

Copy

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Felicity Sparrow  
Greater London Arts  
9 White Lion St  
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Dear Felicity,

**Boyden Southwood Draft**

I understand that, despite requests for a short postponement, written responses to the above must be in by the 17th. This does not leave time to offer detailed comment but, as someone who has been involved with the sector for a long time, I would like to make two brief points about inaccuracies in the way the sector's background is described and which also affect the analysis of the present. (Please note that I do not have my own copy of the report so the page references have not been checked)

1. (P.27) Although it is roughly correct to say that the sector was set up against the prevailing ideas of industry, it is misleading to add "and education." There was a strand of independent practice which sought, and often obtained, close cooperation with teachers and saw students in schools and colleges as an important part of its public.

2. (p.87) The sector did not come into being around public funding in the '60s and '70s - it only became more visible then and began to expand and change. There has been an independent sector since at least the 1920s which owed its existence to a combination of individual enterprise, collective commitment and private patronage. Its relationship with the commercial industry was, and is, complex but it has generally not been as separate as the report (elsewhere) implies. Public funding, when at last obtained, was a recognition of the value of what had been achieved without it.

These are not academic points. The failure to describe correctly either the sector's relationship with other public service work, such as education, or its own origins and past methods of funding leads to muddled recommendations.

As far as the sector earns income, it does so largely from public service organizations which are themselves being cut. It is far from obvious that there are alternative commercial sponsors waiting to be converted, by dynamic marketing, to the value of "critique and experimentation". What is more plausible is that individuals may respond to cuts by taking on more commercial work and some may use this to subsidise non-commercial work which they consider more valuable (a practice which goes on anyway and was commoner when there was virtually no public funding)

Overall, therefore, the report has exaggerated the extent to which improved administration, management or marketing can open

new opportunities within independent practice in present circumstances. And, as a result, it recommends measures - such as the creation of resource centres - which may lead to top heavy management structures and divert too many resources into administration at a time when there is less to administer. This is not to say that training in administration, financial management etc. is not needed or that there is no room for improving efficiency, but rather that the emphasis is misplaced.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson