

DEMOS Consultation Paper

Culture and Learning: Towards a New Agenda

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The UK Film Council is the Government backed lead agency for film in the UK ensuring that the economic, cultural and educational aspects of film are effectively represented at home and abroad.

We welcome this timely exploration of the role of learning within cultural organisations and would also welcome a wider exploration that included the role of cultural organisations within formal learning.

The UK Film Council and its partners¹ have developed a Strategy for Film Education that will make film more accessible to children and young people for their enjoyment, as a means of understanding the world and as a medium of self-expression.

The aims of film education are to;

- provide children and young people with opportunities to watch a wide range of film – in cinemas, schools and elsewhere, using new technologies and platforms,
- encourage learning, critical understanding, debate and conversation about films and the issues and emotions they raise,
- enable children and young people to use film as a vehicle for their own creativity, and encourage the film industry to respond to them.

The Strategy has been underpinned by the three themes of the Media Literacy Charter;

- **Cultural Access** – the opportunity to choose from a broad range of films and so get a better understanding of our and other people's culture, way of life and history
- **Critical Understanding** – the confidence to look behind the surface of the screen, to understand a film's intentions, techniques and qualities

¹ Partners include British Film Institute, Film Agency for Wales, Film Club, Film Education, First Light Movies, Northern Ireland Screen, Scottish Screen, Screen England and Skillset.

- **Creative Activity** – the opportunity to make films, to have some understanding of the technical and creative process that allows the effective expression of a story, a mood or an idea.

These themes (3 C's) do not work in isolation but need to be brought together in an integrated approach. Whilst each is valuable, there is substantial value-added by integration with the other two and developing an understanding of the relationship between them.

We agree that shared standards of excellence, impact assessment, networks and brokerage and leadership are key areas of focus, and are hopeful that we can work together on these. However, we are disappointed that the definition of culture (in the consultation document) excludes film and moving image. We would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss this response further.

From here on in, this response is to the questions that appear throughout the main body of the Paper.

Is this the most useful definition in order to develop a new agenda for cultural learning?

It is extremely disappointing that the definition of culture (bottom of p10) omitted film and moving image. By doing so, it excluded the cultural interests of ordinary people (film is hugely popular), and positioned the discussion from the viewpoint of the provider of high-art. This is especially unhelpful when we live in an age when to be literate means to be as familiar with images on a screen as with text on a page, and to be as confident with a camera or a keyboard as with a pen. Literacy in the moving image has become an integral part of a wider literacy for the twenty-first century; children and young people need both to fully participate in society.

We need agreed definitions of culture and cultural learning, and of creativity and creative education, across both cultural and learning sectors. How best might this be done?

An adapted version of the definitions of the three C's as outlined in the Media Literacy Charter could be a useful starting point;

- **Cultural Access** – the opportunity to choose from a broad range of cultural activity and so get a better understanding of our and other people's culture, way of life and history
- **Critical Understanding** – the confidence to look behind the surface of the activity, to understand intentions, techniques and qualities
- **Creative Activity** – the opportunity to make cultural product, to have some understanding of the technical and creative process that allows the effective expression of a story, a mood or an idea.

As noted above, when the learning experience contains elements of cultural access, critical understanding and creative activity it is most potent. These elements work best when integrated.

How can the development of networks, brokerage, and aggregation help to solve the specific problems of specialism, ad-hocery and inconsistency?

The quality, diversity and range of work undertaken throughout the cultural education sector is impressive, but at present provision is patchily spread, uncoordinated and inconsistent. With inevitable limitations, it is important to deploy resources effectively and equitably. Technology, if harnessed properly, can be a great enabler in this regard, and can help democratise knowledge, share what is special and avoid needless duplication of effort and resources. In this way facilitated networks, defined geographically and/or by area of interest/specialism/communities of interest enable the coming together of people, expertise, knowledge transfer and brokering partnerships. Networks would also enable the sharing of cross-sector best practice, the multiple benefits of user generated content (UGC), social networking and peer2peer learning.

We strongly suggest that cultural organisations (including film) jointly develop plans to foster a proactive network to drive cultural education forward. We are particularly interested in exploring how cultural organisations can work together to deliver virtual learning to maximise the opportunities from the major investment programme in ICT for schools. We are also keen to be part of a wider exploration as to how knowledge, intellectual property and cultural learning collateral is used and managed effectively.

Leadership from Boards and funders is essential in order to address these questions of capacity, sustainability and finance. What does such leadership mean in practice?

We suggest as a starting place a joint cultural education forum at Board and CEO level to agree and drive forward common principles on capacity, sustainability and finance. This would begin the process of ensuring delivery to agreed standards; organisations able to retain and/or bring in sufficient capacity; developing comparable (and meaningful) evaluation frameworks so that the worth of culture and cultural education is demonstrated, understood and valued. This leadership would also recognise that others are often better placed to lead on particular areas and that the institutional role may be as supporter and enabler.

How can the funding of cultural learning be structured to encourage excellence, openness, co-operation and consistency?

Some dedicated resources to developing and supporting partnership frameworks and national and regional networking structures would encourage excellence, openness, co-operation and consistency.

Investment in leaders of cultural learning as well as in leaders at Board and CEO level of cultural learning organisations. Opportunities to progress in the cultural environment supported by a holistic package of incentives and rewards.

Leadership investment in determining values and determining desired outcomes for cultural learning. Leadership in setting the scene around broad shared objectives and then ensuring that is fed through the cultural sector. It would be useful to explore the impacts and outcomes of co-operation and excellence as well as researching the transactional value of knowledge and resources within the cultural learning sector. Acknowledging that knowledge collateral has often benefited from public investment, can that be shared more effectively.

Practical manifestations of this could include national and regional networks of cross-sector cultural educators/enablers coming together to share best practice; working to agreed standards; common monitoring and evaluation frameworks with common training and accreditation programmes.

To what degree do the answers lie within the education and lifelong learning sectors – the demand side of cultural learning?

We would welcome further discussion on supply and demand, particularly focusing on the role of the learner. The education and lifelong learning sectors could be labelled 'demand' in that the sector stimulates desire for cultural learning, but sustainability lies within the combination of the education and cultural sectors.

However most people pass through the formal education sector, this is also where the majority of funding is channelled and, where the highest numbers of professional staff are employed. It would be helpful if these professionals were encouraged to think of cultural activity as a core part of the learning process and cultural organisations as key partners that add value to its delivery.

As such a focus on regular CPD and new teachers training has to be part of any answer which might involve initiatives such as regular inset training days delivered by networks of local cultural organisations and/or national cultural organisation delivering weekend/holiday inset training days.

What should a national initiative or campaign do to put cultural learning at the centre of education and of cultural organisations, and to reduce the fragmentation within the cultural sector?

A national initiative involving a wide range of cultural partners that seeks alignment and avoids duplication would be helpful in reducing fragmentation in the cultural sector. This would include all parts of the cultural sector including film and moving image and use of new technology. The Youth

Cultural Trust's Cultural Offer has made sound initial progress around bringing together key agencies thus avoiding competition.

How can cultural educators become more integrated into and influence educational initiatives?

This would be a long-game and require a multi-layered approach that might include;

- National and local education forums that included cultural educators as equal participants
- Cultural educators being encouraged to take up roles as school Governors/Trustees
- School leaders being encouraged to value the contribution of cultural educators
- Advanced Skills Teachers operating across local clusters
- Local cultural enablers/facilitators.

How can Boards of cultural organisations and school governors be encouraged to increase the number and quality of cultural learning opportunities?

Professionals from the cultural sector could take an active role in school leadership – through Governor and Trusteeships; attending as regular invited guests; as special agenda items.

This effort should be supported by a clear body of evidence that clearly articulates the value of cultural activity against attainment levels, as well as in improving social, personal and technical skills.

It would be useful to put effort into making it easy for Governors and Boards by demystifying each others activity and ensuring clear entry-level points for engagement that are open and accessible for all.

Is a sustained PR and media advocacy exercise needed to revitalise the nation in relation to culture and creativity? If so, how might this be achieved?

Yes a sustained PR and advocacy exercise aimed at the general public, parents, policy makers, education providers and the cultural sector is absolutely essential. This will be best achieved by working together to ensure consistent, clear, simple relevant messages are conveyed by all.

How can cultural programmes in the media be harnessed to the need to encourage greater public demand for culture in the curriculum and across all learning settings?

By having a positive, non-elitist message and making full use of readily available technology. For example red button digital back-up and resources; digital online parallel opportunities for learning.

What, and who, will drive improvement in cultural learning?

Ideally there would be a bottom up/top down synchronised drive. Ministers and Government Departments specifying the destination and direction of travel. This will need to be driven by a consortium of interests including local authorities, schools, skills and training agencies (culture and education) and the major independent funding trusts working together. Stimulating interest and demand would put the learner in the driving seat.

A great deal of cultural learning depends on the passion and commitment of individual teachers or other professionals. Current cultural professional development for teachers and other educators is neither systematic nor adequate.

How can we establish a universal standard of excellence in cultural learning?

We need to stimulate the desire and passion for culture and cultural learning and show it a high priority by subsidy and opportunities for access. The nuts and bolts to this could include;

- standardized training and accreditation programmes across the cultural learning sector, with appropriate subject specialism
- systems for regular benchmarking and monitoring of delivery standards that would include the involvement of the learner.
- broad based programmes of cultural activity to be included as part of initial teacher training.

Professional networks would identify and spread good practice.

Is target-setting a useful tool for improving cultural learning?

Target setting might be useful around access and offers, but should avoid a 'sheep dip' experience at the expense of quality.

To help identify, credit and reward quality we need to develop more systematic and integrated approaches to evaluation including common criteria for evaluating impact and reach.

It may be useful for organisations and/or individual practitioners to be accredited as being of a suitable quality and professional standard in their work with young people.

Would a new improvement initiative for cultural learning be a helpful resource for cultural organisations to better assess what they do?

An improvement initiative that focused on quality and not targets would be a helpful resource, backed up by the identification and promotion of good evaluation practise and recognised systems of evaluation.

How might a dedicated specialist learning team operate to ensure shared approaches to, and standards of excellence in, learning to improve quality and confidence across the sector?

In addition to peer review and monitoring. The team could provide training and CPD sessions in different regions. Could also act as specialist advisers for individual areas of culture. Needs a core team (not tied to one art form/cultural sector) to be on hand to advise and develop initiatives.

- Regional ambassadors link to cultural NDPBs and schools, Las etc
- Knowledge share
- Lead to sustainable actions

Should professional membership bodies and funders require cultural organisations to prove their commitment to, and practice of, learning?

Where this is appropriate it should be given full consideration, being mindful that education will not be the sole or main purpose of all cultural organisations (save in the broader sense of access and audience development). And where it is appropriate, it should be a condition of funding (with the proviso of adequate resources to ensure it can happen)

How can an effective, coherent and wide-ranging programme of continuing professional development be created for teachers, cultural educators, artists and museum professionals?

Those agencies with a remit for skills and training, including the teacher training agencies, sector skills councils, FE/HE should work together to devise an accredited training and CPD programme that works both for new entrants and those who are already active in their professions. They would be charged with developing a Cultural Skills Plan with buy in from all cultural and education bodies at national and regional levels.

How can the Boards of cultural organisations be encouraged to put learning more at the centre of their work and thinking?

Accepting that education is not the sole/main purpose of many cultural organisations, advocacy campaign around the benefits of learning in terms of

growing audiences and therefore profits for Board members may prove beneficial.

For NDPBs and their funded organisations DCMS PSA targets for cultural education provide focus.

PR and advocacy programme to encourage education professionals to play an active role on the Boards of cultural organisations.

How can greater incentives be introduced to encourage more cultural organisations and schools to improve their cultural learning practice – and who might provide those incentives?

Funders can start by linking objectives and measurable success to funding. Schools and learners can play a role through Reward/Awards and PR initiatives.