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Ammatillisen koulutuksen
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sijoittuminen



TAITEEN KESKUSTOIMIKUNTA. TUTKIMUSYKSIKÖN JULKAISUJA N:o 31
ARTS COUNCIL OF FINLAND. RESEARCH REPORTS No 31

Taiteen keskustoimikunta
Arts Council of Finland
2006

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Kansi: Kari Piippo

Taitto: Jussi Hirvi

ISBN 952-5253-63-5

ISSN 1796-6612

 Lönnerberg Print
Helsinki 2006

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Professional training in the arts and the labour market

English Summary

Introduction

In 2002, the Research Unit of the Arts Council of Finland launched a project with the aim to examine the situation of Finnish artist training. The need for the study derived from the growth of the volume of professional training in the arts¹⁴⁴, which had catalysed a discussion on its effects and objectives. Artists' organisations in particular expressed concern about increased training which, according to them, caused an oversupply of artists in the Finnish labour market. The purpose of the project was to clarify the actual volume of graduated artists, and especially their employment situation. One of the main questions was whether graduated artists enter the art field or some other field of occupation.

In order to examine these questions, the project started by mapping the data sources on artists' professional training. The objective of the mapping was, among others, to find out the need for specific projects in data collection. This first phase of the project proved that many official databases deal with training, graduates and employment and include valuable and extensive data. However, these databases also lack features which are quite essential when dealing with the training in the arts. For example, they do not include information about the quality of the graduates' employment, i.e., the line of job. Moreover, the definitions and classifications of these databases are insufficient for the purposes of the research project on artists. In most cases, such as theatre and dance, the art forms are combined in one category and cannot be separated. The same holds true for fine arts and audiovisual media. Furthermore, the degree titles might be pre-

144 Professional training in the arts = training on all educational levels, targeted to occupational qualification.

sented in such a general manner that it is impossible to separate, say, a photographer from a ceramic artist. Since databases – being very useful as such – did not answer some of the vital questions of the project, we decided to launch a set of surveys in order to get more detailed information on art graduates and their status in the labour market.

In 2003 and 2004, two surveys directed to those who had either a secondary level degree or a polytechnic degree were carried out at the Arts Council of Finland. The first survey covered the degree programmes of fine arts and audiovisual media. The second survey dealt with the degree programmes of dance, music and theatre. These surveys concentrated on the employment situation of graduates, as well as their opinions about the training received¹⁴⁵.

University level training was examined through the above-mentioned official databases, and the studies were carried out – for instance for evaluation purposes – in the training institutions in question. Separate surveys were not carried out at the university level¹⁴⁶.

This report is an overview of the above-mentioned studies carried out at the Arts Council of Finland, supplemented with the information received from databases and other sources. The aim of the report is to illustrate in a nutshell the situation of Finnish artist training and to discuss the unemployment and possible oversupply of artists in different fields of art.

Professional training in the arts in Finland

Artists' professional training in Finland dates back to the 19th century when most of the predecessors of recent art universities were founded. In addition to these "major" institutions, many private schools in different art fields were established mainly in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these also received public subsidies from national or municipal authorities. In the education reform of the mid 1980s the whole so called intermediate level was renewed, and training in the arts was partly reorganised and linked administratively with other professional training.

145 All publications of the project are listed in appendix (liite) 1.

146 In the mid 1990s the Research Unit of the Arts Council of Finland carried out a number of surveys dealing with the graduates from art universities.

Major events in the history of Finnish training in the arts

	19 th century	1900–1950	1950–1970	1970–1990	1990–
Architecture	Founding of predecessor of Helsinki University of Technology (1872)		Architecture at Oulu University (1958) Department of Architecture at Tampere University of Technology (1969)		
Cinema			Cinema studies at the University of Art and Design (1959)	Studies in audiovisual media at intermediate level in the 1980s	Polytechnic level education in audiovisual media
Crafts and design	Founding of predecessor of University of Art and Design (1871) Handicraft schools in provinces			Artisan and artenom degrees (1987)	Polytechnic level education
Dance		Ballet School of National Opera (1921)		Department of Dance in Theatre Academy (1983) Professional training of dance teachers in the 1980s	Polytechnic level education
Fine arts	Founding of predecessor of Academy of Fine Arts (1848)	Free Art School (1935)	Founding of art schools maintained by artist associations		Polytechnic level education
Music	Founding of predecessor of Sibelius Academy (1882)		Music schools	Professional training in conservatories 1970s	Polytechnic level education
Theatre		School of National Theatre (1906) School of Swedish Theatre (1908) Finnish Drama Institute (1920) Founding of predecessor of Theatre Academy (1943)	Drama Studio in Tampere School of Social Sciences (1960) Tampere University, Department of Acting (1966)		Polytechnic level education

In the 1990s the most important reform in Finnish educational life was the forming of polytechnics. One of the aims of this reform was to connect the labour market and education more closely with each other and to react to the needs of changing working life. In addition, the objective was to raise the standard of highest level professional training. Polytechnics were formed on the basis of former intermediate level institutions and were at the same time combined into larger units with diversified fields of study. All in all 250 institutions were merged into 29 polytechnics. For artistic training institutions this meant the reorganising of training with more general objectives and in larger administrative units than before.

The quantitative needs of art graduates as well as the objectives of artist training have been under discussion for decades by arts policy decision-makers and other actors in the field. In the 1960s and 1970s in particular, several official documents discussed artists' training. The key message of the documents of these decades was that the professional training of artists should be connected more closely to the general education system. The reason for this was the idea that students of the arts should also receive permanent government financing as well as general student benefits. As far as the quantitative needs were concerned, the majority of documents stated that the need for (professionally educated) artists would grow in the future and the number of students should be increased. One exception to this rule was a report on the training of fine arts (1973). This document emphasised, unlike the others, that there was no need to increase the number of trainees in the fine arts since already a high proportion of graduates did not have work corresponding to their training.

Far reaching ideas were presented at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s when the Committee of Audiovisual Culture published several reports including proposals on professional training. The committee proposed, for example, the increase of audiovisual culture professionals and introduced new degree programmes. Besides audiovisual media, the committee made proposals concerning the field of theatre. Consequently, a number of new training programmes and institutions were established. However, this manner of thinking changed quickly when, at the end of the 1990s, the discussion about the oversupply of artists was initiated in several art fields, mostly by the artists' associations. Also, among educational authorities the idea suggesting a possible oversupply of graduated artists gained ground and the policy makers started to emphasise that the number of graduates should be based on the needs of the labour market. Alongside these ideas, the new indicator-based management was also launched in educational administration. This meant that institutions were obliged to follow-up the employment of graduates.

Currently, professional training, for example, in cultural degree programmes on the secondary level is restricted by the instructions of

the Ministry of Education. The number of students in several polytechnics is also proposed to be restricted. At the university level, the volume of arts students has been rather low during the years and no considerable changes have been suggested. However, in spite of the restricting actions new training units or degree programmes have continued to be established up until now although not as many as at the end of the 1990s.

The objectives and decision-making of training institutions in the arts operate nowadays under the same rules and regulations as any other training in Finland. Thus, artists' training no longer officially falls into the field of cultural policy since the decisions are made by the educational authorities. The general educational policy objectives are defined by the Finnish government and in the regularly published Education and Research Development Plan (the latest for 2003–2008). Being under the same rules and methods of measurement as the other fields of study is, however, a twofold issue for artistic training institutions. On the one hand, the situation ensures stability and constant development, for example, in financing. On the other hand, certain characteristics of arts training institutions might be considered secondary. For example, the tradition of studying in small units and the master-apprentice-idea cannot necessarily be realized in large institutions with diversified study fields. Moreover, the adoption of a more formal curriculum decreases the time devoted to the practical studies of one's own art.

Educational levels and the number of graduates

At the moment it is possible to take a professional degree in all fields of art¹⁴⁷. Professional training in the arts is also provided at all educational levels. At the secondary level there are in total 56 institutions providing training in five art fields¹⁴⁸. Annually about 900 persons graduate from secondary level training (excl. crafts). This is approximately three percent of the total number of secondary level graduates in all fields of study. The majority of secondary level training institutions in the arts provide training in audiovisual media. At the polytechnic level art training is offered in 23 institutions and in six art fields. Annually almost 1 500 persons graduate from polytechnic level art training institutions. This is about seven percent of the total number of polytechnic level graduates. The highest numbers of stu-

147 In literature, the training has been organised mainly in separate courses (e.g. creative writing). Currently, a Master's degree in writing is available at the University of Jyväskylä in 2006.

148 If secondary level artisan training is included, the number of institutions is 83.

dents and graduates represent the fields of audiovisual media and crafts & design.

At the university level the most important training institutions are so-called art universities, i.e., the Academy of Fine Arts, the Theatre Academy, the Sibelius Academy and the University of Arts and Design (UIAH). Besides art universities, some scientific universities also provide training in the arts. The University of Lapland has a faculty of arts where it is possible to take a Master's degree, for example, in audiovisual media, graphic design and industrial design. The Department of Acting at the University of Tampere provides university level professional training for actors. In addition to these, the Helsinki University of Technology, the Tampere University of Technology and the Department of Architecture at the Oulu University train architects. Annually altogether about 500 persons graduate from university level art training, composing about four percent of the total number of university level graduates in all fields of study. The highest number of students and graduates at the university level represent the field of crafts & design.

Table 1. The number of training institutions in 2006 by art form and educational level

<i>Art form</i>	<i>Secondary level institutions</i>	<i>Polytechnic level institutions</i>	<i>University level institutions</i>	<i>Total</i>
Architecture	–	–	3	3
Cinema & audiovisual media	34	17	2	53
Crafts and design*	52	12	2	66
Fine arts	16	8	3	27
Dance	6	3	1	10
Music	17	10	1	28
Theatre**	1	4	2	7
Total	56*	23	9	98

* Secondary level training in crafts and design is not considered here as artistic training. The artisan training at this level includes education of, e.g., carpenters, shoemakers and weavers, which requires manual skills but does not necessarily lead to artistic professions. However, the numbers and proportions of artisans are given in the tables and figures of the report.

** Circus at the secondary level.

Table 2. The number of graduates of artistic training institutions in 2004 by art form and educational level

Art form	Secondary level institutions	Polytechnic level institutions	University level institutions	Total
Architecture	–	–	93	93
Cinema & audio-visual media	524	484	35	1043
Crafts and design*	1166	531	75	1772
Fine arts**	204	146	98	448
Dance	16	13	13	42
Music	168	252	124	544
Theatre	–	54	42	96
Total	912*	1 480	480	2872*

* Secondary level training in crafts and design is not considered in this report as artistic training. The artisan training at this level includes education of carpenters, shoemakers, and weavers, which requires manual skills but does not necessarily lead to an artistic profession. At the university level, the figures include graduates from the design department and the degree programme of graphic arts at the UIAH and from the Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Lapland.

** Figures for fine arts at the university level include the graduates from the Academy of Fine Arts, as well as the degree programmes of fine arts, arts education and photography at the UIAH.

One of the characteristics of Finnish artists – regardless of the field – is that their education level is very high. For example, in 2000 the proportion of professionally trained of over 15 year old population was 59 percent but in most art fields the share was considerably higher. In architecture, the proportion of professionally educated was fully 100 percent since the occupation requires diploma¹⁴⁹. Moreover, in crafts and design and fine arts the share of trained was over 90 percent and in dance, music and theatre over 70 percent. The training of artists seems also to be multiple since the number of those who take more than one formal degree is considerable, especially among those who have a secondary level degree in fine arts, music and audiovisual media.

Employment of graduates in the arts

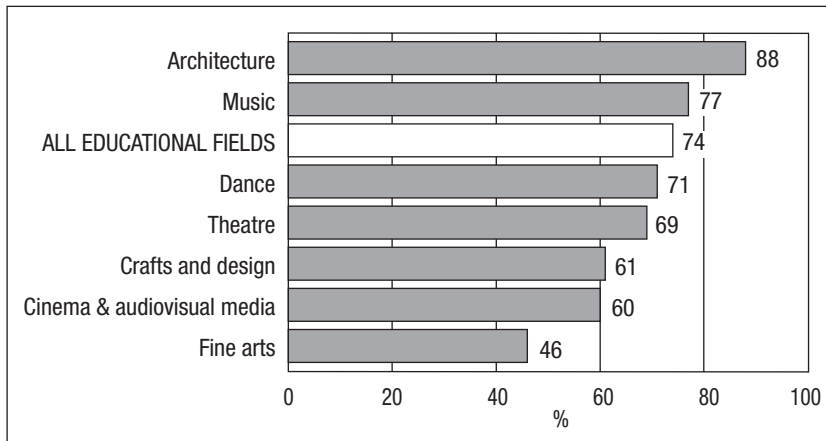
The employment of art graduates has been studied through both the data produced by the Research Unit of the Arts Council of Finland and official databases as well as other studies. The main variables

¹⁴⁹ Architects are an exception among artistic professions since in every other art field it is still possible to practise a profession without a formal degree.

examined were the proportions of employed and unemployed. Also, the proportions of freelancers and the share of artistic work of income sources were examined through the survey data.

Figure 1 describes the proportions of employed graduates in different fields. As can be seen, the proportions vary considerably by art form. The share of employed is highest among architects (88 %) and lowest among the graduates of fine arts (46 %). In most art fields, the share of employed is lower than in all educational fields in general.

Figure 1. The proportion (%) of employed graduates* in different art fields



* Graduation years 2000–2004. Employed includes employed students. Employment branch is not known.

Source: Statistics Finland.

The proportions of art graduates working in the field corresponding to their training vary also according to art form and occupational group. The line of work was examined by surveys in which the questions dealt with jobs, occupational titles and main income sources. At the secondary level, information about the income sources is somewhat misleading since many graduates continue their studies and thus live on student benefits. Nevertheless, the results showed that graphic designers and dancers with secondary level degrees are very well employed in their own branch¹⁵⁰. At the polytechnic level the results concerning main income sources were similar: graphic designers and dance teachers¹⁵¹ were in general working in the field corresponding to their training. Also, those with music degrees had jobs corresponding to their education. The areas with clear problems in

150 As for dancers, this is due to the fact that part of the respondents in the field of dance were graduated from the Ballet School of National Opera and were mostly recruited straight into the National Opera.

151 Polytechnics provide training only for dance teachers not for dancers.

getting work in the arts were fine arts, audiovisual media and theatre. At the university level the sources concerning employment do not give much information about the graduates' line of work. However, according to earlier studies, we know that the most problematic fields with regard to employment in one's "own" field are fine arts and dance while, for example, music professionals with university level degrees have a rather satisfactory situation in this respect.

Conclusion

Training in the arts in Finland has increased considerably during the past 15–20 years. The growth in training has been faster than in other educational fields. Along with this growth, artist training has become one of the major topics in the arts policy discussion. The main line of the discussion has been the consideration of whether there is too much artist training or not. This concern is due to significant proportions of unemployed in some art fields. Artists' organisations and the media have repeatedly raised the question about the oversupply of artists in relation to existing jobs. However, it must be taken into account that the growth in training in the arts has not been as uncontrollable as one might think. In fact, the decisions concerning new degree programmes and institutions have been made together with representatives of art fields, for example, in governmental committees. Besides, in spite of the growth, training in the arts still comprises only a small part of the entity of professional training. The proportion of art graduates among all educational levels is under five percent of all Finnish graduates.

In addition, when dealing with the volumes and trends of artists' training it must be borne in mind that there is actually no such homogenous group as "artists", but many groups of artists representing different fields. These fields vary in terms of labour market status, educational structures, income level, and composition. Although the growth of training has been characteristic of most of the art fields, the focus of growth has concentrated on different educational levels depending on the art form. Further, the number of annual graduates varies according to art form from a few dozen (dance) to a couple of thousand (crafts & design). The multiple training also might lead to misinterpretations concerning volume of training since the total number of graduates from different educational levels is partly overlapping.

The results of the research project reported in this publication show considerable differences in the proportions of unemployed among art graduates. The highest share of unemployed is among graduated fine artists and the lowest in music and architecture. This result was uniform according to all sources (official education data-

bases, Arts Council studies, other reports). The background for the level of unemployment in fine arts is known on the basis of other studies concerning fine artists. The lack of an employment structure and the tradition of working as a free artist without any contracts often leads to a situation where the artist cannot make a living on his/her art. In contrast, the situation in music seems, according to these results, much brighter. The reason for this is mainly the occupational distribution of the field of graduated music professionals, namely, the high share of music educators. In general music educators have jobs, but the problem seems to be that these jobs do not offer sufficient income due to the temporary and part-time nature of the contracts.

In the field of music, genre seems to be decisive concerning employment and income. For example, the situation of classical musicians is better than those in rhythm music (pop, rock, jazz, folk). The last mentioned musicians mostly work as freelancers without a permanent job and salary. Thus, the differences in unemployment among graduates are mostly art-form related. For example, the level of training did not have much effect on the general situation although it was evident that the graduates of university level training had the lowest unemployment rate compared to other educational levels. An exception was dance, where the unemployment rate of university graduates was higher than that of the polytechnic graduates. The explanation is, once again, the occupational distribution of the field. At the polytechnic level training is provided only for dance teachers while those graduated from the university are mainly performing dance artists or choreographers. The situation of the last mentioned, who also represent contemporary dance, is known to be difficult when it comes to employment possibilities since the number of employing institutions is very limited.

Statistics from all educational fields show that a high employment level usually corresponds with a high educational level. However, in the arts the most relevant factor concerning employment does not seem to be the level of education but the art form. Although the unemployment level of university level graduates was the lowest compared to other levels in almost every field¹⁵², the sequence of art fields remained almost the same in spite of the educational level. (Table 3.)

152 An exception was dance, where the proportion of unemployed among the polytechnic level graduates was lower than that of the university level graduation. The explanation is that only dance teachers are trained at the polytechnic level and they do have jobs.

Table 3. The proportion (%) of unemployed graduates* by art form and educational level

	Secondary level	Polytechnic level	University level	All educational levels
Architecture	–	–	2	2
Audiovisual media/cinema	23	15	9	19
Crafts & design	18	14	9	16
Dance	18	4	13	12
Fine arts	27	29	18	27
Music	10	6	5	7
Theatre	–	25	15	19
ALL EDUCATIONAL FIELDS	15	7	5	10

* Graduation years 2000–2004.

Source: Statistics Finland.

Nor did gender have a strong effect on the unemployment rate of the art graduates. However, there were a few features which seemed to be more common among women than among men. For example, they showed that female graduates were more likely to continue their studies, to be outside the labour market (family reasons) and work at part-time jobs.

In spite of the fact that many art graduates are employed rather well and most of them also in a job corresponding to their training, it should be taken into consideration that employment does not mean the same as income. Most of the jobs in the arts are temporary and part-time, and do not provide sufficient income. This is a feature which is becoming more common in other sectors, too.

The situation of art graduates differs from that of the graduates from other fields to some extent. The most striking phenomenon is the level of unemployment which – apart from a couple of exceptions – is higher in the arts than in other educational fields. Also, multiple job-holding and multiprofessionalism are general features among artists although these are becoming common in other fields, too. Moreover, the importance of personal networks and contacts seems to be more relevant in the arts. Training in the arts can also lead – if not to an actual occupation – at least to a lifelong hobby and activity in the arts, which hardly is the case in many other fields of study.

One of the main questions of the research project reported here was whether there are too many graduated artists or not. Determining the possible oversupply in the arts is not an easy task for several reasons. For example, due to the different definitions of artists it is difficult to determine the size of the actual labour force. In addition, when

the work is done on a freelance basis or totally without contracts it is difficult to predict the volume of the available jobs. Consequently, the answer to the question of oversupply depends on the objectives of artist training. If employment is considered to be a main objective of artist training the obvious solution is to cut the volume of training. Then again, if the objective is to produce art professionals of good quality, cutting the volume of training is not necessarily the right solution. However, in the last mentioned case the situation concerning employment remains problematic.

The question of what professional training is considered to imply comes also into focus. In many cases, for example, the artist organisations have considered that publicly subsidised training is at least implicitly an assurance of employment in a given field and for this reason they have demanded a decrease in the training volume. The fact is, however, that today education only makes it possible to aim at a certain labour market but does not necessarily guarantee access.

All in all, the results of the studies of the Arts Council of Finland did not indicate a serious oversupply of artists, although the unemployment rates in fine arts and audiovisual media were quite alarming. Cutting training would probably not help, at least in the case of fine artists, since unemployment among them has been a general feature for decades. The situation is dependent on the structure of the field and the markets for visual art and not so much on the increase in training.

The experiences of the last decade's educational policy decisions indicate that any prediction of the future need for artists is – if not impossible – at least very difficult. In many cases predictions have been made under the influence of certain trends, such as the enthusiasm for the growing audiovisual industry or even the creative industry as such. These trends do not necessarily form a solid base for educational or cultural policy decisions because of the special characteristics of the artists' labour markets and the unpredictability of future demand for the arts.