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# Tanssin ja teatterin koulutuksesta työelämään

## Kyselytutkimus ammatillisen ja ammattikorkeakoulu- tutkinnon suorittaneista

Finnish dance and theatre graduates on the labour market. Survey  
on graduates from secondary and polytechnic level education



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## *Finnish dance and theatre graduates on the labour market*

*Survey on graduates from secondary  
and polytechnic level education*

*English summary*

### *Background and data*

The study is a part of the project "Artists' professional training", which has been carried out at the Research Unit of the Arts Council of Finland since 2002. The objective of the project is to produce an overall picture of the effects and structure of artists' professional training and the changes which have taken place in this field of education over the past decades.

This publication reports the findings of a survey focusing on graduates from secondary and polytechnic level education in the fields of dance and theatre (graduation years 1999–2004). The survey, carried out at the turn of the year 2004/2005, examined the occupational and labour market structure of dancers, dance educators and drama instructors<sup>1</sup> after graduation.

The survey is a part of a series of identical surveys which have focused on the graduates of fine arts, audiovisual media and music<sup>2</sup>.

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1 Drama instructor is a rather new occupation in Finnish theatre life. Training of drama instructors started at the beginning of the 1990s at the polytechnic level. The degree programme is specialised e.g. in applied drama and community theatre. The objective is, among others, to connect theatre methods with projects in social and health care and education.

2 Publications: Karhunen 2004 and Karhunen 2005.

The data was collected through a mail questionnaire sent to those who have taken a degree in dance and theatre at the secondary or polytechnic level. Information about the graduates' name, date of birth, and the graduation year was collected from educational institutions. In dance, nowadays nine institutions provide professional degree-based training. In theatre, the number of educational institutions is six.

A total of five training institutions in dance and three in theatre provided a list of their graduates. Of these institutions, two were secondary level vocational institutions and five were polytechnics.<sup>3</sup> After updating the addresses, a total of 162 dance professionals and 145 theatre professionals received the questionnaire. The response rate in dance was 71 per cent and in theatre 69 per cent. No marked bias was found between the original populations and the respondents.

## *Main findings*

### *Characteristics of respondents*

#### *Dance*

The respondents in the field of dance form a group of 115 persons who represent occupational groups of performing dancers (both classical and contemporary dance) and dance educators. Some of the respondents (10%) have completed vocational adult education, i.e. have been working in the field and have only updated their qualification.

The majority of the dance respondents are women. The proportion of men is only 15 per cent and most of them are ballet dancers. The average age of all dance respondents is 26 years. Dancers are younger (25 years) than dance educators (28 years). Ballet dancers in particular usually graduate in their early twenties (average age 22 years).

Over 40 per cent of the dance respondents live in the metropolitan area. Among dancers the proportion of metropolitan area residents is even higher due to regional concentration of employment possibilities. (Table 1.)<sup>4</sup>

#### *Theatre*

Theatre respondents consist of a group of 100 persons who were formally enrolled in the drama instructor programme, but some of whom specialised in music theatre, puppet theatre, circus or performance. Their answers

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3 Some training institutions were excluded from the study because they did not as yet have graduates.

4 Symbols in tables: – No cases

.. Information not available or will not be shown due to small number (<5) of cases

are analysed separately (group "other") since their working profile differs considerably from that of the actual drama instructors.

The share of men among theatre respondents is also very low (15%). The average age of theatre respondents is 30 years. Almost half of the graduates in the theatre field live in the metropolitan area. (Table 1.)

*Table 1. Characteristics of respondents*

	Dance %		Theatre %
Dancers	47	Drama instructors	73
<i>Classic ballet</i>	23	Others	27
<i>Contemporary dance</i>	24		
Dance educators	53		
Women	85	Women	85
Men	15	Men	15
Secondary level degree	62	Secondary level degree	–
Polytechnic degree	38	Polytechnic degree	100
Swedish-speaking	2	Swedish-speaking	5
Metropolitan area	44	Metropolitan area	47
<i>N</i>	115	<i>N</i>	100

## *Labour market situation of respondents*

The labour market situation of the respondents was clarified by asking about, for example, their current employment status and jobs, working history, unemployment periods and main income sources.

The employment situation of dance graduates is strongly dependent on the occupational group. The proportion of employees, unemployed persons and entrepreneurs varies according to occupation (dancers, dance educators). According to these results, over 80 per cent of dance educators work as employees; among dancers the share of employees is also high (65 %) <sup>5</sup>. In addition, genre has an effect on the situation of dancers, since ballet dancers and contemporary dancers have completely different labour markets. The proportion of employees among dancers is raised by the ballet dancers, who are almost without exception employees (73%). Among contemporary dancers the proportion of employees is 57 per cent.

<sup>5</sup> The labour market status of respondents – and artists in general – is not exclusionary. Persons can at the same time have several different statuses.

The share of unemployed dance graduates was 10 per cent, but as Table 2 shows, there are only a few unemployed persons among dance educators. Moreover, the proportion of unemployed might be somewhat misleading since all unemployed dancers are actually contemporary dancers. Thus, the accurate proportion of unemployment is as high as 36 per cent.

The situation of theatre respondents is characterised by multiple job-holding and a high share of freelancers. However, the proportion of employees is also relatively high among theatre graduates (68%). The rate of unemployment among graduates in theatre is about one fifth for all respondents in the field. Unemployment is, however, higher in the group of drama instructors, of which 25 per cent were unemployed when the survey was conducted. In many cases, however, unemployment is "part-time", i.e., the periods of work and unemployment may vary even weekly.

*Table 2. Labour market status of respondents\**

	Dance			Theatre		
	Dancers %	Dance educators %	Dance total %	Drama instructors %	Other %	Theatre total %
Employee	65	84	75	68	67	68
<i>Artistic work</i>	41	26	33	36	41	37
<i>Teaching</i>	30	75	54	47	37	44
<i>Other</i>	11	8	10	29	..	25
Freelancer	33	36	35	52	41	49
<i>Artistic work</i>	33	25	29	40	41	39
<i>Teaching</i>	15	18	17	16	–	12
<i>Other</i>	..	..	..	7	–	5
Student	24	28	26	18	33	22
Unemployed (partly/ total)**	19/36	..	10	25	..	21
Entrepreneur	..	11	7	15	..	11
On grant	9	..	6	15	–	11
Other***	..	..	..	12	..	10
<i>N</i>	54/28	61	115	73	27	

\* The sum does not add up to 100% since the respondents have chosen many alternatives.

\*\* The latter number in the "dancers" column refers to contemporary dancers.

\*\*\* Maternity leave, army, etc.

A majority of respondents in both fields work in jobs corresponding with their training, namely as performing artists or educators, or in some other art-related work. Teaching is a main income source for the majority of dance respondents (55%) and about one fourth receive their main income

from work as a performing artist. However, the proportion is clearly higher among dancers (45%). Quite many (35%) of the dance respondents receive income from other sources than work, that is, from social benefits and student grants. (Table 3.)

In theatre, work as performing artists and teachers has almost same proportion among respondents. Well over one fifth of the respondents work outside the theatre field. The share of income from other sources than work is relatively high also among theatre graduates.

*Table 3. Main income sources of respondents\**

	Dance			Theatre		
	Dancers %	Dance educators %	Dance total %	Drama instructors %	Other %	Theatre total %
Work as a performing artist	45	10	27	36	44	38
Work as a teacher	30	78	55	35	..	30
Work related to own art field	11	..	6	19	..	16
Other work	17	9	13	22	..	20
Other income sources**	49	22	35	38	48	40
<i>N</i>	53	58	111	73	26	99

\* The sum does not add up to 100% since the respondents have chosen many alternatives.

\*\* Study grant, parental allowance, unemployment benefits, etc.

The main employers of dance professionals are dance schools (36%), theatres and the opera (33%), and artist training institutions (22%). Almost half (49%) of dance educators reported that their main employers are dance schools. Among dancers, jobs are generally in art institutions such as the opera and theatres (48%).

The major employers of the theatre respondents are theatres (34%) and theatre groups (31%). They often mentioned freelance work (30%), which means that they create their own jobs. The "new" working opportunities, such as museum drama and community were reported by half of the theatre respondents.

Concerning the means of recruitment, the data confirms the well-known fact that the most common way of getting a job in the arts is through one's personal contacts and network. Official means of employment (such as employment offices) are insignificant in this respect. (Table 4.)

*Table 4. Means of getting one's present job\**

	Dance %	Theatre %
Personal contacts	47	56
Employers' initiative	43	42
Own initiative	40	41
Advertisement in newspaper/internet	9	19
Self-employed	14	23
Other means	11	12
Employment office	..	..
<i>N</i>	106	86

\* The sum does not add up to 100% since the respondents have chosen many alternatives.

Besides unemployment at the time of the survey, the questionnaire included questions concerning respondents' unemployment history after graduation. Since the data deals with the graduation years 1999–2004, it is clear that both the unemployment and employment histories of the respondents are rather short. However, the share of those who had experienced unemployment at some point of their career was 66 per cent in dance and 71 per cent in theatre. (Table 5.)

The total duration of unemployment<sup>6</sup> had usually been less than six months (theatre 69%, dance 63%).

*Table 5. Respondents' unemployment after graduation*

	Dance			Theatre		
	Dancers %	Dance educators %	Dance total %	Drama instructors %	Other %	Theatre total %
No unemployment periods	36	32	34	33	19	29
Incidental periods	16	9	12	14	31	18
During the summer season	..	35	22	7	–	6
One unemployment period	16	9	13	16	35	21
Two unemployment periods	12	..	7	10	..	8
Three or more unemployment periods	12	12	12	20	..	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	50	57	107	73	26	99

<sup>6</sup> Respondents' own estimation of the total duration of their unemployment after graduation.



## *Opinions about training*

The opinions about the content of training were mapped out through questions dealing with expectations concerning training, merits and deficiencies in training, as well as respondents' ideas about the development of professional training in this field.

Respondents in both fields had mostly expected practical skills from their training. Also, the versatility of studies was emphasised in their answers. The majority of graduates in both fields were rather satisfied with the correspondence between the training and their expectations. Thirty-seven per cent of the dance respondents considered their training as completely corresponding to their expectations. In theatre, the share of those was 24 per cent. In both fields, only a few stated that there was no correspondence at all. (Table 6.)

*Table 6. Correspondence between expectations and training*

	Dance %	Theatre %
Training corresponded to expectations	37	24
Training mostly corresponded to expectations	47	50
Training partly corresponded to expectations	15	24
Training did not correspond to expectations at all	..	..
Total	100	100
<i>N</i>	115	100

Besides the correspondence with expectations, the connection between the training and present job was also examined. The results showed that the majority of respondents in both fields were of the opinion that their present job entirely or at least partly corresponded with their training. Respondents in the field of dance seemed to be slightly more satisfied than those in the theatre. In both groups, only a few respondents stated that there was no correspondence at all between their present job and their training.

Table 7. Correspondence between present job and training

	Dance			Theatre		
	Dancers %	Dance educators %	Dance total %	Drama instructors %	Other %	Theatre total %
Corresponds entirely	33	57	47	21	36	25
Corresponds partly	56	39	47	71	55	67
No correspondence at all	..	..	..	..	..	..
Can not say	..	–	..	..	..	..
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	45	56	101	66	22	88

In general, the respondents felt rather positive about their training, although some criticism was also expressed. The criticism dealt mainly with two issues: insufficiency of information on and contacts with the labour market. However, the proportion of those who considered their training as entirely useless was very low in both fields. In fact, the majority of the respondents stated that their training and degree have been particularly useful as a means to employment. The share of these respondents was 51 per cent in dance and 62 per cent in theatre.

## Conclusions

### *Dance*

The professional training in dance has increased in number and widened in scope during the past fifteen years. Today, about 30–40 persons graduate from different levels of dance education annually. Not all of them enter the labour market immediately, but instead continue their studies. About half of the dance graduates are dance educators. Thus, the number of new performing dancers is annually about 15–20. Although the number of graduates in this field is small, it seems that also the working opportunities for performing dancers are few. In classic ballet, the only employer in the whole country is the Finnish National Ballet, and in contemporary dance the work is mostly freelance work with the exception of a few free dance theatres that employ dancers on temporary contracts. Thus, the situation of dance graduates is strongly dependent on occupation and genre.

Because of the freelance nature of the contemporary dance labour market, the situation of this group proved to be more problematic than that of the others. Work is intermittent by nature, the unemployment rate is high and the income level is low. The unemployment rate of contemporary

dancers was 36 per cent, which is about the same proportion as earlier studies have documented. Among ballet dancers, none was unemployed. In contrast to dancers, the employment situation of dance educators seemed relatively bright. Actually, many dance educators referred to a labour shortage in teaching jobs, at least outside the metropolitan area. For dance educators the problem does not seem to be so much a lack of work as the lack of full-time jobs with reasonable contracts and income.

### *Theatre*

Annually about 80–90 theatre professionals graduate from different educational levels. Most of them are actors and drama instructors.

The majority of theatre graduates from polytechnics work in a field corresponding to their training. However, more than one fifth reported that they were unemployed at the time of the survey. The unemployment rate is undoubtedly high, but not in fact higher than the unemployment of the whole group of theatre artists. The study concerning the year 2000<sup>7</sup> and the statistics of the Ministry of Labour from 2004 indicate that the unemployment rate among theatre artists is 23 per cent.

Besides rather high unemployment one problem in the field is a high share of temporary and part-time jobs, as well as the low level of income.

Since the occupation of drama instructor is rather new, it remains to be seen what kind of role it will have in the field. At the moment, the profile of this occupational group seems to be somewhat unclear for both graduates and employers. The new ways of using art (drama) in different areas of society are strongly emphasised in the arts policy documents. However, in order to increase working opportunities in this sector there are also needs for new channels of financing.

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7 Rensujeff 2003: 35.