7.4.1 Cultural managers’ training

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Cultural managers’ training has its own specificities which arise from, on the one hand, its recent history, and on the other hand, the unstructured nature of the profession so far. This chapter aims at reviewing that history and the evolution of managers’ training.

The practice in the world, as we started to know not just that we lived but to know we knew, and therefore we could know more, led us to the process to know the practice itself. [quotation translated]

Paulo Freire
Letters To Those Who Dare Teach

We go back thirty-five years to deal with the profession of cultural manager. Before these years, there were of course people or professionals whose work consisted in organising cultural events, and even they worked in public or private organisations which could be included in the cultural sector. However, until Spain did not recover the democratic normality (approximately in 1979), we could not start talking about cultural public policies in accordance with our European environment, and it was not produced the so-called social assignment of including culture in public institutions and in the public life of the nation in all the government and administration levels, from municipal councils to the government of the nation. We talk about a “new” profession from this perspective, which emerged in fits and starts and was still not very regulated in such beginnings. There were traditional cultural professions, such as the case of librarians, archivists, and museologists in the public sector, and producers, managers, directors, etc. in the private sector. However, the first steps to institutionalise culture as in our surrounding countries (France, Italy, and others European Countries) were taken with the first democratic local corporations (1979) and with the creation of the Ministry of Culture (1978). This process of institutionalisation demanded the presence of professionals and managers in charge of the implementation of the recent released cultural policies of the democracy. Thus, administrative structures increased, and cultural programmes and projects started to be systematically implemented from the public sector. The professionals trained for this task constituted the first generation of cultural managers in our country. One of the main problems tackled by these people was their training lacks in many cases for the entrusted tasks. Firstly, it should be considered that there was not a regulated and academically approved training which, on the one hand, gave access to the profession, and on the other hand, provided professionals with the tools and knowledge required for their tasks. Being aware of their own lacks made this generation more active in the reflection, in the search of options and in the proposals related to cultural managers’ training. Similarly, public institutions contributed to a similar process of reflection and proposal concerning training, maybe also encouraged by the managers carrying out their work within them. This process has been considered, studied, and presented by the lecturer Martinell in its day (Marcé and Martinell, 1995). Some of the milestones were as follows:

- January 1981. Barcelona. I Sessions on Cultural Animation These sessions were organised by the town council of this city and were a meeting and reflection space in which not only professional aspects were considered, but also borders with other scopes (free time, youth, etc.) are discussed.

Observatorio Cultural del Proyecto Atalaya
- February 1982. First Congress of Sociocultural Animation. It was organised by the provincial council of Madrid, together with other provincial councils and town councils. This meeting was the first step to think about the need of including cultural aspects in the community field.

- Interacció 84 was held in Barcelona in the year 1984. It was a meeting of the provincial council supported by the Ministry of Culture. With the format of a summer school, it joins together more than six hundred professionals. The need to provide culture with both an own framework of operational concepts and own management models was clearly stated in this space.

- In 1985, the Ministry of Culture organised two seminars (Cuenca and Benicassim) through the Sub-directorate for Cultural Cooperation: cultural workers’ training in Spain was dealt with. It was a meeting between people and institutions working in that moment in Spain on the professionals’ training for cultural management. A clear distinction between the training addressed, on the one hand, to the associative and volunteering world, and on the other hand, to the professionals of cultural interventions was first established.

Also, between 1980 and 1986 there was an emergence of municipal and autonomous schools of sociocultural animation. Although the sociocultural animator’s figure was at the beginning the profile which could be associated with the new needs, then it resulted in a professional figure distinguished from the cultural manager. Whereas the animator works in community and group scopes, with very participatory tools and from an approach addressed to habits changes, the manager influences the territorial management and from specialised equipment (theatres, museums, etc.). However, this aspect does not mean that both profiles share sometimes instruments, purposes, strategies or interests. Many of these schools have disappeared or have been turned into other profiles. As happened with the disappeared Andalusian Public School for Sociocultural Animation (Spanish initials: EPASA) which was not aimed only at training animators, but also making quite serious incursions into managers’ training in collaboration with the provincial council of Cadiz in relation to managers’ training of small populations or with the University of Cadiz in a postgraduate degree training. TASOC, an advanced vocational training course in Sociocultural Animation of the regulated educational system, probably influenced the disappearance or refocus of such schools. Also, the fact that public institutions’ policies led more to a management model than to a social-community model contributed to their restructuring.

Another important milestone was the moment when the need to include the processes of cultural managers’ training in the university was considered. It was undoubtedly an alliance of mutual interests. On the one hand, professionals needed a university guarantee to validate and to give social prestige to cultural management. As many managers had a degree, together with the fact that the easiest way was high degree studies against the complexity to launch a bachelor’s degree, master’s and postgraduate studies were chosen. The pioneer was the University of Barcelona in 1989 and emerged from the alliance of this university with the provincial council of Barcelona. The former had active concerns and specific projects for managers’ training; in fact, it influenced not only the Catalan province, as it received professionals from other places of the world. Since then, this pathway of postgraduate studies has been followed by many universities in our country, such as Valencia, Complutense of Madrid, and Zaragoza, and as for Andalusia, by the Master’s Degree in Cultural management of the Universities of Seville and Granada. Universities generally were supported by public institutions interested in supporting this advanced training processes. For example, the case of the Department for culture with the Andalusian universities mentioned above.

However, training based on master’s and postgraduate studies did not completely solve the problem of the social disestablishment of the profession of cultural manager. The first editions of such master’s degrees were full by experienced professionals in the pursuit of a social validation through the university, but those professionals without a degree to access to a postgraduate degree or those whose institutions did not give them any facility or aids to continue this type of training could not participate. The need of a degree training in the field of cultural management...
emerged little by little. Nevertheless, this idea is not shared by all professionals, as some of them think that specific undergraduate studies are an obstacle to access and to exercise the profession of manager. In this sense, the lecturer Martinell from the UNESCO Chair of the University of Gerona (Martinell 2001) said that, from our experience, we consider that the structuring of undergraduate studies is not suitable in this sector and maintain, according to the multidisciplinary idea of the cultural sector, the existence of high degree studies. However, professional associations have strongly pressured in this sense. In fact, two proposals in two universities are currently implemented. On the one hand, the University of Navarra provides a pathway in Cultural Management and Heritage within the Bachelor’s Degree in Humanities. On the other hand, the University of Huelva provides a Bachelor’s Degree in Cultural Management which was partially implemented due to the pressure and the effort by the Professional Association of Andalusian Cultural Managers (Spanish initials: GECA).

During these years, many seminars, courses and sessions for professionals of cultural management have taken place by local and autonomous powers. As for Andalusia, it is worth mentioning the effort made by some provincial councils (Cadiz, Cordoba, Almeria, and especially Granada) in relation to the training of technicians who were managers of small populations in their respective territories. For example, the Provincial Council of Cadiz developed between 1991 to 1995 a training and renewal programme in which more than thirty technicians from municipal council lower than 20,000 inhabitants participated. It was a participatory process for creating programmes based on the analysis of technicians’ needs and demands.

Coinciding with the expansion of cultural administrations and their budgets, many proposals and initiatives for the cultural managers’ training were developed throughout the country. The crisis has significantly affected academic programmes for cultural managers in general and in the country. In fact, some master’s degrees have disappeared, as the paradigmatic Andalusian case, or hardly surviving. The training programmes offered by local institutions (town councils and provincial councils) have also been strongly reduced or simply disappeared. In some cases, simpler objectives and programmes adjusted to their territories have been restructured. In this context, some private training initiatives have emerged, obviously with difficulty, intended to adapt to the demand and particularly to new digital formats, both of backup and of cultural products and services. This is the moment of online training focused on the management of cultural microenterprises.

However, it is also the moment to consider a cultural managers’ training model adapted to this period, independently of its attachment to the private or public sector and of its disciplinary origin. The reason is that the manager is the agent who should try to adapt the culture sector to the changing realities of the context. In this line, it is understood that contemporary cultural organisations and projects are registered in the context of what some authors have called “complexity organisations”. These organisations are understood as structures which should manage the decision-making based on complex processes and with the difficulties of not having standard, legal or legislative elements which solve all the many situations of their sector (MARTINELL, 2001). Training responses to such complexity involving cultural management and its professional action cannot be static programmes. Current managers’ training model, within the context of the liquid world, should be mainly based on the development of capacities which allow quick responses to the cultural needs of territories and their inhabitants to be made. Training should be a permanent innovation and creativity above all. In this line, Martinell (2001) points out the qualities which should guide cultural management’s training processes:

- Encouragement of active mentalities in the pursuit of resources. This aspect is essential in a time of scarce resources and competition for them.
- Capacity to consider information as a fundamental element in the anticipation and prevention policies in the processes of social dialogue. Culture management has always been considered as conflict management, and especially social conflicts. In this sense, the manager should manage useful capacities to understand
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processes and communication: that is culture.

- Opening to new relationships, contacts, etc. Management aims to open territories to new ways of modernity, to interchange with other cultural realities, to new perspectives, etc.
- Control of new abilities and capacities from processes of continuous training. Project management in networks, the capacity to formulate new objectives, the capacity of integration with other non-cultural policies, negotiation, etc., are some of these new abilities.

Managers’ training is in a key moment of reformulation and reflection. On the one hand, master’s degrees are reduced, although there is still a high diversity of centres and specialisations. Also, within the university scope, attention to the consolidation and the possible expansion of undergraduate studies should be paid, as well as to the reality of the professional praxis. However, the most worrying aspect is today the lack of dynamic academic programmes focused on new capacities, which was the objective of many institutions using short formats or specific programmes for their specific territorial reality. These programmes are almost non-existent or exist with very limited ambitions. This third aspect of managers’ training is still a pending task.

For Reflection

- In your province, look for the courses related to cultural management offered by the provincial council and municipal councils. Compare them with that of ten years ago.
- Take the table of contents of this Supportive Web Handbook for Cultural Management and choose those epigraphs you consider essential for a cultural manager’s work. Why are they essential? Which courses are offered today? Where?

References
