

Nordic-Russian Cooperation in Cultural Management

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Abstract: Article discusses the introduction of a degree programme of cultural management in the Karelia region of Russia and the major findings of the article are gathered during two Nordic development projects in 2008 – 2010. During the project, differences and similarities between the Russian and Nordic education programmes of cultural management were identified.

Tiivistelmä: Artikkelin tuo esiin näkökohtia, jotka liittyvät kulttuurituotannon työelämälähtöisten opetusmenetelmien siirtämiseen Venäjälle kahden pohjoismaisen kehittämissuunnan pohjalta. Vuosien 2008 – 2010 käynnissä olevien projektien puitteissa vertailtiin suomalaista ja venäläistä koulutusohjelmaa. Eroista huolimatta samankaltaiset työelämätarpeet sekä Venäjällä että Pohjoisissa johtanevat koulutusohjelmien yhtenäistymiseen.

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Introduction

Looked upon as a sunrise industry, events and leisure business is one of the fastest growing sectors in the Nordic and Russian economies. While many Nordic universities have separate degree programmes in cultural management, Russian Federation has very underdeveloped infrastructure of raising skills in specific fields, such as experience industry or leisure management.

This article discusses the introduction of a degree programme of cultural management in the Karelia region of Russia. Differences between the Russian and Nordic curricula and teaching methods will be identified, but similar demands arising from the events industry employers across the border drive education institutions to develop study programmes with shared characteristics.

Nordic and North-West Russian Education of Event Management

Following the significant growth rates of creative industries over the past decades, Nordic governments have adopted terms such as 'experience industry' or 'cultural economy' recognizing the growing impact of the sector. Similarly, educational initiatives have taken place in the Nordic countries, and today each of them provides Bachelor or Master level training opportunities in the fields of Creative Business, Arts or Cultural Management, Experience Management or Tourism and Leisure Management. (Madsen 2007: 5, 9-17.) Moreover, research centres (Imagine and Center of Experience Research in Denmark) and or networks (Network for Experience Industry in Sweden) have been established and innovative corporations like Musicon Valley in Denmark or Lillehammer Kunnskapspark AS (Lillehammer Science Park) in Norway facilitate joint initiatives between private sector, education institutions, public organizations and NGOs.

Also in the North-West Russia, emerging markets for leisure and arts business have created demand for event management professionals¹. Local traditional cultures as well as arts festivals, parades, shows and concerts attract growing number of tourists to Karelia (and Leningrad region), thereby increasing the need for skilled managers capable of organizing demanding tasks such as logistics, security, public relations, marketing, fundraising and volunteer coordination. (Report of the Project Development of Educational Program *Management in Cultural Events*, 2008-2009.)

However, there are few – if any – study programmes that would train professionals for the regional events industry. Russian higher education of arts is widely known for its professional excellence but arts management is less established as a subject of study and research. For instance, Karelian State Pedagogical Academy (KSPA) in Petrozavodsk provides training in creative, technical, logistical and financial management of events but does not yet have a comprehensive Master's Programme in this field. Similarly, Faculty of Theatre Research in St. Petersburg State Theatre Academy offers courses in performing arts management but there is not a separate degree programme or faculty for event management.

¹ In view of statistics, creative industries in Russia have shown decent growth in the recent years. The creative industries' contribution to GDP and national employment in 2005 was in Russia higher than for example in the neighboring Finland. According to the statistics, creative industries in 2005 in Russia comprised 7.3% of national employment and their contribution to GDP was 6.06%. (Creative Economy Report 2008.) However, Russia has yet to fully capitalize upon the economic potential to foster creative entrepreneurship, innovation and productivity (Ruutu et al 2009).

Project Petrozavodsk Event Management

The need for specialized training in the Karelia events industry was demonstrated by the surveys carried out among the region's culture managers in 2008- 2009. According to the survey results, today's culture managers rely mostly on their own professional experience and self-education in the field, and respondents unanimously declared the demand for specific training and professional exchange opportunities with foreign experts.

Surveys were conducted as part of the project *Development of Educational Program Management in Cultural Events*, which studied the prospects for the introduction of an education programme in the management of cultural events. Encouraged by the project results, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Karelia invited the Karelian State Pedagogical Academy (KSPA) and Karelian Regional Institute of Management, Economics and Law (KRIMEL) to develop a training programme together with Norwegian and Danish partners (Lillehammer Science Park and Roskilde Business College).

Today, a project supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Karelia is running to pilot the new training programme. The Development project entitled Petrozavodsk Event Management (PEM) brings together all the partners from the previous project as well as the Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) from Finland.

In spring 2010, the partners gathered in Mikkeli to elaborate the plan for the piloting of a study module. Partners had also an opportunity to observe organization of the Campus Festival, an annual event that the MUAS students and staff organize in and around the university campus. During the festival, all kinds of concerts, exhibitions, seminars and sport events are open to general public, and besides enlivening the campus cities, the festival offers the MUAS students of Cultural Management practical experience of event organization.

In November 2010, the second phase of the study module will be piloted and evaluated by the project partners with a view to the future degree programme in Cultural Management. In addition to Russian representatives of culture organizations, Finnish students will travel to Petrozavodsk to evaluate the planned module from the students' point of view. The project will end in December 2010 to a final meeting in Mik-

keli, where the upcoming study programme plans will be finalized and future cooperation possibilities between the project partners will be explored.

Pedagogical Approaches to Event Management Education

MUAS Campus Festival engaging the university staff and students in cooperation with public and private sector partners (such as theatres, municipalities or restaurants) is a typical example of work life oriented pedagogical approach that is widely used in Nordic education institutions. In other words, universities seek to include hands-on activities in their curricula, linking classroom-based theoretical concepts to practitioner views or real-life scenarios. Work life oriented pedagogy is believed to enhance the students' practical skills and to provide students with realistic perspective of their future careers. Moreover, practical projects help bridge the gap between academy and industry, enabling teachers and researchers to update their knowledge of the field and offering latest research results for the use of business. (Robinson et al 2008: 6, Tynjälä 1999)

Teaching methods in Russian education institutions differ from the Nordic approach in that they are strongly classroom-based and the instruction is usually a one-way process, in which the teacher presents theoretical information dictated by a textbook (Kamyab 1997, Kortunov 2009: 209, Viljamaa 2001: 168). In addition, Russian higher education and research are institutionally separated, as they were divided between universities and the Academy of Sciences in the Soviet era (Bianquis 2002).

Russian education sector appears to be very conservative social institution, resisting change and protecting its traditions and autonomy (Kortunov 2009: 203). Therefore, introduction of any pedagogical innovation in Russia risks facing strong structural resistance and prejudice. However, recent reduction of state control and emergence of commercial affiliates of public education institutions have increased the capacities of Russian universities to innovate and adopt foreign influences². (Bianquis 2002.)

² Following the collapse of Soviet Union, public financing of the higher education decreased substantially. As a response, public institutions came up with commercial affiliates while private education institutions emerged. As the private sector carries no past legacy of administrative structures or methodological doctrines, they have become Russian vanguards of pedagogical innovation, reforming curricula or even creating novel disciplines. However, also private institutions are depended on state relations, when it comes to licensing, accreditation and general oversight. (Bianquis 2002.)

Comparison of Russian and Finnish Curricula and Teaching Methods

Faced by the employers' demand for skilled manpower, Karelian Regional Institute of Management, Economics and Law (KRIMEL) initiated the two projects introducing an education programme of Cultural Management in Petrozavodsk. As an independent education centre of Petrozavodsk State University, KRIMEL has trained thousands of managers in North-West Russia and has abundant contacts with the region's employers. Therefore, KRIMEL is ideally positioned to act as a link between the business, education institutions and government, and it is no surprise that the institute is first in Karelia to develop events industry education.

During the first project 2008-2009, KRIMEL drafted a curriculum for the upcoming study programme and presented it to the project partners in Finland in April 2010. Respectively, the MUAS study programme and pedagogical approach were introduced to the Russian project partners in the same meeting. The comparison of the two programmes reveals some differences in the curricula and teaching methods.

Firstly, whereas the Russian curriculum includes several courses related to the legal, political and administrative framework of cultural management³, the Finnish curriculum stresses the importance of worklife practices, such as project management, events technology, networking and entrepreneurship. However, both Russian and Finnish curricula include fundraising, economics, marketing and communications studies.

Secondly, Russian and Finnish programmes differ in training methods. Major bulk of the Russian education consists of lectures that are accompanied with a few practice hours. Exam is the most common means to complete a course. By contrast, all the MUAS programme courses include development projects that allow students to put their skills in practice and work alongside with private or public sector partners. To this end, MUAS has established various strategic partnerships with business, public or third sector partners (the Theatre of Mikkeli, for instance) that cooperate with MUAS in different projects. Instead of exams, student performance is assessed with alternative means, including the evaluation of learning diaries or professional manuals that students draft for themselves.

³ Programme curriculum includes subjects like civil law, administrative law, labour law, regional policy and social policy. Also various courses on management (human resources, documentation, strategic management, organization theory, sociology and psychology of management) are available for students.

As the Russian representatives of culture organizations visited the Campus Festival in Mikkeli, their impressions on worklife oriented pedagogy were surveyed. Having observed practical training that involved students in the organization of a real event, Russian visitors came up *inter alia* with the following comments:

- One of the key virtues of the presented training programme was that it allowed students to go through the whole chain of event production from a project idea to its detailed elaboration and practical implementation.
- Preparation of an event manual by participating students was considered an interesting way to measure students' professional growth.
- The MUAS programme appeared rather universal to Russian commentators, allowing culture managers to get professional training necessary for the organization of various cultural events.

All things considered, Russian partners were satisfied with their excursion and interested in the worklife oriented pedagogy. When asked whether they could imagine any obstacles to the use of similar methods in Russia, the respondents found no major barriers. In fact, one of the visitors proposed that the current project partners would consider choosing a case example among the Karelian events and study more closely its production.

On the other hand, Russian culture managers have strong qualifications in arts and cultural history that Finnish students of cultural management usually lack. Even though the MUAS study programme includes courses of literature, visual arts, music and dramatic arts, curricular introduction to these fields remain shallow. It would therefore be interesting to create mutual exchange of know-how in combining artistic and managerial sides of events industry.

Conclusion

Much of the events industry demand for workforce is for semi-skilled and moderately remunerated positions. However, there is an increasing demand for well-qualified graduates. (Robinson et al 2008: 5.) Culture management recruiters in Finland and Russia seek specific skill sets, such as logistics, fundraising and volunteer coordination capacities.

Furthermore, the industry comprises small operators with flat management structures, which means that there is little demarcation of tasks and all levels of employees

are involved in all aspects of business (ibid. 15). Today's employment trends in events industry seems therefore to call for versatile and practical study programmes that combine robust theoretical education with hands-on training.

This article has presented the ongoing activities of the project Petrozavodsk Event Management (PEM) that seeks to introduce a training programme of cultural management in Karelia. During the project, differences and similarities between the Russian and Nordic education programmes of cultural management were identified. While the Russian training tends to focus on lectures and theoretical knowledge, Nordic education emphasizes practice-oriented learning by participating in actual event production processes.

However, many common points were found, including shared course topics like fundraising, economics, marketing and communications. Project partners have also acknowledged opportunities for mutual learning in the field of teaching methods and training modules.

Unfortunately it is too early to report the final outcomes of the project. Only time will tell whether the Nordic and Russian study programmes will converge in near future. There is however a demonstrated aspiration from both sides to learn from each other and continue cooperation in training, research and development projects.

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