

SLOVENE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES OF ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

Primary school teachers (342 in total) from all over Slovenia were questioned on their attitude towards arts and cultural education. The results of the study show that the teachers were most unanimous in regard to the importance of team planning in educational work in the field of the arts and the importance of cultural education for the life of an individual and society; this was followed by measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education in primary school and the content of teacher training programs. Statistically significant differences in the teachers' attitudes occurred with respect to their age and teaching position (class teacher and subject teacher). Unlike their younger colleagues and subject teachers, older teachers and class teachers expressed a more positive view of arts and cultural education.

Key words: *arts and cultural education, primary school, teachers' attitudes.*

Introduction

Today, schooling and education are facing a crisis of global proportions. Scientific thinking paradigms and modern technology govern the life of the individual and society. Classical scholars in pedagogy have already issued warnings about the danger of one-sided reasoning in education. Kroflič points out that “the value of arts ought to increase in the spirit of postmodern epistemology and value orientations because it is a key instrument that allows emphatic recognition of various value perspectives and raising existential questions” (Kroflič, 2007, p. 14).

In accordance with the competences of lifelong learning, in particular the competence of cultural awareness and expression that includes extending personal growth, constructive control of emotion, identity, innovation and creativity, critical thinking and intercultural communication, arts and cultural education represents a starting point for co-creating a culturally conscious and aesthetically sensitive individual (young person).

As a result, arts and cultural education in the 21st century is becoming one of the more important topics in the field of education and culture (Požar Matjašič and Bucik, 2008), which is also corroborated by a number of documents, such as *Arts Education Partnership* (2004) or *Road Map for Arts Education* (2006). In Slovenia, these correspond with the *National Guidelines for Arts and Cultural Education* (2009), the *Proposal of Arts and Cultural Education* (2009) and the *National Cultural Programme 2008-2011*. With the *Communication on a European Agenda*

for *Culture in a Globalizing World* (2007) report, the *Work Plan for Culture 2008-10* (2008) and by declaring 2008 the European Year of Multicultural Dialogue and 2009 the European Year of Creativity and Innovation, the European Commission has also underlined the importance of creativity and innovation and the role of culture and creativity.

Slovenia has traditionally appreciated culture and the arts; however, there remains a lack of awareness as to their importance for the preservation of a democratic society which is not only based on the civilizational achievements of mankind but also preserves and cultivates them (Musek and Musek Lešnik 2003). For this reason, it is necessary to put more effort into short- and long-term strategies of functional education that will promote these values to a more important position in society. Each adult and child has the right to education and participation in arts and cultural life. Introduction to the arts processes cultivates pupils and awakens in each of them a feeling of creativity, initiative-making, rich imagination, emotional intelligence, critical reflexivity, free thinking, etc.

Taggart et al. (2004) point out that the majority of European countries have arts education aims defined in their curricula. A comparative study prepared by the Eurydice network (2009) offers an insight into the planning and implementation of arts education across curricula in 30 European countries.

It is more and more evident that state institutions and various documents offer mostly theoretical starting points about the importance and role of arts and cultural education that are also taken into account by curriculum designers; however, they do provide no concrete didactic approaches to teaching arts and cultural education. This raises the question of the extent to which the teachers (class teachers, subject teachers of arts subjects, subject teachers of other subjects such as, for example, history, mathematics, etc.) can implement the aims of arts and cultural education in the planned and operational school curriculum.

Teachers who teach arts subjects play a key role in developing pupils' creative abilities. In the study about the impact of culture on creativity (KEA European Affairs, 2009), teacher training was singled out as one of the main areas that need improvement in order to establish a creative learning environment in schools.

This is why it matters who teaches arts subjects and how well these teachers are trained. In European countries, class teachers mostly teach the arts at the primary level; subject-teachers teach the arts at secondary level. Because quality teaching of the arts represents a difficult task, it is not surprising that class teachers lack self-confidence in this area (Taggart et al., 2004). Bresler (1998) points out that, in teaching arts classes, teachers focus on topics related to vacation, seasons of the year, holidays and other special occasions, while subject teachers focus on the elements of a particular type of art. She thinks that the contexts in which the arts operate in schools do not enhance pupils' creativity, so she suggests a systematic approach to aim-oriented planning of arts education. Therefore, teachers who prepare subjects and teach in the field of the arts should have enough pedagogical-didactic knowledge and skills, the ability to create and perform works of art and the ability to analyze, interpret and evaluate works of art. They should also have developed their personality potential and social and emotional competencies that manifest themselves in a responsible view of the aesthetic development of pupils, in a positive attitude towards culture and the arts, and in the expression of joy and interest in a particular type of art.

Many authors point out the problem of how to ensure quality teaching in the field of arts and cultural education (Bamford, 2006; Sharp and Le Métais, 2000; Taggart et al., 2004). In the past, not enough attention was paid to studies that monitored the quality of arts teaching. Since few share the belief held by the authors of this paper that quality planning and implementation of arts education depends on the teacher's attitude towards art, the decision was taken to pay special attention to this in an extensive empirical study about the role of culture and arts in Slovenian education.

The attitudes of Slovene primary school teachers towards the following were investigated:

- the importance of arts education,
- the measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education in primary school,
- the content of future teacher training and
- the team planning of teaching.

The role of teachers' age and teaching position (class teachers - from 1st to 5th grade, subject teachers - from 6th to 9th grade) was most interesting for our research.

Research Questions

- What is the teacher's attitude to the importance of arts and cultural education for the development of the individual?
How do the age and position of the teacher affect their attitude to arts and cultural education?
- What is the attitude of the teacher towards measures aimed at improving arts and cultural education?
How do the age and position of the teacher affect their attitude towards measures aimed at improving arts and cultural education?
- What is the attitude of the teacher regarding the content of teacher training programs?
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- What is the attitude of the teacher towards team planning in teaching?
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Methodology of Research

Sample of Research

The research sample comprised teachers from Slovene primary schools (n=342) - class teachers (n=160) and subject teachers (n=182); they were under 30 (n=53), under 40 (n=122), under 50 (n=105) and over 50 (n=62) years of age. The research sample was selected randomly and represents 5% of teachers employed in Slovene primary schools.

Instrument and Procedures

The survey was conducted by e-mail – web survey tool. Besides closed-type questions (dichotomous questions, questions with verbal and scaled answers), the questionnaire also included a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree) of attitude. Validity and reliability were empirically confirmed with factor analysis, the validity of which is based on a high KMO value (Kaiser-Meyer_Olkin) (0,794) and statistically typical Bartlett's test of sphericity values ($\chi^2=1430, 439, \alpha= 0,000$). The first factor explains 26.7% of variance, all common factors explain 57.9% of variance, according to $r_{tt}=\sqrt{h^2}$, the reliability coefficient is 0.76.

Data Analysis

The following steps were followed:

- factor analysis (principal axis factoring – PAF),
- analysis of individual statements is based on the means (\bar{x}) of the five-item agreement scale (5 - I strongly agree, 4 - I agree, 3 - I neither agree nor disagree, 2 - I disagree, 1 - I strongly disagree), and of the categories as a whole on the sums of the items (grades) according to the corresponding statements,
- the role of age and teaching position in the categories expressed in this way after the factorization of attitudes was examined with the analysis of variance and t-test.

Results of Research

The established categories were analyzed in terms of their structure and in terms of teacher age and teaching position.

Table 1. Ordered series of categories of teachers' attitudes in terms of mean (\bar{x}) on a five-item agreement scale.

Cat-egories	Importance of arts education	Measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education	Content of future teacher training	Team planning of teaching
1	T13 – Arts education allows individuals to develop their creative potential (4.28).	T15 – It is necessary to provide additional professional training for teachers about arts education (3.19).	T1 – Training at the faculty offers future teachers good professional knowledge (3.32).	T5 – Planning the learning process at class level should include teamwork among class teachers (4.28).
2	T11 – Arts education encourages understanding between different societies and cultures (4.19).	T7 – Encouragement of partnership between schools, artists and cultural institutions should be given more attention (3.89).	T2 – Training at the faculty offers future teachers good general knowledge (3.31).	T6 – Planning the learning process at subject level should include teamwork of teachers from various subject areas (4.26).
3	T12 – Arts education strengthens personal and collective identity (4.16).	T8 – Arts education aims should be systematically planned across various subject areas (3.87).	T4 – Training at the faculty encourages development of future teachers' creative abilities (2.83).	
4	T14 – With a well-guided teaching process, arts education raises the level of pupils' motivation and active cooperation (4.11).	T16 – Primary schools would need cultural coordinators to manage arts and culture activities (3.82).	T3 – Training at the faculty offers future teachers information on the importance of the social-emotional competence of teachers (2.61).	
5	T9 – Arts education encourages development of interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and competences (4.04).			
6	T10 – Arts education can help solve problems of modern society (3.83).			
Total \bar{x}	4.10	3.87	3.02	4.27

Teachers express the highest level of agreement with team (cross-subject) planning of teaching (team work among class teachers, cooperation of subject teachers), followed by the importance of arts education (they assign the highest rank to its potential to enhance individual creative potential, then to encouraging understanding between different societies and cultures, strengthening personal and collective identity, raising the level of pupils' motivation, developing interdisciplinary knowledge and, finally, its help in solving problems of modern society). This is followed by teachers' efforts to raise the quality of arts and cultural education in primary school (they emphasize the need for additional professional training, encouragement of partnership between schools and cultural-arts institutions, planning of arts education aims across various subject areas and a need for coordinators for managing arts and cultural activities, who would be employed by primary schools). At the bottom of the list is the content of future teacher training at the faculties (they emphasized most the professional and general knowledge of students and to a lesser extent the development of abilities and familiarization with the importance of social and emotional competencies of future teachers).

The ordered series of individual categories attitudes and the individual statements within them reveals that teachers, on the one hand, highly appreciate arts education and its influence on the development of creativity and interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and competencies. They think that arts education encourages understanding between different cultures, strengthens personal and collective identity, raises the level of pupils' motivation and helps solve problems of modern society. Teachers support team planning and quality arts and cultural education in primary school (e.g., additional professional training for teachers, encouraging partnerships between schools and artists, planning aims of arts and cultural education in various subjects). Furthermore, they warn that university-level teacher training will have to pay more attention to the development of creative abilities and the importance of social and emotional competence.

What follows are the results of difference analysis of teachers' attitudes as with respect to their age and teaching position.

Table 2. The results of the analysis of variance in four categories of teachers' attitudes with respect to their age.

Categories of teachers' attitudes	Age	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between means	
			\bar{x}	s	F	α	F	α
Importance of arts education	21 - 30	53	23.170	4.084	2.457	0.063	6.285	0.000
	31 - 40	122	24.361	2.565				
	41 - 50	105	25.248	2.703				
	51 and more	62	24.839	2.777				
Measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education	21 - 30	53	14.547	2.971	2.511	0.059	3.492	0.016
	31 - 40	122	15.361	2.275				
	41 - 50	105	15.810	1.991				
	51 and more	62	15.516	2.387				
Content in the training of teachers at the faculties	21 - 30	53	11.283	2.918	2.279	0.079	2.971	0.032
	31 - 40	122	11.744	2.561				
	41 - 50	105	12.162	2.283				
	51 and more	62	12.574	2.526				
Team planning of teaching	21 - 30	53	8.113	1.450	0.153	0.928	1.337	0.262
	31 - 40	122	8.504	1.550				
	41 - 50	105	8.524	1.526				
	51 and more	62	8.656	1.515				

On the basis of the non-violated assumptions of homogeneity of variance ($\alpha > 0.05$), statistically significant differences in three out of four groups of attitudes were established. More than their younger colleagues, older teachers (over 41 years old) expressed a positive attitudes towards the importance of arts education ($\alpha = 0.000$), towards measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education in primary school ($\alpha = 0.016$) and the content of teacher training ($\alpha = 0.032$). Older teachers also support team planning of teaching, although not to a statistically significant extent. The results thus show that as they grow older, teachers become increasingly aware of the highly valuable and unique role arts and aesthetic education play in the development of pupils' personalities.

The differences between class and subject teachers will now be analysed.

Table 3. The results of the t-test of differences in four categories of teachers' attitudes with respect to their teaching position.

Categories	Teachers	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Test of homogeneity of variances		Test of differences between mean	
			\bar{x}	s	F	α	t	α
Importance of arts education	Class	160	24.750	2.606	1.582	0.209	1.246	0.214
	Subject	182	24.346	3.292				
Measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education	Class	160	15.656	2.025	4.424	0.036	1.914	0.056 (approximation)
	Subject	182	15.176	2.607				
Content in the training of teachers at the faculties	Class	160	12.194	2.481	0.285	0.594	1.663	0.097
	Subject	182	11.733	2.606				
Team planning of teaching	Class	160	8.775	1.546	0.293	0.589	3.461	0.001
	Subject	182	8.211	2.025				

In the second category (measures for raising the quality of arts and cultural education in primary schools), the assumption of homogeneity of variances is violated, which is why we provide the approximation method results, while in all other dimensions the assumption is not violated, so the usual t-test results are provided.

Means show class teachers to have an advantage in all cases. This proved statistically significant with respect to team planning ($\alpha = 0.001$) and indicated a tendency in the measures towards raising the quality of arts and cultural education ($\alpha = 0.056$) and the content in university-level teacher training ($\alpha = 0.097$). The reasons that class teachers have higher regard for arts education than subject teachers lie in the content of the study programs. With the exception of teachers of languages, and music and fine arts pedagogy, subject teachers receive significantly less training aimed at raising their arts and cultural awareness during their university studies.

Discussion

The insights thus reveal that teachers hold culture and the arts in high esteem and support a number of measures aimed at raising the level of arts and cultural education in primary school. It is particularly important to point out their emphasis on team (cross-subject) planning, the need for the additional professional training of teachers regarding arts and cultural education and the encouragement of partnerships between schools, artists and cultural institutions.

As arts and cultural education allows for the building of connections over a wide area of subjects, a didactic approach involving cross-subject integration seems the most suitable starting point for the implementation of arts and cultural education aims in the learning process. The integration of art into the education system no doubt requires a systematic analysis of cross-subject integration on the level of aims and content (Kalin & Kind, 2006). By including the aims, content and methods of arts work in other subject areas, we develop an attitude towards art (Schirrmacher, 2002). Experience shows that cross-subject integration allows pupils to develop an interest in and motivation for learning and to deepen their understanding and use of knowledge.

The quality of arts education is influenced by successful cooperation between subject teachers, class teachers and recognized artists (forms of partnership: visits to museums, galleries, musical and theatre performances, visiting artists at schools, etc.), which would be based on mutual recognition and understanding of the planned aims and on mutual respect of each other's competence.

Last but not least, it is necessary to emphasize that, according to teachers, Slovene teacher training institutions offer sound professional and general-education knowledge; however, they pay insufficient attention to the development of creative abilities and the importance of the social and emotional competence of future teachers. For this reason, it is necessary to consider a restructuring of education programs or appropriate and effective training of future class and subject teachers as well as an appropriately designed system of permanent professional training. This would provide additional training and development of the abilities, skills and knowledge required for the successful planning, implementation and evaluation of the education process in various fields of the arts.

In line with Šuvakovič's (2007) observations, it is necessary "to replace the accumulation of positivistic knowledge, dates and data with a critical analysis and a consideration of the positive effects and the reception of a work of art; it is necessary to emphasize pupils' individual contributions, their ability to self-organize and self-reflect, to replace the authoritative teacher with a mass of critical and investigative actors, and listen to the voices of culture and the art itself" (Šuvakovič, 2007, p. 14). Vasudevan and Hill (2008) ask what chance there is for different learning at school after media and media texts have become part of the learning materials. Arts teachers should be familiar with the advantages and disadvantages of various media, new technologies and their use in the classroom. Since teachers use the media as a way of expressing and forming identity, the teacher should have a command of information-communication technology. For this reason, teacher training should familiarize teachers with the use of new technologies for the purpose of artistic expression and provide them with the chance to teach with the help of the internet.

Conclusion

Research, practical experience and the views of teachers all suggest that art is gaining in importance in both the public and education sphere; various fields within the arts have become part of the syllabi in both Slovene and the European education systems.

Studies of cultural education in Slovenia (*Culture Education: Accessibility of Culture*

and Integration Between Culture and Education – A Search for Conceptual Solutions, 2005; *Culture Education – Evaluation Study*, 2004) point out that schools receive cultural content; that there exists a one-sided relationship between educational and cultural institutions, but that it is not based on partnership; that more attention needs to be paid to quality cooperation between institutions and the further training of pedagogical and cultural workers. It has been shown that the inclusion of cultural content in schools depends on the initiative and resourcefulness of teachers. Results of studies concerning youth culture and education (Heath, 2001) also caution that schools still insufficiently exploit their potential as places of creativity and in the quest for new art forms. Teachers are also aware that we will have to do more to raise the level of quality of arts and cultural education in primary schools. It is vital that the arts in education receive an equal, independent status in relation to other subject areas. Supporters of this perspective see arts education as a way of encouraging pupils to be the co-creators of the education process and not only passive recipients of knowledge from others.

In Slovenia, intensive integration of arts and cultural values in the education system no doubt represents a long-term strategy of more efficient arts and cultural education. In order to make arts and cultural values (once more) a criterion of modern education, we need cultural programs of better quality in education and education programs in culture; more appropriate levels of financial support; a broader and better network of partnerships and coordinators of arts and cultural activities; training of professional workers in education and culture and examples of good practice.

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