

Arts Education – Culture Counts

A contribution from European experts to the Seoul process

The right to Arts Education is a human right.

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to (...) realization, through national effort and international co-operation (...), of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” (Art. 22 Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.” (Art. 27 Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

Everyone has the right to Arts Education. International declarations and conventions are aiming to protect everyone’s right to education, to provide a framework for everyone’s full and harmonious development in life and everyone’s participation in arts and culture. It is the task of the state and society to secure the formal and material conditions for everyone to exercise this right.

Arts Education is an essential dimension for lifelong learning and for the full development of personality and citizenship. Arts Education is part of all periods and all areas of life. It comprises formal, informal and non-formal education. This is building on a holistic approach to education and learning, embracing all emotional, physical, cognitive, social, aesthetic and moral human competencies. Arts Education comprises education for the arts, in the arts and through the arts. Arts Education encourages people to learn about their cultural heritage, various forms of traditional and contemporary art and everyday culture as a source and resource for their present and future life.

How people conceive and how they live their lives finds its expression in the arts and in the cultural forms of everyday life. This, in turn, affects everyone’s perception, activities and attitudes in all areas of life. Coordination and cooperation between the fields of arts and culture in education and other fields of education are therefore needed.

1. Arts Education has an intrinsic value.

The value of artistic and cultural activities lies particularly in their potential to create an unrestricted and non-committed space for social actions and critical reflection. However, Arts Education must not only be seen from a functional perspective, for example in terms of its contribution to the development of a given society or of creative industries. Arts are characterised by their open, playful and experimental handling of issues and contents and by their way of dealing with discontinuities and ambiguities.

2. Arts Education always involves reception and production of art.

Arts Education is not only aiming at ways of an enjoyable or reflected reception, it also fosters a productive and practical approach – guided as well as independent - in all artistic fields of perception, expression, composition, presentation and communication. Arts Education creates space for experiments. It enables and encourages people to get involved. Active involvement in the production of art again is one of the essential preconditions to experience the intrinsic value of the arts.

3. Arts Education contributes to the development of the individual and to the development of modern societies.

Arts Education fosters historical awareness and awareness for the importance of cultural heritage, it enhances the development of key competencies, and it bolsters personal, social, methodical and aesthetic skills and promotes tolerance and mutual understanding.

Thus Arts Education makes a large contribution to the development of those individual attitudes that are essential to achieve the key objectives in the fields of cultural diversity, intercultural understanding and sustainability, as defined by UNESCO. Participation and education are interdependent. Therefore the concept of Arts Education substantially contributes to the idea of citizenship.

4. Today, the greatest challenges are lifelong learning for all, difference and diversity, inclusion and participation, inter- and transculturality and sustainability, as well as creativity and the digital media technologies.

European societies are facing major challenges today which are concerning both each individual (development of new concepts of personality), societies at large (social cohesion in multicultural communities) as well as the use of natural resources. Media and digital information and communication technologies play an important role in influencing peoples' identity and self-expression. At the same time, the industrially shaped culture of consumption and growth in Europe will have to be transformed into a global culture of sustainability.

In its Medium-Term-Strategy 2008 through 2013, UNESCO has identified five overarching objectives designed to respond to specific global challenges. These five objectives are attaining quality education for all and lifelong learning, mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development, addressing emerging social and ethical challenges, fostering cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace, and building inclusive knowledge societies. Arts Education can make substantial contributions to meet these objectives.

5. Arts Education needs investment. It must be maintained and further developed. It requires time, space, money and people.

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, we identify six major requirements that have to be met in order to ensure consolidation and further development of Arts Education:

- integrating Arts Education in various subject matters in all schools at all levels **compulsorily** and as a cross-curricular content
- supporting professional **training** of future and already active teachers, cultural professionals, artists and non-paid staff
- reducing **inequities** in the fields of Arts Education
- fostering scientific **research** for further development in Arts Education
- strengthening cultural **diversity** and intercultural dialogue within the fields of Arts Education
- promoting **networking** and cooperation at global, national and local levels through guaranteed funds and structures in all educational fields (formal, non-formal and informal)

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