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## **Cultural Policy and Lifelong Learning**

The changes and challenges associated with the recent focus on lifelong learning have had a significant impact on educators charged with the responsibility of delivering such an education and training. These changes and challenges coincide with the stresses and tensions associated with work intensification and 'students' being re-conceptualised as 'clients' or 'customers'. Thus the way in which educators engage with and accept or question lifelong learning depends on their understanding and appreciation.

Throughout the centuries, governments of great nations, states, and cities have participated in promoting the arts for the enrichment and edification of the lives of their citizens. These governing bodies believed that societies are ultimately judged by the quality of their cultural environment, and that nations are remembered, not for their victories or defeats in war or politics, but for their contributions to the human spirit.

The above analysis implies that government support of the arts, both financial and advisory, is important to the development of a healthy cultural environment. Moreover, support of a nation's arts establishment and arts education programmes should be of prime concern to any national government.

In many parts of the western world there have been periods of 'practical necessity' where supported art forms provided a service for the government, 'economic necessity' where governments had to assist with dwindling private support, and 'cultural necessity' meaning response to the aesthetic needs of the people and the artistic requirements of artists and arts organisations. The reason for all of this was to make the arts more widely available, preserve cultural heritage for present and future generations, strengthen cultural organisations and encourage the creative development of the nation's finest talent.

In order to achieve any or partial resolution of the above it is necessary for artists and educators to engage in dialogues and projects. Recent research has shown that artists and educator issues in conflict exist on philosophical, pedagogical, and personal levels. Philosophical differences are concerned with the relationship of students to the art form – where man serves the art or art serves the man. This seemingly subtle shift of emphasis could affect issues such as methods of audience development, the selection for clientele for instruction, and the kinds of experiences presented. Pedagogical differences are associated with modes of instruction, selection of students, and instructional materials employed. Finally, personal differences centre around matters of mutual respect for the quality of professional preparation, respect for artistic taste, and perceptions of artistic abilities.

History has shown that government arts commitment has largely resulted from necessities dictated by social, economic, and political pressures. In a simple and practical way response therefore grows out of the needs and desires of citizens. However, unless these needs and desires are clearly expressed, they may be lost in so-called ‘practical reality’ which compromises between content and format, and a general underdeveloped sensitivity to the arts.

Although timeless in its concepts the above paradigm today is being implemented in different ways and here I will only refer to what is happening in Europe. At the Lisbon European Council in 2000, government leaders set the EU a 10 year mission to become ‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustained economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Lifelong learning is a core element of this strategy, central not only to competitiveness and employability but also to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. Lifelong learning has become the guiding principle for the development of education and training policy and there are concrete proposals that aim to make lifelong learning a reality for all.

Lifelong learning encompasses learning for personal, civic, social and employment-related purposes. It takes place in a number of different environments in and outside of formal education and training systems. It implies raising investment in

people and knowledge; promoting the acquisition of basic skills (including digital literacy) and broadening opportunities for innovative, more flexible forms of learning. The aim is to provide people of all ages with equal and open access to high quality learning opportunities and experiences throughout Europe. Education systems have a key role to play in making this vision a reality and in order to do this, barriers between different forms of learning will need to be broken down.

Lifelong learning is also about providing ‘second chances’ to update skills and offer learning opportunities at more advanced levels. In general terms the Council of the EU has identified six essential elements for comprehensive and coherent lifelong learning strategies:

- Partnership working on all levels whether publicly, socially, within business or any other kind of service.
- Insight into the demand for learning, to include redefining basic skills, the new information and communication technologies and foreseeable labour market trends.
- Adequate resourcing, involving a substantial increase in public and private investment in learning. Investment in human capital is important at all points in the economic cycle.
- Facilitating access to learning opportunities by making them more visible, introducing new provision and removing obstacles to access. Special efforts are necessary in this context for different groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities or people living in rural areas.
- Creating a learning culture by giving learning a higher profile, both in terms of image and by providing incentives for the people most reticent to opt for learning.
- Striving for excellence through the introduction of quality control and indicators to measure progress. Achievements to be recognised and rewarded.

Focusing more specifically on the education and life of a musician in today’s ever-changing society, educational establishments responsible for the training of today’s musicians, must take up the challenge to produce employable students. These students must not only be experts in their chosen field, but they must also be adaptable, open-minded and flexible in their approach to work opportunities and

developments in the labour market. A musician's career is more and more turning into a variety of facets, a 'portfolio career' is the most commonly used term for this, and it is incumbent on musical educational establishments to educate students for this purpose. In order to do this they must create new curricula, innovative methods of assessment, programmes to increase teacher competence, systems to ensure dialogue, and discussion to ensure adequate quality control, following market forces and the labour market; the institutions must build up a large number of contacts within the sector to ensure relevancy and continuity and above all they must centre their activities around their students. They must also increase access, which means find ways of supporting a greater diversity of clientele including those who wish to refresh and update their knowledge and skill.

Lifelong learning therefore can cover an entire lifetime in a transforming and creative process of continual change and challenge that should enrich people and the society in which they function. Individuals, however, cannot achieve this easily without support and governments need to assist with concrete proposals and resources if education is to be of any use at all.

To return to an earlier point: no one ever denies that the artist has a special gift, but how valuable do we think this gift is to society and what is its real function there? Going a step further, how do artists gain a true sense of their art? Perhaps Socrates has the answer:

“...if you have an innate gift for art, you will become a famous artist, provided you also acquire knowledge and practise; but if you lack any of these three you will be correspondingly unfinished.”

Perhaps none of us is ever truly “finished”, but we can constantly strive to that end. Cultural policy should allow us to do this, but it should also allow us to take part in the decision making process so that our horizons are broadened and our value to society be made more apparent. Unless musicians [and I include in that word performers, composers, technicians and all those artists who work in the media] are given the opportunity to speak, cultural policy will cease to have any relevance in today's society. Therefore the politicians must get their policies right and back them

up with concrete support. There is some evidence to prove that this is happening in a number of places within the EU, in some counties more than others, but the real proof will only be evident when lifelong learning is a reality for the people experiencing it and in some cases when people are returning to the workforce after training.

So how can education and training systems adapt to the evolving needs of an increasingly global and information-based economy? What kind of policies can respond directly to the recognised need to develop the capacity to continuously adapt and renew? Education ministers need to adopt a programme of lifelong learning for all as a strategic framework for guiding education and training policy as we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This framework needs to foster learning societies where every individual receives the necessary knowledge and skills, where all are encouraged to engage in lifelong learning. Emphasising individual capacity and motivation to learn means tapping the potential for strengthening innovative energies, democratic foundations and social cohesion; it also means encouraging wide economic participation. The success of such policies, which can only be implemented progressively, entails significant changes in attitudes towards learning and a solid, broad commitment.

*For those interested in looking at a seriously comprehensive policy (I make no comment of either agreement or dissent) I recommend a look at how the Koreans view lifelong learning and what they are doing about it.*

[www.logos-net.net/ilo/150\\_base/en/topic\\_n/t14\\_kor.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/150_base/en/topic_n/t14_kor.htm)

Investment in this concept of lifelong learning is no longer just a possibility, it is a necessity, and governments, education departments and ministries who ignore this fact do so at their peril.