WOR CULTURE - SKILLS: ENABLING THE CULTURAL WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Welcome to this reflection from our most recent **Wor Culture** event which focused on **Skills: Enabling the cultural workforce of the future.** Here, we'll share the presentations, reflect some of the discussions, provide some (hopefully) useful links and resources, and let you know what's happening next.

For those of you who couldn't be with us for our zoom gathering, further information on what **Wor Culture** is about can be found at the end of this document. Please get in touch if you'd like to contribute, have any suggestions, or would like to share any links or resources.

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events.

The #WorCulture team,

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Vee Pollock noted that before the pandemic the five universities as part of the **North East Cultural Partnership (NECP)** had got together to start a conversation around skills. This was instigated by several concerns including the introduction of the English Baccalaureate that has radically altered the opportunities for young people to experience and access culture as part of their education. There's also concerns about pathways through which people can engage in and access the sector and some of the government narratives around the perceived value of creative education as opposed to the STEM subjects.

It was recognised that there is a potential need for more join up between further education, higher education and the sector in the way in which we think about providing and facilitating access to skills at whatever stage of career. Skills are going to be critical to rebuilding the sector post-covid and to addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.

Leanne Alldred, Assistant Producer (Schools & Colleges) from **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** has recently been seconded to **Newcastle University** to work on an evidence review around skills and talent development in the cultural sector, this will help begin thinking about some of the resetting that is needed alongside colleagues from the other universities, particularly colleagues from **Northumbria University** who have also been thinking about employability and skills, and the **North of Tyne Combined Authority** who likewise are looking at the skills needs of the region and how we can work together to address them.

The event is hopefully the opportunity to start a conversation and a chance to think about what is needed. If you are interested in joining future discussions then please email bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk

Presentations

Our event included presentations from **Melanie Shee, Partnership Manager (North East) - Creative & Cultural Skills** and **Rebecca Huggan, Director - The NewBridge Project**

Melanie discussed longstanding issues of diversity in the sector and Higher Education creative art & design courses, stating that **CC Skills** is committed to apprenticeships as another route into the sector that can help to bridge the skills gaps and support diversity. Melanie also focused on the current changes to apprenticeships, and the further increase in youth unemployment post-covid - asking how the education, skills and cultural sector can work together to solves these problems.

Rebecca discussed the support NewBridge offer to develop creative and professional skills at all stages of the artistic journey and career, including a new programme Create/Disrupt specifically for people who don't have a formal degree and who might face systemic barriers to pursuing a career in the arts or are currently under represented in the sector. Rebecca ended with a provocation asking what does success look like and, as it so nuanced, how do we support people to build the skills they need to develop a sustainable career? How do we help people to think about what they need rather than what they think they should need to develop a career?

VIDEO - SKILLS: ENABLING THE CULTURAL WORKFORCE FOR THE FUTURE
Watch the full presentations - Subtitles are available by clicking 'Subtitles/Closed caption (c)'

https://youtu.be/8sc6d5rJlkY

BREAKOUT ROOMS

After the presentations we split into Breakout Rooms (smaller discussion groups) themed on:

1. Identifying needs: What are the skills development needs of the cultural sector? What are the priority areas?
2. Overcoming barriers: What are the barriers to accessing CPD opportunities and lifelong learning? How do we overcome them?
3. Finding solutions: What kind of new models can we envisage for CPD? How can we create affordable, inclusive and robust pathways for lifelong learning?

Here's a summary of the key points from those groups

Identifying needs

This was the most popular topic with attendees split across three groups. The first group considered context and position in the sector, thinking about whether you are an employee, practitioner or an organisation and especially if you are a freelancer or on short term contracts. This is something that has been picked up in the **Newcastle Cultural Compact** around skills opportunities and talent development pathways. As sector skills needs are not equally distributed there is need to be clear on communication due to sectors requiring different approaches.

The group also considered diversity and access to the sector, especially for younger people – how do we improve access and make skills development more impactful?

Another point made was that while there's a lot to be said around national approaches, that actually if change is going to be meaningful then local ownership, delivery and commitment is paramount. It is also important to look beyond traditional educational routes.

It was noted that the sector can change rapidly, especially in a post-covid economy, the 'skills needs' change quickly so approaches needs to be adaptable with structures in place to deal with this process of change.

The first group then ended by thinking how skills provision is delivered e.g. mode, format, timing, terms of access, cost etc...

The second group included a wide range of perspectives: university workers, careers councillors, city council, artists/arts leaders, museum hr. The gap of marketing skills mentioned in Melanie's presentation was picked up as an interesting one, especially considering the current digital context we are in and identify digital skills a need. This raised questions of access in terms of disability and digital poverty.

Climate and sustainability in the sector is a potential skills gap – how do we embed sustainability into working skills?

Another point was that employers value flexibility, a range of skills and resilience so this needs to be developed in holistic ways and we need to push past A-to-B thinking in training of all kinds (i.e. you do x degree to do y job; or that going to university is only about getting a 'good' job etc...)

Other key points and questions raised included critical and creative thinking is needed across creative industries at all levels, identifying a skills gap does not necessarily mean you'll find people who want to fill it, behaviours are increasingly identified as skills in the job market, reflective practice is a key means to recognising skills that can be valued beyond the creative and cultural economies, you need to be able to communicate beyond your own practice area; and who has access to skills development and *how* do they have access?

The final group focusing on identifying needs also mentioned the surprise of seeing Marketing and Communications as being at 53% within Common Skills Gaps and Shortages in Melanie's presentation.

Following on from a point mentioned during the Q&A, the group discussed cross-sector conversations and if a good starting point for identifying skills gaps would be if the North East sector came together to identify those and how a joined-up sector approach could support graduates, artists etc..

The group talked about apprenticeships and a few points / questions raised were the capacity for organisations to host apprenticeships, is there a skills gap within the sector to host apprenticeships, could there be a joined-up approach within the cultural sector to host an

apprenticeship, which led onto a point mentioned about a shift in apprenticeships becoming more flexible.

It was also mentioned that skills investment should be coming from the bottom up and how that may identify skills that an organisation or a sector need.

Overcoming barriers

Group 2 considered what the barriers are to accessing CPD opportunities and Lifelong Learning, and how to overcome them.

The barriers identified included; under 30s being more likely to have received social media training than the over 30s; being told what skills you need e.g. you must run a website, as this can put some people off even trying; freelancers not having the same access to training - in terms of the time (and therefore loss of income) and the cost of the training itself; a lack of confidence; a lack of family income to fall back on if required; and finally not being taught how to listen or how to expect to be heard, or to be a leader.

Help to overcome some of these barriers the group suggested taking care when writing job descriptions and person specifications - only include what is actually needed e.g: experience in administration vs. experience in arts administration. Also, to help people with self-reflection - so they can identify for themselves what their real barriers are, to train people in networking and finally to help people to develop their confidence so they feel able to go for jobs in the arts/ask for pay rises/ apply for better paid jobs in the arts by believing that they really are worth the salary on offer.

Finding solutions

Group three considered potential solutions and what kind of new models can we envisage for CPD? How can we create affordable, inclusive and robust pathways for lifelong learning? The group acknowledged that this is the start of a design conversation, trying to design a solution when we don't know exactly what the problem looks like yet.

It was noted that there was a wide cross section of people from across the cultural sector in attendance, and that this is a good starting point for the conversation, but the point was raised about diversity of people and views, and that if we are going to design solutions then we need to think about who else is not in the room to ensure solutions are inclusive.

Following the breakout groups Vee closed the event by restating that the event was very much the start of the conversation around addressing this skills agenda in the sector and an opportunity to build on this with follow up conversations and events.

If you are interested in being part of follow up conversation please contact bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk

RESOURCES/READS/SECTOR NEWS

This is not a comprehensive list (and many sources will have been updated or have become outdated by the time you read this). It is what we've come across, what people have been reading recently, and resources suggested by yourselves.

- Creative and Cultural Skills https://www.ccskills.org.uk/
- Creative Apprenticeships Research Report https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/creative_apprenticeships_taskforce_research.pdf
- Workforce Analysis - New Labour research on arts, culture, craft and design sector https://www.ccskills.org.uk/articles/workforce_analysis
- Building a Creative Nation: Current and Future Skills Needs https://www.ccskills.org.uk/articles/building-a-creative-nation-current-and-future-skills-needs-2
- Developing the Future Theatre Workforce https://uktheatre.org/theatre-industry/guidance-reports-and-resources/theatre-workforce/
- Discover Creative Careers https://discovercreative.careers/
- The NewBridge Project - Create/Disrupt https://thenewbridgeproject.com/news/open-call-create-disrupt/

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