



23-25 October 2003, Tilburg, Netherlands

24 October, Friday

Breakout session I

The impact of international mobility on arts education from art student's perspective

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There was one main point, which this breakout group carried forward from the presentation of the LAA research results. It was the notion that international mobility is a factor in students' ambition to achieve the **rounded profile of arts professionals**.

In the course of his or her higher education the arts students appear to seek a variety in educational experiences, which will boost their individual artistic growth. This seems to be the common denominator in choosing structures and levels of qualification both nationally and internationally, within the same arts discipline or cross-disciplinary. The idea of a rounded educational experience came forward in the responses given by students, alumni and tutors alike during interviews conducted by the LAA researchers. The breakout session focusing on the arts student perspective on international mobility inevitably faced this issue head on.

Initially, the participants' opinions were divided in approaching the notion of a rounded experience of arts education. It seemed to embrace a variety of different needs for the various students, tutors, arts disciplines and institutions.

First, the breakout group had to reflect on the hypothetical claim of the LAA research results that through international mobility the students seek to connect with the global environment of both arts education and professional networks. Overall, the responses of the breakout group support the validity of such an assertion. Several lines of discussion broke out as seen below.

- For arts students, international mobility offers a **meeting point of educational perspectives**. Seeing how students and tutors think and act elsewhere, within a different cultural and educational system, is a motivation for the international arts student to **do more than before**.
- **International students bring new energy** to the school both in terms of their a) **cultural difference** and in b) their **educational approach to the specific arts discipline**. Tutors in the Fontys Hogeschool voor de Kunsten, for example, were both inspired and challenged to rethink their discipline under the influence of Dance students from Ghana.
- Returning to the arts education framework, the **arts professor** who has experienced international mobility as a student has a broad scope of pedagogical methods on the tip of the fingers. **Flexible use of methodological approaches in both the arts practice and teaching** is the main benefit of international mobility programmes connecting various educational contexts.
- **Artistic disciplines** such as Music, Theatre or Film **are differently motivated** for international mobility.

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1. Students in the Netherlands feel that it is the **curriculum** primarily, which **brackets off an international module**. The educational system allows for a study abroad as leave of absence, the effect of which is that the student lags behind the programme upon return to the school.
2. Matching studios, workshops, practice room spaces and technical equipment appears to be one of the matters over which arts institutions stumble on a regular basis, when setting up international partnerships for exchange or collaboration. **Sharing facilities in a way that embraces international students is, as yet, an unwritten chapter of educational policy.**
3. Students and alumni assert that they benefit most from learning from the other students and the different educational perspective. This positive feedback contrasts with the views of higher arts education management and its infrastructure. They are oriented at dealing with international exchange in a literal sense, referring to an equivalence of 1:1. **The institutions seek to institute learning equivalencies and quality assurance mechanisms before initiating the exchanges** in order to guarantee that the students will continue the trajectory of educational development set by the home institution.
4. Arts students, on the other hand, demand flexible educational programmes. This appears especially true for students involved in artistic education after completing a higher arts education degree. They form a high percentage of the spontaneously mobile students, who stress the pressing need to take in various viewpoints and **explore new areas of study in new learning environments.**
5. A sub-issue of discipline related mobility is the **group related educational process**, particularly in the performing arts. Higher arts institutions offering such courses normally have stable education programmes, which tie the development in one artistic subject area with other. For example, acting classes are oriented at teamwork and in turn with working with directing students etc. Working with a number of dancers for a longer period of time would be necessary part of the learning process of a choreographer and so on. The issue of international mobility in these arts disciplines demands the development of **specific provision for international collaboration.**
6. **Lack of mutual recognition of educational quality and degrees** in Europe impedes international mobility. The situation in all arts disciplines leaves more to be achieved.
7. Formal procedures towards interdisciplinary international mobility are even more complicated to conceive of. Yet, some institutions seem to have found a model of developing a spiral curriculum in which key concepts are revisited at increasingly intricate levels. The educational method in teaching “composition” of “performance”, would be specific to the discipline taught at hand and the level at which the international student joins the course. At the same time it will be universal enough, so that it could be useful to the specific purpose of the student. ¹

¹ The example came from the Dartington College of Arts in the United Kingdom.



Second, the breakout session had to respond to the potential **dangers and benefits to international mobility for the group process and for the institutional trademark on the education of artistic development.**

This issue came prominently to occupy discussion. Provocative voices suggested that students should perhaps chose schools oriented at international education from the start rather than demand that from every arts institution in Europe. Or, perhaps arts tutors should make appropriate recommendations when they see fit: a) regarding the necessity of international studies in the first place and b) regarding the suitable institution abroad. The provocation served its purpose of stirring up a lively exchange of opinions and experiences.

- When perceived as a challenge, international mobility fits well with an essential quality of higher arts education, namely its **vocational nature**. It touches the roots of a rationale in providing formal artistic training. The devil's advocate argument would be that one does not necessarily need institutionalised education to become an artist. At stake is the risk, which students and the institution deal with in both providing a vocational training in the arts and in encouraging or curbing international mobility. It refers, as one participant in the breakout session put it, to enjoying the **freedom to learn from the success and failures of artistic experiments**.
- Yet, one should for instance be aware that **the efficient use of an international programme in the arts involves conscious choices**. Chinese artist Yan Gong, currently studying at Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, offered the example of her own decision in favour of international mobility. Her choice entailed learning French, moving to Europe, finding funding and studying within an atelier system of vocational training, for the second time within an undergraduate cycle. In her example, each of these factors has contributed to the success of her artistic education but they have also been a substantial risk.
- Two pragmatic issues were raised in relation to the **timing of an international** unit in higher arts education. Some tutors feel that arts students should be allowed to learn and then reject. Typically a borderline would be reached around the third year of the first cycle of higher arts education. The logic behind this argument is that students should **obtain fundamental basic skills and competencies before they are able to navigate independently through a foreign educational environment**.
- A contrary view was expressed about the effect international mobility had on the artistic growth of students. Tutors felt that international components should be present **in the foundation year**, as it appeared in practice that the variety of educational perspectives allows arts students to hit upon their true vocation early in their careers. This may **permit individual pathways to be formed** instead of students merely being skilled in following an institutional tradition and having to spend years being "de-skilled" later.
- The debate shifted from "how does the student know" to how does the institution realise an educational programme, which encourages international mobility but does not enforce it. The general developments of the **Bologna process** for higher arts education was mentioned as potentially introducing uniformity in educational systems instead of providing compatibility between different educational structures. The **development of quality assurance mechanisms, which ELIA facilitates on European level**, was offered as one example, where **the Bologna impact can be owned and managed by the international network of arts institutions**.

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- A key to “the danger of international mobility” appeared to be the self-constructed image of the arts institution. Does it see itself as a centre training for a specific **profession** or as training a **rounded artist capable of re-creating the boundaries of the arts discipline**? How could and should these two be distinguished in the field of a creative and vocational education?
- A mirror image of the same problem appeared to be the choice made on an individual level by the arts student. Does he/she set off to study abroad to achieve **individual growth or artistic development**? How could and should these two be distinguished in the field of a creative and vocational education?

Conclusions

- The **international component of higher arts education** should be brought up for discussion **in the definition of arts institutions in Europe today**. The essential qualities of arts training demand greater flexibility in the understanding of the arts faculty as a community of discourse, as a network of arts professionals, which is already globally engaged.
- Instead of problematising the convergence of educational systems, higher arts education in Europe should **focus on comparable educational structures and compatible content**.
- Asserting the provision of **different modalities of learning in higher arts education** would make the European scope of international units both varied and useful to the arts student and to arts institutions.
- A general recommendation for higher education institutions is that they should be open to the **necessary international dimension of developing rounded arts professionals**.
- Developing a rounded profile of the arts professional is the aim of both academies and students. There are local responses to the immediate learning situation of students and to the context of the institution. Individual students opt for a) spontaneous mobility, individual tutors develop b) new methods of teaching, or individual schools c) develop international policy. **The general feeling of the breakout group is that some steps could be taken on an inter-institutional and on an international level to facilitate the local responses to international mobility.**



Quicksilver conference and Learning Abroad in the Arts Project Information

The title for this conference stands for time-based studies in the arts. Quicksilver refers to the unique liquid metal, which travels by tracing a natural route. It settles in the fissures of the systems, which contain it and affects them in critical ways. ELIA's research project Learning Abroad in the Arts (2002/2003) suggests that international mobility in higher education arts institutions in Europe has outlined new developments affecting the very notion of arts training. The Learning Abroad in the Arts project explores international student and staff mobility in the arts. It involves quantitative research based on institutional data and student/alumni response forms gathered from arts institutions within Europe. It also comprises qualitative research based on interviews conducted on eight different locations across the continent.

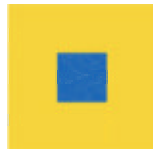
Living Manifest

International mobility and the transformation of the higher education sector directly concerns and affect students and students interests. The students' perspective should be taken into account in these discussions. Thanks to a grant from the European Cultural Foundation ELIA was able to invite students to the Quicksilver conference to contribute to the discussion, to the interactive presentations and to the performances.

The arts education community in Europe drafted a position paper about the Bologna process and the art schools in Europe. If there is a written manifest for arts education, why not have a 'living manifest' as well.

The project Learning Abroad in the Arts and the Quicksilver Conference is supported by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture under the programme 'General activities of observation and analysis'

With thanks to the sponsors: European Commission, European Cultural Foundation and Fonds voor de Podiumkunsten, the City of Tilburg



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