

7. USE OF ART AND EXPRESSION THROUGH ART AS A WAY TO EDUCATE AND PREPARE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE PROFESSIONS OF THE FUTURE

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Abstract: *Decision-makers in the field of education have always faced questions about the purpose of school and education. Is education meant to develop intellectual capacity, or does it have the role of developing skills and competences, of preparing the workforce for a constantly changing economy? The current discourse in education focuses on the adoption of standards, but they will matter less in a cyber world, in which, much more important will be the way of using the information. This study includes the role of art in education, focusing on how arts education could provide a way to adapt to this ever-changing environment, more energy, flexibility and confidence. Education for tomorrow does not mean limiting learning only to the assimilation of basic knowledge, through art or any other form of learning, but to how we can invest more closely and more carefully in the role that creativity can and should play in the training and preparation of young people.*

Key words: *arts integration, art in education, art learning, thematic instruction, experiential learning*

1. Introduction

From the perspective of education, the arts have been permanently placed in the shadow of the sciences, and as a hierarchy of disciplines has been established, as parts of the school curricula, the phenomenon has deepened. Even today, they continue to be given a lower status, being distributed in the pre-university curriculum as additional, secondary or complementary fields, the visual education subjects in schools being optional and focused on the attempt of "visual literacy". The current education sign up within the area of efficiency, and art is not found in this agenda of efficiency. Efficiency is largely a virtue in relation to tasks we do not like to do, but an education system designed as a primary commitment to efficiency can produce unsatisfactory and unsustainable results. Individuals, of any age, rarely carry out activities voluntarily that do not bring them at all any or little satisfaction.

Also, it is considered wrong today that an individual is based in his activity only on disciplines considered essential, that he must acquire and know literature at a primary level, as well as mathematics, etc. Today, more than ever, a person needs art education, at least it some of its essential aspects. There are currently two sets of fundamental elements necessary for an individual in the context of the labor market, the first being: the ability to read, write and calculate, these being simply the pillar conditions that accompany the other more complex skills, just as vital, of higher level skills, necessary to have a good yield in the current economic climate. Among these we can list the ability to allocate resources; to collaborate with others; the ability to discover, analyze and communicate information; the ability to operate with increasingly complex systems of seemingly unrelated components and, finally, the

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ability to use technology. The arts give us an unparalleled opportunity to pass on these basic elements of higher level, which are increasingly important, not only for tomorrow's workforce, but also for today's workforce. Because the world becomes more and more competitive, the quality of the workforce is becoming increasingly important, therefore, much of the rhetoric on improving education focuses on the importance of schooling and its role in increasing competitiveness.

*Aesthetic experience might be nice, but it can be secured outside of school. Preparation for work is something every student will some- day need. If the arts can contribute to success in this realm, it will have something really important to offer. (...) Since the world is believed to be becoming increasingly competitive, the quality of the workforce is increasingly important. Art, those who embrace this view believe, will find a secure home in our schools if it can contribute to the creation of such a workforce.*³⁰¹

The perception so far regarding the arts, in the context of education, was that performance in art requires less effort, or at the least one at a lower level than the one submitted in science. In reality, what should be taken into account would be the analysis of the related results and their consequences in the education of an individual, which in the long run can offer him a better performance in work.

STEAM is a modern, interdisciplinary approach to research and innovation in education (Jagodzinski, 2015: 105), whose implementation principle started from the archetype of the artist-scientist proposed by Carl Jung and Albert Einstein's statement that, in mystery, science and art have common roots. „A” from the arts easily found its place in the middle of the acronym STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in projects such as: *Innovation starts with action! STEAM* („Inovarea începe cu acțiuni concrete! STEAM”) or the project *DLAB: Digital Learning Across Boundaries* (Învățare digitală fără granițe) etc., most of them having in common the combination of science and technology with art.³⁰²

Through this analysis, an exemplification was sought of how the education today has the role of conceiving situations in which the training of those who must be educated becomes more sophisticated, imaginative and more qualified (Nathan, 2019: 304). The premise from which it started it was that the objectives, visions and content of education are not uniform, but what is considered the most important in any field - the purposes to which is directed - is a value, the result of a judgment, the product not only of visionary minds and persuasive arguments, but also the social forces that create the conditions that make certain goals compatible with time. (Mayo, 2019).

2. Arts and cognitive development

Does arts education have a cognitive consequence? Does the effort in art contribute to the development of complex and subtle forms of thinking? Although the cognitive consequence of the involvement of expression through art has been advanced since the first quarter of the twentieth century and, despite the fact that it

³⁰¹ Eisner Elliot W., 2002, *The arts and the creation of mind*, Yale University press, New Haven & Londra, pp 34-35

³⁰² Educația STEAM: Proiecte europene care combină știința și arta, online: <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/ro/pub/latest/practices/steam-learning-science-art.htm>, consulted at october 25, 2021, 17 am

has ardent followers, this way of rethinking the objectives of arts education to provide a more important point of support in its positioning on a higher level of the hierarchy from education, does not apply (Robyn E; Robyn G., 2007: 162). The reason could be that the arts have been for a long time perceived as "affective" rather than cognitive, easy not hard, simple not complex. Not surprisingly, it is considered that the arts have very little to do with complex forms of thinking, artistic activities are seen as concrete activities rather than abstract, rather emotional than rational, made with the *hands* not with the *head*, rather imaginary than practical or useful, more closely related to play than work activity.

Nevertheless, the tasks that the arts propose - such as grasping the subtleties between qualitative relationships, conceiving imaginary possibilities, interpreting the metaphorical meanings that the work displays, exploiting unforeseen opportunities during the work - require complex cognitive ways of thinking. Examined analytically, the work of art offers a wide range of such opportunities. *At a time when the development of thinking skills is particularly important, at a time when schools are expected to prepare people to work in more than a single occupation during their lifetime, the presence of a program that fosters flexibility, promotes a tolerance for ambiguity, encourages risk taking, and depends upon the exercise of judgment outside the sphere of rules is an especially valuable resource*³⁰³

Any action of expression through art requires subtle and sophisticated forms of thinking, but only a part from the artistic activities seem appropriate for cognitive development. (Baker, 2013: 11). These include those projects that require students to define their own goals, election of the expression forms, topics that involve reflection on their work or those that encourage them to initiate an analysis or express their views about art. Understanding the concepts about arts education and the context of their emergence, understanding any other issues of education, must be analyzed in the context in which it is applied, in the classroom (Eisner, 2002: 46). Among the most important factors that affect the experiences of young people in the classroom are: the quality of teaching and the quality of the program offered.

3. Teaching art and its role in personal development

How can we relate to the teaching of art? Advancing thinking, promoting competence in a field, expanding intelligence and expertise - other such enumerations - are produced without a formula. The intellectual perfection acquired through learning can take a variety of distinct forms and values. Moreover, good teaching cannot be "taught." Teaching, like knowledge, cannot be transmitted, inoculated or sent as the content of a letter in the minds of students, all teachers can do is adapt to the context. The teacher designs environments consisting of situations that he and the students construct, but the process is never entirely independent; the student always mediates and, therefore, modifies what will be received or, better said, interpreted in the context in which he develop work. Given this aspect, the teacher is someone who projects situations that are based on what students appreciate or know. "Situations" are conditions related to the quality at which students experience and in which they act.

³⁰³ Eisner Elliot W., 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 35

Thus, if the teacher's goal is to teach how colors interact, the teacher must decide how such a lesson can be taught, obviously considering the level of those he works with. In this task, the teacher must behave as a designer of the work environment, creating contexts that, in turn, will generate interest in learning. They will contain tasks and materials that will involve students in an active learning process, in turn learning that they can apply and connect what they are learning with other aspects of reality. Configuring such situations can take many forms, a detailed and well-structured planning can be undone by poor teaching and, on the contrary, good teaching can save a lesson whose content may seem worthless to students (Eisner, 2002: 46-48).

When the “manner” of teaching is intelligently controlled, sensitive and appropriate for each student or group, it has value. Although it is believed that teaching can be reduced to a "science", this theory in reality doesn't work. Improvisation is needed to make teacher planning useful. Although research has sought to discover "what works," that is, to obtain a formulated and science-based matrix for effective teaching, such an aspiration is utopian. The values that people want to achieve through the educational process differ, but even if formulation procedures were available, their use would nullify teachers' opportunities for intervention and the challenges created by the context. Scheduling might be appropriate for workers on an assembly line, and maybe not even there, but it alone is not appropriate for teachers. (Eisner, 2002: 49; Lewis, 2015: 169-170).

Another direction related to teaching is related to the previous one, namely, that the effects of teaching can only appear long after students leave school and in ways that a teacher may never anticipate. During the different stages of the life cycle, individuals can turn to lessons taught years ago, when they were not aware of the value of the aspects learned. Reflecting on the effects of teaching, it must be acknowledged, once again, that students learn more or less from what a teacher intends to teach. They can learn more due to personal attributes and the particular meanings given to the information received. In this sense, what students learn exceeds what the teacher intended to teach but often, the teacher's educational aspirations for students are almost never fully realized. (Eisner, 2002: 51).

The promotion of certain learning / teaching methods is done by helping students to form their own learning way. Art, as action, is an encouragement of individuals to seek themselves, to express themselves, as freely and creatively as possible. However, one of the important skills that artists use in their work is to determine their purpose, work in art involves finding mainly the idea which materializes and transmitted subsequently through the image/form created by the artist. Regardless of their value, through his work the artist comments on or celebrates an aspect of the world, reveals something, so understanding what artists have to say is an important aspect of the role of art in education. Understanding that art is an advanced form of communication, students, in turn, will be tempted to use it as a mean of communication. The acquisition of only artistic techniques, the presentation of working materials, the concern to achieve aesthetic quality of form are important in teaching art, but limiting these aspects can lead to a neglect of problems of intention, which from an educational perspective is paramount.

4. Art as a way of knowledge and personal development

What ways of knowledge are stimulated, practiced and refined through art? The visual arts in particular, the art form that has a particularly important impact on the way we process, retain and render information, knows four directions of personal development. First, art helps the individual to acquire skills and develop their imagination, in line with this vision, educators should design programs that develop such skills. (Aypek Arslan, 2012). It is not easy, because in order to acquire them, students must learn to think like artists. Second, artistic training helps individuals learn how to understand and explain the value of the art they see. Understanding aesthetic value, a form of cognitive thinking, cannot be assumed as such. Nor can it be assumed that experience in creating art will be on its own sufficient to develop the ability to observe the aesthetic qualities in what we call collectively name visual art, or the ability to understand any visual narrative in an aesthetic setting reference. Seeing from an aesthetic perspective is a learned form of human performance, a kind of expertise.

School programs should only be designed to encourage its development. Observation and analysis from an aesthetic perspective requires the ability to focus on the formal and expressive qualities of the form, rather than on its utilitarian functions. The action itself requires the ability to *slow down* the reading of the image so that the visual qualities can be inspected and enjoyed, also it is necessary to intuit the qualitative aspects and the quality of the experience that generates it. Such dispositions and ways of attention can be developed through teaching. Learning to use certain forms of representation means learning to think and transpose the meaning of ideas through images.

In addition to developing the ability to create and perceive art, arts education has two other objectives. One would be to understand the historical and cultural context in which art is created, the other a possible answer to questions about the values that art offers. The first is closely related to the history and evolution of art, the second to a philosophical field called aesthetics. Both objectives, if will be achieved, would help students understand the relationship between the social context in which works of art are created and their content and form. Understanding this context can significantly influence people's behavior, supporters of arts education consider that this path would be a more comprehensive approach to education than other ways, as it amplifies the four types of relationships of individuals in society, changing their behavior by the fact that: are more open to the new, appreciate better the context in which they live, identify the place of culture in space and time, discuss and justify their judgments about the nature, merits and importance of certain ideas (Corbisiero-Drakos et al, 2021: 4-6).

5. Art education in training young people for the professions of the future

Does arts education really confer competencies and, if they that exist, do these competencies have applicability in employment? A favorable argument would be that the experience in the arts develops initiative and creativity, stimulates the imagination, develops planning skills and, through some artistic sub-domains, helps young people to learn how to work together. (Eisner, 2002, p. 34). We cannot deny

that these personal qualities are professionally relevant. None of the subjects studied in school provide express training for a particular profession, the study of literature or mathematics does not turn students into mathematicians or writers. Plastic or visual education can determine the interest to discover, cultivates not only creativity but also sensitivity and sense of observation, i.e. analytical ability, in other ways than literature or mathematics. Mathematics attributes confidence in a calculable truth and in the reason, while the arts encourage the reflective spirit.

The artistic exercise from the perspective of education exceeds the satisfaction of a strict performance, it refers more to autonomy, to the fact that ideas go beyond the abstract framework and become representable forms. The mathematical applications represented are found everywhere, from weather forecasts, maps, statistics and economic predictions, to mobile phone applications, all forming a universe of images, decorative or utilitarian, to which are added the artistic ones. The tools for understanding the world can be mastered by presenting the link between the two fields, so far removed today in the hierarchy of subjects in the school curriculum, because, beyond its utilitarian nature, mathematics draw near by art through a freedom to solving the most difficult and sometimes seemingly unnecessary problems. While projects made in an art class may not seem to have much to do with a profession, they are part of the "skill set" that future employees must acquire in order to become productive employees.

*Arts-based learning enables students to develop the very skills that futurists say we need most: persistence (learning how to practice and commit to something through many revisions), collaboration (working together on a play, a music ensemble, curating a gallery show, choreographing and performing a dance), communication (making sure everyone in the ensemble or cast knows what's going on, at what time, and how the action or event will flow), critique (being able to distill what one likes/doesn't like in a piece of work, helping others grow from criticism, connecting the work to those that came before—in other words, on whose shoulders do you stand?), and resilience (the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties or even toughness).*³⁰⁴ In the context of education and qualification for the various existing professions on the jobs market, not the shortcomings of teaching art, lack of teaching materials, etc. are the ones that annihilates its value in the development of an individual, but the wrong perception about art is the one who contributes to the inability of many to distinguish between naive stereotypes about art and the unsuspected possibilities of (trans) forming the individual that art offers. The reduction of the number of hours and the disappearance of some subjects, their transformation into optional ones will contribute even more to a formal education, from which the enthusiasm, the curiosity and last but not least the effectiveness will disappear.

6. Conclusions

The purpose of visual education is to strengthen, encourage and satisfy individual needs, expression through art involves the use of a wide range of mental

³⁰⁴ Nathan, Linda F. 2018, *Creativity, the Arts, and the Future of Work*, Sustainability, Human Well-Being, and the Future of Education, J. W. Cook (ed.), p. 292

processes, gaining knowledge in art is a process and can be divided into three specific aspects: visual literacy, contextual relevance and critical response. Drawing is a tool for creative thinking that helps to develop many types of ideas and solve problems, but observational drawing develops the intuitive part. Especially in the creative industries, workers use *drawing* to develop concepts and create ideas, similarly it has been found that when they practice both expressive drawing and observational drawing, students naturally develop their own creative thinking skills. Aesthetic practices and experiences provoke commitments and, insofar as they are thought provoking, are crucial for the individual. Art in the context of work from the perspective of education teaches us that:

- imagination and the use of sensitivity are important;
- the way things relate to each other is essential;
- extrinsic rewards matter;
- in work the objectives must be kept constant, but the purpose can be flexible.

If the extra-artistic or extra-aesthetic aspects of life are not the main justification for the need to study art in schools, better organization of teaching, conceiving learning as a creative action, designing an educational environment as an artistic task - all this represent a sufficient number of arguments in favor of the use of art to obtain a redesign of teaching practices and the context in which teaching takes place, their result being the development of creativity and thinking skills, broadening student's social and cultural knowledge.

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