


Research into skills gaps and educational provision for the cultural sector in Russia

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About this report

This report contains the results of the research conducted by the Institute for Social Urban Development for the British Council. The research explores skills gaps in the cultural sector in Russia and aims to inform the development and implementation of new educational programmes for the cultural sector in Russia.

The focus of the research is existing educational opportunities for administrative and technical professionals in the cultural sector: whether they meet labour market demands, what skill shortages and gaps are affecting the cultural sector, and how and where the educational programmes can add greatest value to the cultural sector in Russia. Administrative/managerial specialists are specialists that manage the creative process (for example curators, buyers, fundraisers, marketing specialists, PR specialists, producers etc). Technical specialists are those who deal with the material side of the creative process (for example, sound engineers, lighting engineers, directors of photography, editors, designers, CGI specialists etc).

The research was carried out in several stages. Firstly, a literature review allowed the team to collect preliminary information about the general state of affairs in the cultural sector in Russia. Field research included 100 interviews with cultural experts from Moscow and St. Petersburg – cultural sector professionals, managers, policymakers, educators, and representatives of business and

charity supporting culture. For further validation of the data, quantitative online surveys of 222 experts and 236 students of cultural establishments were conducted in 10 Russian cities – Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk, Perm. Quotas were set, so that the sample covered various cultural fields (film, theatre, fashion, design, dance, music, cultural heritage, visual arts, book publishing and literature).

The research allowed the team to generate an extensive overview of the culture sector in Russia and reveal which skills and competencies the professionals working in the cultural industry are lacking, which opportunities the existing educational programmes provide and which niches in this sphere are still open. However, it is important to note that the methods used have objective limitations. The results of the research cannot be exhaustive and they do not apply to the evaluation of the ability of paying demand for the education programmes. The British Council, as well as the authors of this report are not responsible for the readers' interpretation of the results and their validity.

Sincere thanks are owed to all the colleagues for their insights and expertise, as well as to all professionals and students who contributed their time to be interviewed and to complete the online survey.

Foreword



We commissioned this research because we believe that cultural skills are one of the areas in which the British Council can make a positive and lasting difference to relations between Russia and the UK.

The British Council has been working in the cultural sector in Russia since 1959 and has been involved in a range of skills development programmes. Over that period we have seen how cultural relations come into their own especially at times when political relations are strained. We saw it in the success of the 2014 UK-Russia Year of Culture, and we saw it again in the 2016 UK-Russia Year of Language and Literature, when we connected the UK with 19 million Russians.

It is striking how many of the British Council's Russian partners, who make programmes like this possible, have had formative and developmental

cultural experiences in the UK. It is clear that investment in cultural skills can be an investment in collaboration for the future.

The British Council works at the meeting points of UK and Russian agendas, and contributes through UK experience and expertise to Russia's own priorities, and these include demand for world class cultural leadership and management training. These are clearly areas where we can work together for mutual benefit, both contributing to the long term development of Russia's cultural sector, and creating opportunity for the sector in the UK.

It's all about connecting people, and building long term relationships, and this research will help us do that on an even larger scale.

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Michael Bird
Director Russia, British Council

Foreword



The British Council cultural skills research is a very relevant and timely initiative. The cultural sector in Russia lacks cooperation both

between the two biggest cities, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and other regions, as well as among the separate cultural sub-sectors. Research is an important tool in bridging this gap.

As both a researcher and also a cultural sector professional I feel that discussing the quality and market of education provision in the sector is impossible without also discussing the labour market. It is important to understand whether the market can absorb specialists with new competencies and whether it can provide them with the necessary technical resources to put their skills into practice. Knowing this will help better understand how recent gaps in education can be turned into opportunities.

I'd like to see the discussion about the problems of education in the cultural

sector in Russia become a part of a more ambitious process – developing a common understanding between educational institutions, employers and students about strategic and tactical objectives of the education in the cultural sector. Not only should educators know how to train young professionals – young professionals themselves should demand high quality educational courses, and employers should support this with a view to hiring the best alumni.

We hope that research into these issues will carry on and will contribute to the development of high quality educational provision for culture professionals. We thank the British Council for the opportunity to be a part of this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Privalova'.

Maria Privalova

General Director of the Nekrasov Central Universal Science Library in Moscow, research curator

Foreword



Having seen significant political shifts in the country over previous decades, the cultural sector has the challenge of keeping up

with, responding to and dealing with the implications of these changes. One huge challenge facing the development of the sector concerns the shift from state support of the cultural sector during the Soviet era, to the development of the sector as an industry, which must grow and develop by itself. The sector has been required to learn how to adapt to these new conditions; in particular to raising funds and adopting a more business-focused outlook. This shift brings with it the requirement to develop a number of specific skills to enable the sector to thrive.

The Cultural Skills team strengthens cultural relations between the UK and the rest of the world through sharing knowledge and developing mutual benefit. With UK and international partners we build sustainable cultural skills programmes that develop the skills of those practitioners and institutions across the whole of the

UK and internationally, supporting the artistic, social and economic benefits of a thriving and dynamic cultural sector.

The successful UK-Russia Year of Culture 2014 provided the British Council with a springboard with which to develop more ambitious programmes. Since then, the British Council Russia team have built on the success of 2014, with a particular focus on capacity building. This research further highlights the needs for capacity building programmes within the cultural sector in Russia and provides a strong evidence base with which to develop programmes which really respond to specific need. It is our intention that this research will be of use to a variety of audiences, both in the UK and Russia, to further strengthen the relationship between our two countries through the vehicle of skills development and overall enhancement of the cultural sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon T Dancey'.

Simon T Dancey
Director, Cultural Skills team

Introduction and contextual overview

Russia is the biggest country in the world by territory. But most of its social and economic activity is concentrated in the big cities – mainly in Moscow (the capital of Russia) and Saint Petersburg (the second biggest city). This gap is true for the cultural sphere as well. The two capitals have the highest concentration of resources (financial, administrative and intellectual) for creating the infrastructure and finding the qualified workforce for employment in cultural establishments. In the rest of the country cultural life exists only in major regional centres, but with far fewer employment and education opportunities.

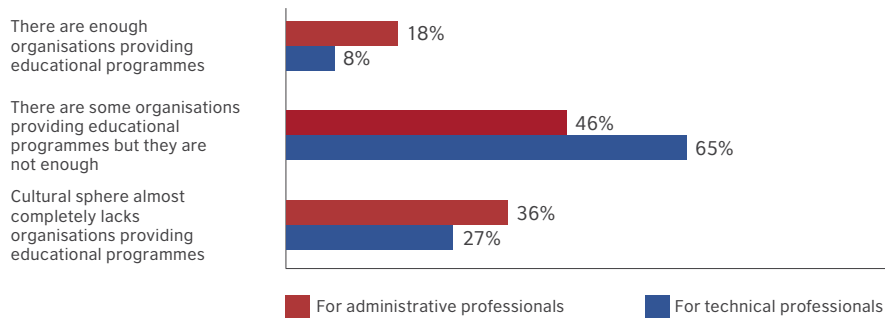
Many characteristics of the modern state of culture in Russia are connected with the Soviet past: for almost 70 years the culture of the USSR was isolated from all global trends, and currently Russia is in the process of catching up, not only on contemporary cultural trends but also on the 'historic' trends that Europe and the US passed through in the 20th century.

With 70 years of Soviet history, culture was both fully funded and heavily constrained by the government. The abrupt switch to the realities of the market economy in the post-Soviet period hit the cultural establishments hard, as they needed to learn how to adapt to these new conditions. In fact, most cultural establishments have not yet mastered this change.

80% of all organisations in the cultural sphere are state-owned. Expenditure on culture, which had been growing throughout the 2000s, started to decline in 2012 due to economic instability, and government financing does not fully cover the demands of cultural establishments. The biggest obstacle for the development of creative industries without state involvement is the lack of tax reliefs for small business in the cultural sphere (e.g. bookstores, recording studios etc). Planned reforms within the next few years are aimed at increasing the role of non-governmental organisations in social and cultural services.

Key findings

Does the cultural sector in Russia suffer from a shortage of organisations providing educational programmes in the cultural sphere for administrative and technical professionals?



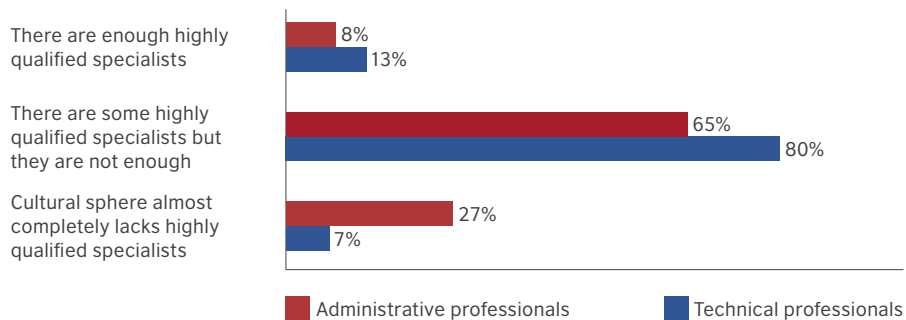
Education in the cultural sector.

Most experts note the lack of organisations that offer technical and administrative education to future professionals, especially in the regions. They also mention the gap between the market demands and the higher educational system. This gap stems from one of the main characteristic of the Russian higher education system – the major focus on theoretical subjects. This approach is the heritage of the Soviet era and is intended to give the students systematic and analytical thinking skills. In practice however, there are few subjects in the curriculum that benefit from purely abstract analysis, and the attempt to ‘teach’ them in this way leads to a shortfall in the practical skills needed. New educational trends also take a very long time to integrate into the curriculum due to a number of bureaucratic obstacles: changes in the culture field often do not fall in line with the approved state educational way of ‘teaching’ the field – and the levels of bureaucracy make it very difficult to change the educational approaches quickly. Sometimes lack of practical subjects

is due to the absence of necessary technical equipment. The students themselves are not entirely satisfied with the quality of their education: most of them say that they would like to see more courses in different aspects of culture management in their curriculum and that their cultural sector lacks qualified teachers.

The inadequacies of secondary and higher education make additional education almost a necessity for young specialists, as well as for professionals with experience in the industry. Non-state establishments have become the beacons of the new trends in education. They are less restricted by formal rules and can offer a wide variety of short-term and long-term courses as well as cooperate with international institutions. However, they mostly provide commercial courses, and culture professionals often cannot afford to pay for further education. They also often do not give certificates of government standard upon graduating which makes employers in the cultural sector unwilling to send their employees to study there.

Does the cultural sector in Russia suffer from a shortage of suitably qualified, skilled, and experienced professionals?



Labour market. The need is high for both administrative and technical culture professionals. It is especially relevant for regions because of the ‘brain-drain’ to Moscow and St. Petersburg – cities where most of the social, economic and cultural activity is concentrated. The result is that an oversupply of staff is accumulating in the capitals while the regions experience a shortage of personnel.

As financial resources are limited, there is not enough money to involve a narrow-focused specialist for each specific task. That is why cultural institutions try to hire ‘multifunctional’ professionals (especially in administrative positions) to save resources.

For technical specialists, lack of demand from the industry for narrow-area specialists, in turn, results in lack of supply: for such specialities as make-up artists or props designers, only a few educational institutions run relevant educational programmes and few students enter them. Besides, young people tend to think that technical specialities in the cultural sphere are not prestigious and low-paid.

The latter is quite true for administrative professions as well: the salaries in the cultural sector are 25% less than the average monthly salary in Russia which impedes attracting qualified professionals.



Skills gaps and shortages

Skills gaps and shortages are generally similar across the spheres. For technical professionals, the level of education and competence is generally perceived as sufficient, aside from the low level of **English** and gaps in **general cultural background** (for young professionals); any lacking technical skills can be obtained at work. Administrative specialists are held to a higher standard than technical ones, because their goal is to allow for the functioning of the whole creative process. For administrative specialists, the most cited skills missing are the knowledge of **English**, the ability to think within a **wider cultural context** beyond their own specific field; soft skills for successful **professional communication, collaboration and networking**, and skills necessary for managing **legal and financial documentation**.

Filmmaking is the only cultural sphere that receives extensive financial support from the state. In absolute terms, however, the budgets of Russian films are small. This situation is also relevant for independent filmmakers, which are financed mainly by private sponsors. The most in demand specialists are **producers and PR-specialists** with **fundraising and audience development** skills. Technical specialists needed include **visual and sound effects engineers, production designers, camera operators, film editors, make-up artists, costume designers** – as well as **assistant directors** to coordinate the team.

Most **performing arts (theatre and dance) venues** in Russia are repertory and state-financed. Single-show production, independent theatre and contemporary dance companies are often seen to be of lower quality than 'real' repertory theatres. That is why the most needed skills in this sphere are **fundraising, collaboration & networking** which are necessary for finding partners and sponsors, as well as **audience development skills**. Poor knowledge of **English** is a serious obstacle for participation in international projects. The most demanded technical specialists are **stage engineers, audio visual, sound and lighting installation engineers, costume designers, make-up artists, hairdressers, property masters, stage designers and technical directors**.

Unlike most performing arts, in the **music sphere** the need for audience development skills is not the key issue thanks to the online distribution of music. But it is necessary to make the loyal audience also willing to support musicians financially, so **fundraising** is the most demanded skill, as well as **business and general management skills** as not all musicians cooperate with big labels and some of them create their own indie-labels. The Russian music industry falls behind in technical aspects: **sound designers** often lack the knowledge and competence to use up-to-date techniques (conceptually) and software. All of this is relevant both for classical and contemporary music.

Museums and cultural heritage venues are quickly obtaining new technologies and becoming multifunctional interactive educational centres. In Russia there are museums of international standards, and there is an understanding among museum professionals that museums can and should change and have a will to implement the changes. An obstacle is lack of professionals with relevant skills in **exhibition and museums space design, audience development**. There are programmes aimed at developing these skills supported by charity foundations, but museum workers often have difficulties with the necessary paperwork procedures: for instance, they do not know how to write a grant proposal or how to account for the grant money. Participation in similar programmes abroad is complicated by the low English proficiency.

The gallery business and **visual art** market in Russia is still underdeveloped and is behind those in other countries. A serious gap in this sphere is absence of professionals in **audience development**. For the art market to grow, it is necessary to change the mentality of the general public and its perception of contemporary art. Public opinion polls in Russia show mostly negative attitude to contemporary art and Russian collectors are not ready to invest in works of contemporary Russian artists. Lack of demand for contemporary art is also a barrier for the development of art critics: art critic reviews are published in specialized mass media on art and are

not read by the general public. There is also a lack of **curators and exhibition designers**.

The book **publishing** market in Russia is highly monopolized as it is basically divided up between several large publishing houses and bookstore chains. Small independent book publishers and retailers find it hard to compete with them due to the absence of rental privileges and high cost of paper (which is mostly imported). To survive, they need to be able to find sponsors, to **fundraise** and to **develop their audience**. Another important skillset that is missing involves specific **book design skills** (ex. cover design, layout design).

The development of **fashion and design** is mainly restricted by technological difficulties. In the case of the fashion industry this is manifested in the lack of production facilities for quality materials and textiles, so designers are forced to purchase them in Europe or China. Another specific problem for the Russian fashion industry is the high benchmark set for young designers to join the market due to lack of discounted rental fees for new business start-ups. Most of the players in the design and fashion market are individual designers with limited resources and small client base. To develop into strong companies, they lack **business, fundraising and audience development skills**. Another gap is proficiency in **modern technologies** (mainly software) which can make the production more efficient.

Conclusion

Models for skills development programmes

Relevant topics. Analysis of the current skills shortages and gaps suggests that courses on the following topics are likely to be in demand:


- Project management in the cultural sector
- Strategy and policy
- Best international practices in managing culture
- Audience development
- Fundraising, finding sponsors
- Directing and production
- Financial management
- Legal competency for cultural managers
- English for the cultural sphere

Though these courses are relevant for the cultural sector in general, the

most demanded courses could differ across the sectors. For example, in performing arts, more demanded could be courses on audience development and directing & production; fundraising courses are likely to be relevant for professionals in book publishing, museums, design and fashion.

Courses in strategy and policy, project management and best international practices will be in greater demand for higher level managers. Courses aimed at developing specific skills will be of interest for middle level managers.

Target audience. The audience for the British Council educational programmes can be experienced professionals in the cultural sphere: they know exactly what they are looking for in additional education and will be willing to invest time and



money in it if they are confident that the acquired skillset will be applicable in practice. Senior students show some interest in English language courses in the cultural sphere. However, focusing on them as the target audience will be difficult, as they are usually not ready to pay for the education and often have little idea exactly what they want to learn.

Delivery partners. Curriculum of these courses should be developed in cooperation not only and not so much with educational institutions but with cultural institutions, creative agencies and business consulting companies. Their varied experience can be useful to expand cultural managers' understanding and help them develop new effective approaches and strategies.

Practical focus. The main problem in the Russian educational system is the lack of a link between the curriculum and practical real-world skills.

Additional education programmes are expected to make up for this deficit. Practical focus does not necessarily mean developing specific skills like working with technology/ programmes or managing paperwork. High level executives are actually more interested in 'theoretical' information that will expand their thinking and allow them to develop a conceptually new view of their work. This information should be presented in a way which makes its practical use clear.

Applicability in Russia. Information about best practices in managing culture is eagerly absorbed by the listeners – but only if they see how it be applied to the Russian reality. A way to work with such cases could be asking participants to role-play a solution to a problem using the business-case method.

General considerations and opportunities

The British Council image. The British Council educational programmes are not well known in Russia. When launching new educational programmes it is vitally important to communicate with the target audience and position the British Council as a trustworthy player on the education market. The most effective way to do this would be via the British Council personal contacts with Russian professionals in the field. Another way is to persuade the graduates of the British Council educational programmes to spread the news about the courses by word of mouth through targeted networks.

Focus on the regions. In Moscow and Saint Petersburg there are many institutions providing additional and further education in the cultural sphere. In the regions such opportunities are very limited, so the British Council could add greatest value by providing educational courses for cultural managers there.

Distance learning. Distance courses give an opportunity to attract professionals (teachers as well as participants) from all Russian regions for whom it might be difficult to disengage from work to come to Moscow or Saint Petersburg.

Renown teachers The key to success in any educational programmes in the cultural sphere are the teachers. It is important that the teachers are not only competent professionals but also perceived as such: course participants are more likely to take part in a programme if it was developed in cooperation with significant figures or key institution in the Russian cultural sphere. This is important to consider when inviting lecturers from abroad: they will probably not attract participants through their name alone, the audience need to understand what they will gain from talking to a foreign professional and whether a foreign expert's experience can be relevant for the Russian situation.

Alumni network. One of the most valued outcomes of educational programmes is the chance to make new social contacts. The British Council alumni network could be the environment for participants of the educational programmes to communicate and establish professional connections across the field.

Certificates Culture professionals and their employers often cannot afford or are not ready to pay for skills training or professional advancement. Public cultural institutions are more likely to pay for their employees' education if the course provides a certificate of government standard upon graduating. Difficulties with recognition of certificates caused by the British Council status of a foreign organisation can be overcome by creating courses in cooperation with the organisations that are licensed to give state-recognised certificates.

Barriers. Barriers to implementing the British Council's new educational programmes include difficulties in

finding Russian teachers, and difficulties in attracting investors and government support. Furthermore, there will be a need to persuade professionals (especially in the regions) to participate in the paid educational programmes and/or pay for the participation of their employees. The main possibility for overcoming these obstacles is in developing and using personal contacts to find teachers, business partners and the audience.

Potential partners and co-investors. Experts believe that state or business support is an unlikely option: small and medium businesses generally do not tend to invest in culture in Russia and large businesses are often connected with the state and are thus unlikely to cooperate with a foreign institution. So they suggest looking for co-investors among other commercial educational organisations and cultural institutions.

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