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Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance
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ARACIS

International Evaluator's Report

Academy of Music, Theatre and
Fine Arts, Chisinau

2023

Introduction

On May 29 -31, 2023, I had the pleasure of participating in the evaluation process of the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chisinau. The evaluation was of an institutional nature. The evaluation committee consisted of eight people and was chaired by prof. Neculai Eugen Seghedin of Iasi University of Technology. As a person invited to the commission by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education ARACIS, I acted as an international expert on it. This was my first visit to Moldova.



General Statements

Despite many difficulties - mainly financial - the Academy is fulfilling its statutory duties. The buildings that house the academy make an excellent impression. Their historical character perfectly emphasizes the character of the academy itself. Each of the Academy's components - music, theater and visual arts - has a separate building. Divided into three independent parts, the Academy is trying to combine multiple artistic disciplines, which doesn't seem to help in the allocation of already limited resources. In 2021, the institution protested significant (22.5%) budget cuts. These limitations are unfortunately evident, both in the state of the Academy's infrastructure and material resources. The overall geopolitical situation is definitely not helping to achieve stability. On the other hand, the good atmosphere accompanying creative work and the great importance of the Academy for the cultural life of Chisinau and Moldova are clearly noticeable.

Comments/Recommendations:

Financial constraints largely determine the Academy's development capabilities. Increased expenditures would definitely help to better fulfill its mission. Saving on culture never brings positive results. Unfortunately, in many countries those in power are unable to understand this. When, at the end of World War II, the British government asked Winston Churchill to cut spending on culture, the latter indignantly asked "then why did we fight this war?". Having a lot of experience in the art education, I can confidently say that dynamic technological development is a very important element in artistic work. Without financial outlays, this cannot be achieved. I would also consider changing the enormously fragmented organizational structure. Under difficult financial conditions, it is easier to manage a smaller structure.



Managerial Structure

The managerial structure of the Academy is somewhat outdated. While fully appreciating the efforts of the current management of the institution, it is hard to resist the impression that, especially in the financial sphere, better use could be made of fundraising opportunities for the development of the Academy. Professional managerial management especially in these times is of great importance. Building a network of institutions that also cooperate financially with the Academy could improve its financial situation. To achieve this, a more progressive and dynamic managerial policy is needed.

Comments/Recommendations:

I would recommend considering a clearer interdisciplinary division within the Academy's financial and organizational structure. Greater influence of qualified managers would certainly help to plan and manage available resources more efficiently and effectively. Perhaps it would also help to better raise external funds independent of limited budget grants.



Teaching Staff

The teaching staff employed at the academy enjoys great trust and authority among students. It has a lot of experience and brings together leading figures in Moldovan artistic life. Hiring lecturers from other countries who would bring some freshness and a distinct outlook is practically impossible for financial reasons. Art education has different characteristics than education in the university-polytechnic model. It is more of a collaboration and exchange of ideas than imparting specific knowledge. A more diverse and varied staff gives students more opportunities for comprehensive development. Although in my experience, in the theoretically worst Academy you can meet that most appropriate person who will change your life, and in the most prestigious one you can be left alone.

Comments/Recommendations:

Increasing contacts with other art centers in Europe. Organizing joint events, workshops, exhibitions, concerts, reviews. We can fully appreciate even the best lecturers when we have the opportunity to compare them with others. The art community is somewhat specific. The best way to build its strength and relevance is through participation. Individual contacts can translate directly into institutional cooperation. Inviting as many external lecturers as possible would raise the level of teaching at the Academy. The key word - diversity.

Facilities

The university's equipment with basic tools, equipment or instruments is not far from European standards. Of course, here, too, financial constraints do not allow for more progress. Fortunately, low-cost art can also be of great value. Using this example, we can clearly see how varied the outlay for meeting basic needs can be in the various art disciplines. Just compare, for example, a violinist and a cinematographer.

Looking at it from a slightly different angle, the buildings belonging to the Academy definitely need to be refreshed or renovated. They don't meet any standards related to caring for people with disabilities. It also doesn't take cosmic expenditures to improve the hygienic standard in the academy's restrooms.

Comments/Recommendations:

Greater fundraising opportunities could give the Academy a chance to dramatically expand its teaching base. Unable to count on increased budget subsidies, a more extensive network should be created with industry and institutions that can enrich the Academy's infrastructure, if only on a sponsorship basis. Organizations supporting people with disabilities could be helpful in adapting the academy's buildings to meet their basic needs.



Students

Students - as everywhere - are the backbone of the functioning of the Academy. It is on their talent, diligence and determination that the richness and artistic level of the Academy depends primarily. In this respect, the Academy in Chisinau does not stand apart from other art centers in Europe. However, there is a palpable sense of Moldova's isolation from other European countries. Most students must therefore seek their chance to continue their artistic work somewhere outside their country.

Comments/Recommendations:

A very important element in art education is the proliferation of international contacts. This gives students the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with students from other, different backgrounds. During interviews with students, all stressed the importance of this element. Most of them, having sufficient opportunities for development in their own country, would not even consider going abroad. Besides, the problem of emigration of graduates from smaller European countries is becoming increasingly painful. It depletes the cultural potential of their home countries, forcing them to adapt to new environments. I see preserving the cultural distinctiveness of even the smallest European countries as one of the more serious challenges of modern Europe.

Returning to more everyday matters, students also asked me to propose in my report to restore the operation of the Academy's canteen, which would save them a lot of time during class hours.



Research

The term "research" in the case of art colleges has a slightly different meaning than in the case of other academic institutions. Research here is not scientific, and its quality is rather measured by its diversity. Diversity, in turn, is built by activity. Activity over the widest possible space. The greater the scope of artistic pursuits, the better this testifies to the educational quality of the academy. Leaving aside the still insufficient element of expansion beyond the borders of one's country, in this respect of artistic pursuits, one cannot have any major complaints about the level of the Chisinau Academy.

Comments/Recommendations:

To further develop artistic exploration on the basis of diversity and creative freedom. Contacts with other art communities in Europe could definitely enrich the Academy's educational offerings. Students are always susceptible to things newly observed. However, there is a definite difference between something observed on the internet and something experienced directly.

Internationalization

Internationalization is one of the most important elements in which Chisinau Academy can make significant progress. It does not require a great deal of money, it is enough to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by international exchange programs. In this regard, the academy should definitely be more creative and progressive. Art is transnational and participating in the European multinational art community is not only an opportunity, but also an obligation. Closing oneself in one's own space is a big mistake and can have very negative consequences. Even the best education will not guarantee students' further development if they do not go out with their art for their own framework.

Comments/Recommendations:

Opening the Academy to international cooperation in the broadest sense can be a driving force for the institution as a whole. Greater use of European funds in the event of a shortage of own funds seems to be a very logical solution. International exchange, by the way, is always an opportunity for both sides of such exchanges. Moldova is a relatively unknown country on the European art market, so it should give others a chance to get to know it. It certainly has something to offer. If the country's only art academy won't do it, who will do it for it? The Chisinau Academy has enough to offer to not take advantage of this asset.



Quality Management

The four basic elements that make up quality management: planning, assurance, control and improvement are inextricably linked. The absence or under-performance of any one of them causes dysfunction in the entire system. Lack of financial control appears to be a major problem in the case of Chisinau University. Lack of control causes problems with planning, these translate into an uncertain future, ultimately causing limited development.

Comments/Recommendations:

I am not a management specialist so I won't sweat over suggesting or advising anything. For an institution that depends heavily on state subsidies, it is difficult to make any meaningful recommendation. It's all the more difficult because the Chisinau Academy is the only institution of its kind in the entire country. Reducing subsidies here is particularly painful and unreasonable. Students who are financially dependent on their parents often choose to raise funds through other means. Perhaps the Chisinau Academy should take inspiration from this.



Conclusions:

The Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chisinau is the only institution of its kind in the country. Such a situation is encountered in the case of a clique of small countries in Europe. The lack of competition here can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. Building large, elaborate organisms has a post-totalitarian character to me. It would be more logical to create three more intimate institutions dedicated only to their fields. This would also stimulate the competitive element I mentioned earlier. Visiting all three of the academy's locations, I had the impression that the unity of three different disciplines within one institution was a bit artificial and maintained by force. Well, one way or another it remains the choice of the people who make up the Academy.

A very important part of the accreditation process was the meeting with graduates of the Academy in Chisinau. It made all members of the commission realize how important a role the academy plays in their professional and private lives. Everyone identified very strongly with their alma mater, and we didn't hear a single bad word about the Academy, even from those graduates who, after graduation, got a taste of life beyond Moldova's borders.

In the final conclusion, it should be said that the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chisinau is fulfilling its mission in a manner adequate to its capabilities. All the shortcomings and deficiencies we encountered are sooner or later to be corrected. One should wish the people who co-create this Academy perseverance and consistency, and the bodies responsible for its financing more imagination and responsibility.
