

European education policy and arts education

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Abstract

In recent years, education in European countries is an important subject of interest. The education system is treated as a preparation stage for children's role in an increasingly uncertain world. Additionally, there is a need to encourage young people to develop a wide range of abilities and interests to recognize and cultivate their potential and creativity. These developments raise a number of challenges for art education. According to the European Framework for Lifelong Learning (European Parliament, 18/12/2006), the cultivation of critical thinking and creativity are essential skills which are required to create integrated and active citizens, to promote social inclusion and to achieve employability. Arts education can be essential in achieving these goals.

Keywords: art education, European countries, education policy

Introduction

Theoretical Part

Art education (Unesco, 2006) ^[26]:

- Supports the human rights to education and cultural participation,
- Develops individual skills,
- Improves the quality of education, and
- Promotes the expression of cultural diversity.

The implementations of art education (Μπρίνια, 2015) ^[6]:

- Achieve multidimensional and in depth thinking on the subject that will be taught,
- Help students to build and expand their imagination, cultivate cooperation and social skills like communication, enhance their creativity and their understanding and gain new knowledge with memory trace,
- Improve the active participation of the students and the teacher,
- Develop critical thinking, promotes innovation students end emotional intelligence. The students get involved in learning with all their strength and abilities because teaching is interesting.
- Improve cultural awareness of students. Observing an artwork reveals social values, historical, political and philosophical views.
- Improves receptivity of students to new ideas that fight conservatism, prejudices and stereotypes and cultivate their metacognitive ability.

The influence of the arts education of young people has been confirmed through a significant number of studies (Fiske, 1999; Deasy, 2002; Bamford, 2006) ^[15, 13, 11]. In particular, the research of Bamford (2006) ^[11] showed that qualitative education in the arts has a positive effect on the child but also on the teaching and learning environment and community. Other studies show the correlation between participation in art courses and learning outcomes such as academic achievements

(Bamford, 2006; Wetter *et al.*, 2009) ^[11, 21], commitment to learning (Fletcher, 2005) and development of skills in reading and writing (Hunter, 2005) ^[16]. Art as a learning tool (Gramsi, 1971):

- Contributes to the development of creativity, communication and initiative,
- Releases from prejudices, and promote cooperation and
- Promotes courage to create and introduce innovations.

Art education and its implementations make the child's mind more flexible and more effective in the pursuit of knowledge. Modern pedagogical trends are based on the development of creativity and free expression of the child, paving the way for a more direct, close and fruitful cooperation of art education and pedagogy (Chapman, 1993; Gaillot, 2002; Μαγουλιώτης, 2002) ^[10, 2, 5]. The aesthetic experience of students, which is their contact with works of art, develops their creative ability and their capacity for reflection and critical processing in depth (Μπρίνια & Βίκας, 2014) ^[7]. The proper use of art as an educational tool, positively affects all feelings and thoughts. Therefore, learning and teaching through art gives the learning process a different "color", because students and their teachers enjoy multiple benefits (Brinia & Vikas, 2012) ^[12]. Consequently, the use of art in the educational process is a great legacy for the educational value of student (Μπρίνια & Σταυρακούλη, 2015) ^[8].

The international and European organizations (UNESCO, OECD, European Council, EU) play a particularly important role, both in the ideological orientation of education and in practice with the suggestions, proposed implementations and the various pilot training programs in partnership with the countries (Αθανασούλα-Ρέππα, 1999). In 1999, the General Director of UNESCO called on all those involved in the field of artistic and cultural education to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the teaching of the arts will win a special place in the education of every child, from kindergarten to the last year of secondary education. Afterwards, the World Summit in Lisbon confirmed the need to consolidate the artistic

education in all societies.

Similar developments have also occurred in Europe. In 2005, the Council of Europe has put in circulation a framework of rules for the value of cultural heritage for society (Council of Europe, 2005) ^[22], which identified the need for European countries to protect cultural goods, promote cultural identity, respect difference and encourage intercultural dialogue. In May 2007, the European Commission created a European Communication Agenda for Culture and in November 2007 the decision by the European Council Culture (Council of the European Union, 2007) ^[23] suggested the promotion of art education and the active participation in cultural activities in order for the students to develop their creativity and innovation. In March 2009, the European Parliament's decision on Artistic Studies in the European Union (European Parliament, 2009) ^[24] included recommendations such as: artistic education should be compulsory at all school levels, teaching arts will need to utilize the latest information and communication technology, teaching history of arts must include meetings with artists and visits to places of culture.

In September 2009, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Jan Figel, stated that the role of education in the arts in shaping the lives of young people is widely recognized at European level. This paper refers to a comparative ethnographic research that took place with the help of Eurydice (Eurydice study, 2009) ^[25] the school year 2007/2008, from 30 countries of the European Union and examines the presence of various forms of art in public education.

Although the arts are displayed in the education policy of all countries, there is a gap between the international education "theory" and its application in the educational systems of countries. Proposals such as "establishing the importance of arts education in all societies" and "being compulsory at all school levels" remain unaccomplished. Robinson (1999) ^[18] in his research found that all national policy statements on education emphasize the importance of the cultural dimension and the need to promote the artistic and creative abilities of young people. In practice, the status and promotion of the arts in education is less evident. In all examined cases, the arts had a lower status than mathematics and science. Additionally, the complexity and diversity of the objectives of artistic education raised questions about the ability of the curriculum of the arts to fulfill such contra and wide-ranging goals (Sharp & Le Metais 2000; Taggart *et al.* 2004) ^[19, 20]. Additionally, the evaluation of the teaching quality in the arts receives little attention (Bamford 2006; Sharp & Le Metais 2000; Taggart *et al.*, 2004) ^[11, 19, 20] despite the fact that since the beginning of the 90s, evaluation and quality issues in education hold high positions on the agenda of the European Union.

More general European educational objectives (e.g. cultural heritage, lifelong learning / interest, etc.) are adopted in the curriculum level in arts in education systems of most countries. European educational systems, although they bear the characteristics of the societies to which they belong, they are put under the guidelines set out by the European Union (Μούτσος, 2010) ^[9]. Levin (1998) ^[17] notes that there is high level of flexibility in the implementation of education policies at the national level, as well as the degree and the way the European guidelines are adopted, depending on the socio-economic and cultural environment of each country. "National states maintain the organizational control of their educational

systems, therefore, differences between national education systems remain significant, despite the common challenges they face" (Ζμας, 2007) ^[3]. In addition, educational systems are still serving national economies and local social requirements (Ζμας, 2007) ^[3].

The lack of adequate facilities, the gradual reduction and elimination of arts courses in the school years, the inadequate assessment guidelines and the complete lack of interest by the central authorities for further training of teachers raise legitimate questions about the treatment of the arts and the humanities in general. A prevalence of a pragmatic and instrumental conception of the role of education is evident. This is confirmed by comparative surveys such as PISA. The utilitarian direction of tests via PISA restricts the development of the imagination, critical thinking and reflection (Ζμας, 2007) ^[3]. The orientation of such surveys rekindled scientific dialogue around the question "what knowledge has the greatest value?" Academic circles have already expressed legitimate concerns about the upcoming mission of the school and foresee a limited role of the school in providing utilitarian knowledge and skills (Ζμας, 2007) ^[3].

Conclusions

The modern crisis, globalization and the related weakening of the nation-state do not simply constitute an economic crisis; this is cultural crisis. If the social sciences and humanities have been weakened, then the means of defense have weakened dramatically (Καζαμιάς, 1997) ^[4]. The survey of Bamford (2006) ^[11] revealed that the process of learning through the arts enhances the quality of education, improves the imagination, creativity and critical thinking and research, which are completely necessary in our time.

"Students, by observing a work of art, draw and reveal social values, historical data as well as political and philosophical views of society. The use of art in teaching economics at school can improve students' participation in the teaching process, as the art can express the truth symbolically enhancing to creative learning. Through the use of art in teaching economics at school, students identify themselves (feelings, thoughts, experiences), strengthen links between school and society and highlight the potential usefulness of teaching economics at school" (Μπρίνια, 2015).

The lack of creativity is the current illiteracy and the need to combat it is critical. Picasso said he spent most of his life to learn to paint like a child, because all children are born artists. The challenge is to remain creative as they grow. The promotion of the arts is essential in teaching in order to provide students with integrated and multidisciplinary education that is based on the creative learning and critical thinking. This type of education aims at cultivating emotional intelligence skills and creating a pleasant learning climate in the classroom which can upgrade the quality of school education through culture based on the senses (Μπρίνια, 2015) ^[6, 8]. A prerequisite for the introduction of art in teaching is the development of appropriate learning climate in the classroom and ensuring the necessary conditions for participatory and interactive teaching (Μπρίνια & Βίκας, 2014) ^[7].

Απαραίτητη προϋπόθεση για την εισαγωγή της τέχνης στη διδασκαλία αποτελεί η διαμόρφωση του κατάλληλου μαθησιακού κλίματος μέσα στην τάξη και η εξασφάλιση των απαραίτητων συνθηκών για συμμετοχική και διαλογική διδασκαλία (Brinia & Vikas, 2012) ^[12].

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