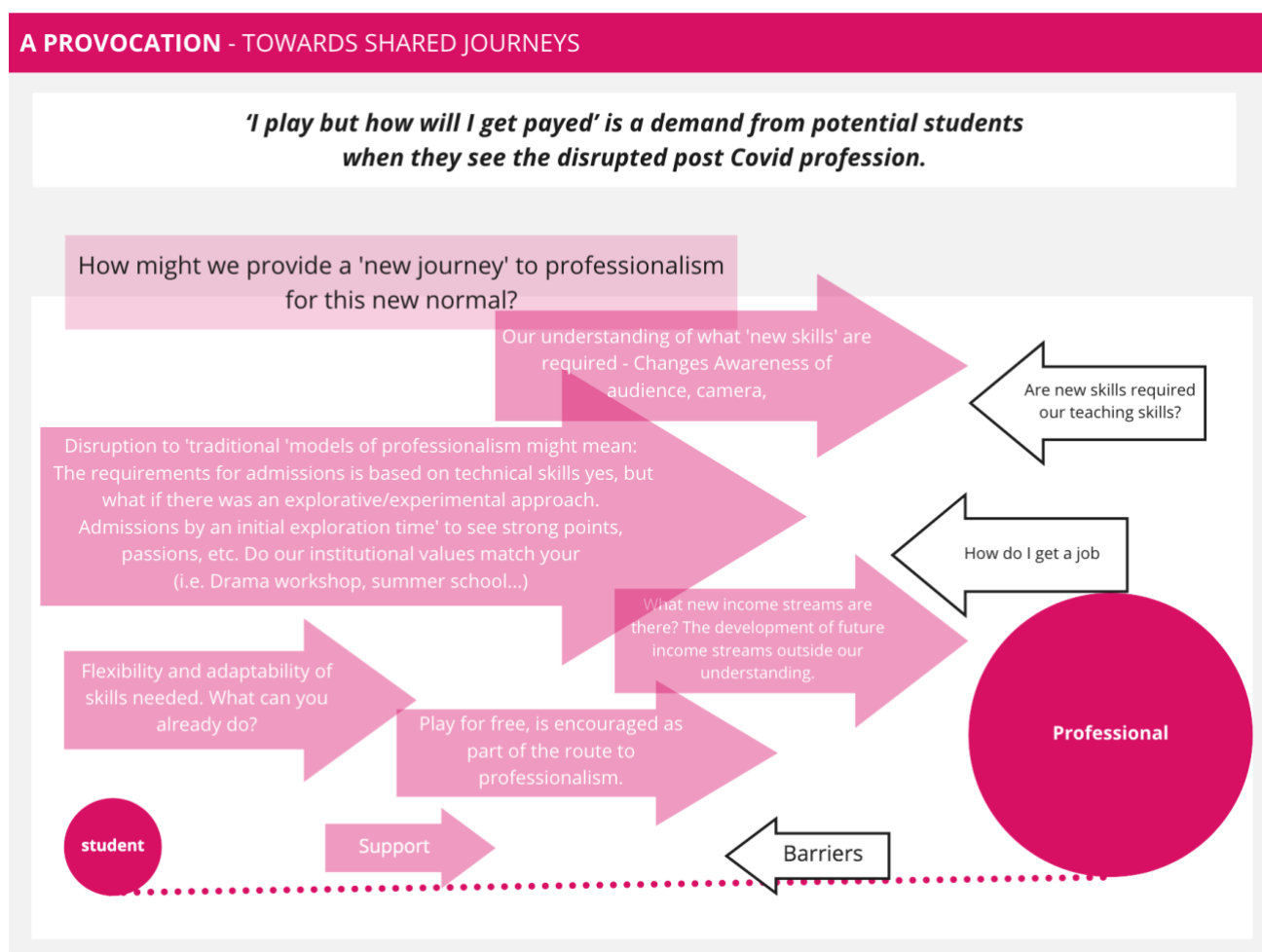


Figure 7: responses to professional journey provocation

GROUP 3 PROVOCATION TOWARDS CHALLENGE-BASED DIALOGUE:

'Conservatoires don't reflect the challenges we face in the community'

How might we build a collaborative journey through answering unmet community needs?

Here we find shared challenges as seen through the eyes of community?

Facilitator Notes: Building dialogue. What is our civic mission? What are the community needs we address? How do we proactively engage in issues such as gender, race, class?

A PROVOCATION - TOWARDS BUILDING NEW DIALOGUE

'Conservatoires don't reflect the challenges we face in the local community'

How might we build new community dialogue through answering their unmet needs?

Can we establish any reliable way of getting to know what our community really needs?

What / who is our community composed of? People who live in the same place? Other conservatoires? Other universities in our city?

Engage a wider conversation. Who do we consider our broader stakeholder/audience?

Community needs....

HOW MIGHT DESIGN THINKING HELP US UNDERSTAND THESE NEEDS?

Our voice on those challenges, is there a shared narrative?

Offer education in different genres than what we offer so far!

Digital communication with collecting responses from community

Figure 8: responses to community dialogue provocation

Wrap-up thoughts:

Do our three provocations provide insight into how to respond to our stakeholder perspectives?

- STUDENT – Vulnerability in recognising a sense of place (do I fit?)
- INDUSTRY - Uncertainty in the face of tangible challenges (is this sustainable?)
- AUDIENCE – Transition in light of the intangibility of creative expression (is this experience emotional?)

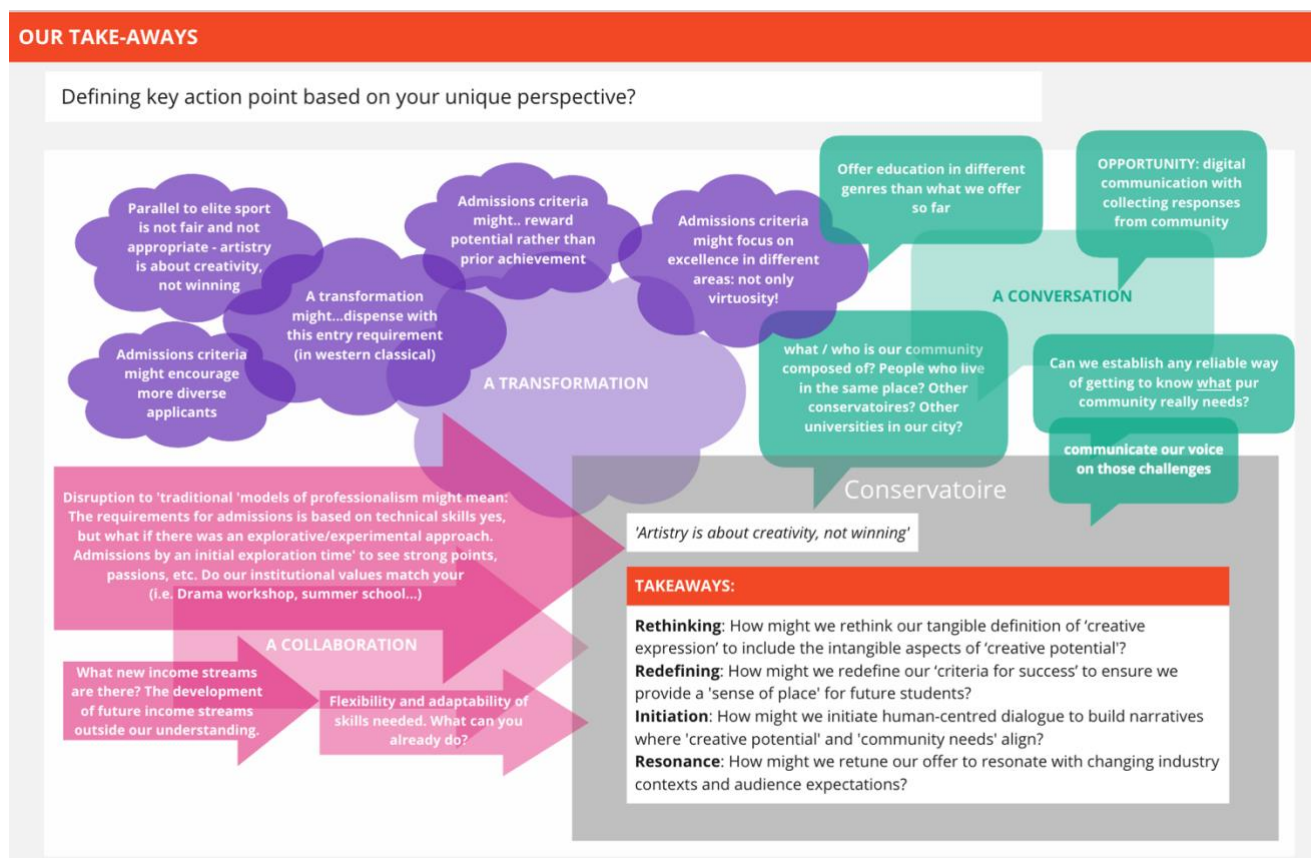
KEY WORKSHOP TAKEAWAYS:

Rethinking: How might we rethink our definition of 'creative expression' to include the intangible aspects of 'creative potential'?

Redefining: How might we redefine our 'criteria for success' to ensure we provide a 'sense of place' for future students?

Initiation: How might we initiate human-centred dialogue to build narratives where 'creative potential' and 'community needs' align?

Resonance: How might we retune our offer to resonate with changing industry contexts and audience expectations?



Many thanks to all the participants, for deeper dives into Design Thinking and Design-Led Innovation, please contact:

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