

Artistic Research and the Transformation of Art Educational Institutions

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Artistic research in Sweden has been in a developing phase for more than a decade. It is now getting established. While art education has been occupied with building and carrying out doctoral courses as well as their administration and financing, the focus is now moving to incorporation of artistic research as a normal and integrated part of institutional activities. Different art education programmes are in different phases of this process and they may choose different ways to go ahead, but the opportunities and problems encountered are basically quite similar. In this article I will discuss the continued process with regard to career opportunities for those who graduate as artistic doctors. Although the article is written primarily with music educational institutions in mind it is relevant also to other areas of art education and therefore frequently refers to art education in general.

Artistic research is still a very young discipline in Sweden. However, after years of debates, plans, development and graduation of a number of artistic doctors one may well claim that it is now established as a discipline of its own. Significant steps leading to this situation have been:

- the introduction of funding for artistic research and development projects to the Swedish Research Council in 2001
- the introduction of an artistic degree ordinance to the higher education ordinance in 2009
- the launching of a national artistic research school in 2010

Parallel to these developments, the Ministry of Education and Research and the universities have recognized that the existence of artistic research means that also institutions of education in fine arts need government research funding in their budgets.

When the first artistic doctoral courses started around year 2000 the matter had already been debated for some time. The first doctoral students were admitted in 2001, and in that year two conferences on the subject were also arranged – one in Gothenburg and one in Malmö – on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research. These conferences resulted in a report with a number of recommendations.

About the same time, what is now the Malmö Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts at Lund University had produced a proposal to the Faculty of Humanities to start an artistic doctoral course. This was done in 2000 and led to the first artistic doctoral degrees in 2006.¹

Long-term aims and what happened

In order to demonstrate the complexity of creating and establishing a new discipline it is worthwhile to return to the starting point and to revisit the thoughts behind the ambition to start a doctoral course in artistic research. Which were the long-term aims underlying the debate on artistic research around the year 2000? The following list has been condensed from the above-mentioned report and proposal.²

- *The opportunity of third-cycle studies for students in artistic educational programmes.* This opportunity was regulated for university studies in all other areas and the argument was that the artistic area should not be an exception. This was solved locally at some universities in 2000 and nationally by the artistic degree ordinance in 2009.
- *Systematic knowledge development in continuation of artistic development work.* 'Artistic development work' had been introduced in 1977 as an artistic parallel to research but with quite limited funding. It resulted in a number of activities spanning from teachers' individual competence development to well-documented research projects. The introduction of artistic research has formed a continuation and development of the latter type of projects.
- *Reflective artists on a high level of competence.* This has been realized by the education of a number of artistic doctors.
- *International position.* It was considered strategically important for artistic educational institutions to develop research in order to keep up with international development. Sweden is now an active part of the international development of arts research.
- *Project funding by research foundations.* This has been administrated by the Swedish Research Council since 2001. The Council has gradually reorganized and stabilized this part of its responsibility. Also other foundations are opening up to artistic research projects.
- *Direct government funding for research and third-cycle programmes in the artistic area.* In the Swedish system of direct government funding there are separate accounts for

1 I am referring to three doctorates in visual arts. The first two doctorates in music came in 2008. The artistic degree ordinance of 2009 was based on the Lund University degree *konstnärlig doktorsexamen* ('artistic doctoral degree') of 2000. It thus leads to the same degree, the only exceptions being adaptations to the Bologna principles.

2 *Konstnärlig kunskapsbildning* 2003, p. 28. The proposal is not published but the ideas behind it can be found in Lundström 1995 and in Fredriksson 2004, p. 107.

education (bachelor and master levels) and for research (including doctoral courses). For many years the artistic educational institutions have had an account for artistic development work. This account has been transformed by the Ministry of Education and Research and by all (or most) universities into an account for research that covers both research and artistic development work.

- *Faculties of fine arts.* Until recently a faculty organization was a prerequisite for conducting research and education on the doctoral level. Faculties of fine arts have been established in Gothenburg and Malmö. The regulations have changed, however, and university institutes can now apply for the right to award doctoral degrees.
- *An artistic disciplinary research domain.* This is no longer a relevant category, but the same formal status has been achieved through the artistic degree ordinance and by the modification of the faculty organisation that now permits not only scientifically but also artistically competent members in the board with responsibility for research matters.
- *Artistic graduate school.* A five-year national school for doctoral students in all fields of artistic education was started in 2010.

These are important changes that have been realized or – in some cases – have begun to be realized but still need to be developed. There were also ambitions and aims that have taken longer time:

- *Add to the development of cultural life.* This is probably a long-term aim. It may also be difficult to assess in a reliable way.
- *Add to the quality of undergraduate education.* Results and experiences from research and education in research have certainly begun to affect education on the bachelor and master levels, but this is a matter that needs further consideration, which is beyond the scope of the present article.

The opportunities for the artistic doctor

Without getting too deep into curricula and assessment discussions it is obvious that the artistic doctoral degree brings a number of new competences. The holder of an artistic doctoral degree has several competences that all focus on her or his artistic practice. The doctor's artistic skills have been developed within an extensive artistic project stretching over several years while still being conceptually and ideologically held together. The trying out and evaluation of relevant methods is essential to this process, as is the practice

of reflection on the project and the communication with other researchers and with audiences.³

This makes the holder of an artistic doctoral degree well equipped for different kinds of activities:

- *Work as an artist* outside the educational institutions on a freelance basis or with cultural project funding. An underlying thought in the planning of the artistic doctoral degree was that a high artistic competence of the doctoral student in combination with the doctoral programme would make the artistic doctor attractive in cultural life. Of course, there may be differences built into the choice of specialisation, but in general it would be seen as a failure to graduate a doctor with little possibility to work in the art community. In fact, many of the doctoral students' activities are located in society rather than in school. In retrospect it can also be observed that most graduated artistic doctors are active as artists in society. This is of great importance for the legitimacy of the artistic doctoral degree.
- *Institution-based project work*. The holder of a doctoral degree is qualified to head research projects or to be a collaborator within projects supported by the Swedish Research Council or other foundations. This has happened a number of times, also in interdisciplinary contexts. The national artistic graduate school includes doctoral students from several institutions. The number of graduated artistic doctors, including those in music, will increase in the near future and can be expected to continue increasing for at least a couple of decades until a critical mass of doctoral students is reached in each artistic field. The Swedish Research Council's resources for artistic research are already undersized and it must be a priority for the Ministry of Education and Research to budget a substantial increase over a number of years.
- *Post-doctoral positions*. There are examples of artistic doctors who hold or have held such positions, most often within research projects funded by the Swedish Research Council or other research foundations. The direct research funding to institutions is still quite limited. This is another area that needs to be developed financially.
- *Senior research positions*. Time-limited post-doctoral positions need to be supplemented by research-based positions as senior lecturer and professor. Such positions can normally be financed only by the direct research funding of each institution. Researchers will bring to institutions new possibilities of development and will constitute possible interfaces with international partners and other disciplines.

3 Cf. *Higher Education Ordinance* (www.notisum.se/rnp/sls/lag/19930100.htm) and Newbury 2011, p. 373-376.

- *Teaching.* The Bologna reform has led to an increased focus on the reflective aspects of bachelor and master students' degree projects and also on the supervision of these projects. There are also examples of new practices and methods which have emanated from dissertations and post-doctoral research and which have then been integrated in basic education in certain subjects. This can be expected to increase in the future. Apart from the fact that a doctor's artistic specialization is useful for 'traditional' teaching, the new, third-cycle artistic education in itself requires teaching and supervision – and to a certain extent also administration – for which the doctors are well equipped.

Integrating research in art educational institutions

Artistic doctors have many possibilities. It is quite likely that some will continue an academic career while others will pursue an artistic one. Probably quite a few will move back and forth between the academic and artistic fields. Even though the possibilities are many, the opportunities for employment at institutions of arts education are in reality limited. There are obstacles in the form of insufficient direct research funding and very limited resources for external funding of artistic research.

Other obstacles are the existing formal and informal structures of institutions that were built to produce highly specialised and artistically-based basic education. This is not to say that institutions have not adapted to the new circumstances. The fact is that as artistic doctoral courses have been developed and as a post-doctoral research level has come into being, institutions are actually in the process of learning how to accommodate research.

This has happened before in other disciplines, for example in engineering in the 1920s. An example closer at hand took place in those music institutions that initiated research in music education in the latter part of the last century. From experiences like these it is known that such a process takes time. The new discipline needs to be accepted not only by the academic world and by society at large, but also by its home institutions and by the people working and studying there.

Those art institutions that have an artistic faculty have a formal organisation in place for leading research and for making the necessary decisions. Other institutions are building such an organisation from the committees for artistic development work. These institutions also adapt to the new needs by gradually building up administration and competence in research and supervision of research.

The existence of artistic research also calls for a widened perspective on education. The planning of new courses or the revision of curricula – also those that do not concern research *per se* – are firmly based in a practice where artistic foundation, proven experi-

ence and administrative competence are combined. Once artistic research is a part of the institutions, the research perspective becomes relevant. Innovations in education are traditionally derived from processes in cultural life, from national or international trends, or from initiatives of individual teachers or students. Increasingly, developments made in artistic research will add further perspectives to innovation in basic education.

Questions like these touch upon a sensitive matter in arts education. The required competence of a senior lecturer and a professor is postulated in the Swedish higher education ordinance. Well-documented pedagogic skill is a necessary requirement. Additionally, one must show appropriate scientific *or* artistic skill. This means that when an artistic doctor and an artist without a doctoral degree compete for a position that requires artistic skill, their levels of artistic competence will be decisive. If the position is advertised with the aim of recruiting a person with scientific skill in the artistic field, on the other hand, their levels of scientific competence will be decisive. This formal dichotomy reflects the fact that there is merely a thin line between artistic research and artistic work and that the two partly overlap. Although this may seem complicated, most or all art institutions find it important to keep the possibility of employing applicants based on artistic skill.

The process of adaptation to the new situation that educational institutions are undergoing is complicated by the fact that the artistic and scientific foundations for education must be balanced. Eventually, this will lead to a changed self-image: from that of being 'institutions of education' to that of being 'institutions of education and research'. This process will be completed when all personnel and students, as well as the academic world and society at large, share the same image.

This may prove to be a very slow process unless the leadership and boards of the institutions see the necessity of moving in this direction and give high priority to the matter. The sooner this is done, the sooner the institutions will get full value for their investments in artistic research and the sooner the artistic doctors will have full access to the whole scale of job options ranging from the artistic world to the academic world.

Conclusions

During its rather short history, artistic research in Sweden has managed to establish itself as a discipline of its own in all formal respects. But much remains to be done until it has reached the level of development where art educational institutions will benefit fully from research and where artistic doctors will be given access to the full scope of opportunities as artists and researchers. In order to arrive at such a level of development at least the following has to be accomplished:

- a substantial increase in funding of artistic research,
- a substantial increase in direct research funding to the art educational institutions – whether inside or outside universities – so that post-doctoral and senior research positions can be created,
- an increased and consistent institutional focus on the transformation from 'institutions of education' to 'institutions of education and research'.

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