

Essential Strategies for Effective Arts Education

High quality Arts Education requires highly skilled professional art teachers, as well as generalist teachers. It is also enhanced by successful partnerships between these and highly skilled artists.

Within this framework, at least two main objectives need to be addressed:

- Give teachers, artists and others access to the materials and education they need to do this. Creative learning needs creative teaching.
- Encourage creative partnerships at all levels between Ministries, schools, and teachers and arts, science and community organizations.

Successful partnerships are dependent on mutual understanding of the goals towards which the partners are working, and mutual respect for each other's competencies. In order to lay the groundwork for future collaboration between educators and artists, the competencies with which educators as well as artists enter their profession need to encompass insights into the other's field of expertise – including a mutual interest in pedagogy.

Programmes for teacher and artist education need to be revised to equip teachers and artists with the knowledge and experience necessary to share the responsibility for facilitating learning, and be able to take full advantage of the outcomes of cross-professional cooperation. To promote such cooperation entails specific arrangements which represent new challenges to most societies.

Thus, there are two main essential strategies for achieving effective Arts Education: relevant and effective education of teachers and artists, and the development of partnerships between education and cultural systems and actors.

1. Education of teachers and artists

This relates to the often very different experiences and perspectives that teachers of general subjects, arts teachers, and artists have concerning educational and cultural processes and practices. The more effective education of all of these actors in Arts Education, broadly defined, is therefore essential.

- Education of teachers of general subjects

In the best of circumstances, teachers (and school administrators) should be sensitive to the values and qualities of artists and have an appreciation for the arts. Teachers must also be provided with the skills to enable them to cooperate with artists in educational settings. This will allow them to reach their own personal potential as well as utilize the arts in teaching. It might also ensure that they have some knowledge of how to produce or perform works of art; the ability to analyse, interpret, and evaluate works of art; and an appreciation of works of art of other periods and cultures.

Taking into account the fact that the arts can help learning in areas that have been traditionally considered general curricula, primary teachers, especially, often use the

Arts in Education (AiE) approach. For example, songs can be used to memorize key words in language, definitions in science and social studies or some mathematical concept or formula. Integrating the arts into the teaching of other subjects, especially at primary level may be one way of avoiding curriculum overload that some schools may experience. However this integration may not be effective if there is not specific teaching of the arts in parallel.

- Education for arts teachers

Teaching the arts must go further than simply teaching learners specific skills, practices, and bodies of knowledge. Therefore, in addition to studio competency, Arts Education programmes should move toward broader teacher preparation. Art teachers should be encouraged to draw on the skills of other artists, including those from other disciplines, while also developing the skills required to cooperate with artists and with teachers of other subjects in an educational setting.

Fully articulated arts teacher education programmes may encourage the development of knowledge and skills in:

- One or more arts disciplines
- Interdisciplinary arts expression
- Methodologies for teaching the arts
- Methodologies for interdisciplinary teaching in and through the arts
- Curriculum design
- Assessment and evaluation appropriate for arts education
- Formal (school based) arts education
- Informal (community based) arts education

Moreover, good schools alone will never be good enough. As discussed below, Arts Education can often be enhanced by partnerships with a wide range of individuals and organizations in the community. Activities such as visiting art museums and galleries or attending live performances, Artists in School (AIS) programmes, and Environmental Education through Arts Education, are valuable educational opportunities for teachers and students in all learning contexts.

There is also a need to focus on the use of new technologies in artistic creation, electronic music and new media, as well as online teaching in relation to preparing teachers of Arts Education. The use of new technologies has expanded the role of Arts Education and provides new roles for art teachers in the 21st century. These technologies can serve as an essential platform for collaboration among art teachers and between art teachers, artists, scientists and other educators.

Computer art, for example, has become accepted as an art form, as a legitimate form of art production, and as a method of teaching art. Nevertheless, computer art is not widely taught in schools. This is because while teachers of the fine arts, for example, are highly motivated to teach computer art in their classrooms, they often lack experience, pedagogical training, and resources.

Subject teachers at secondary school level may assign tasks that require collaboration among other specialized subjects. For example, the area of business and technology

may be incorporated into the commercial aspect of the arts, or students may be given projects that connect the arts to history or social studies. This approach requires understanding about the value of Arts Education on the part of teachers of other subject areas.

Finally, it is important, at least at the local and perhaps national level, to establish guidelines and standards for art teacher preparation in pre-service education. Various sets of standards have been developed¹ and may serve as a frame of reference for each country's efforts in planning, implementing, and evaluating their own Arts Education programmes.

(See Case Study in the Annex)

- Education for artists

Artists of all disciplines, as well as cultural professionals, should also be given the opportunity to improve their pedagogical capabilities and develop the skills needed both to cooperate with educators in schools and learning centres and, more directly, to communicate and interact effectively with learners. Joint activities and projects between artists-in-training and teachers-in-training can also help to ensure future collaboration.

(See Case Study in the Annex)

As with the development of partnerships between cultural and educational institutions and perspectives, the improvement and enrichment of the education of all those involved in Arts Education is crippled by a lack of financial resources and, especially in non-urban settings, cultural resources such as libraries, theatres, and museums.

2. Partnerships

Although creativity is ranked very high in most policy documents, there exists a lack of fundamental recognition of the importance of quality education as a principal means to facilitate creativity. Implementing Arts Education programmes is neither expensive nor difficult to put into practice if the philosophy behind it rests on partnerships.

With this in mind, a joint responsibility for Arts Education within the Ministries responsible for Culture and/or Education and between the various mechanisms that secure the implementation and evaluation of Arts Education programmes is needed; with each entity clearly aware of its contribution to the process. The creation of synergies between the arts and education in the promotion of creative learning can best be achieved through the following types of partnerships.

- **Ministerial level or municipality level**

Partnerships may exist between separate entities of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, and Ministries of higher education and research in forming joint policies and budgets for class projects that take place inside or outside school hours (curricular and extra-curricular). Arts and education may also be united on a policy level among Ministries of Education and Culture and municipalities (which often are the entities in charge of both educational and cultural institutions) to link the education system and the cultural world, through implementing projects of cooperation between cultural institutions and

¹ Principally in the USA, such as: Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood Art standards by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), Standards for Art Teacher Preparation , Purposes, Principles, and Standards for School Art Programmes, and The National Visual Arts Standards.

schools. These partnerships intend to place art and culture at the centre of education rather than at the margins of the curriculum.

(See Case Study in the Annex)

- **School level**

Throughout the world, most cities, towns and villages have some kind of cultural facility. In the current environment it is recognized that the learning process is no longer limited exclusively to schools. New possibilities of pedagogy have resulted from the development of partnerships between schools and cultural institutions. In some countries, there is long-standing collaboration between these institutions; however, the extent and effectiveness of these partnerships vary widely.

Support and genuine commitment by both cultural institutions and schools are vital to ensure the success of the collaboration. Close partnerships have brought about innovative programmes, mainly in the form of visits to cultural institutions. Such visits provide students with a wealth of information, artistic encounters and opportunities to see and get absorbed into artistic processes, and also provide vast potential for integrated teaching practices. In primary education – where young children respond strongly to visual learning – active collaboration between institutions can provide opportunities for enriched teaching methods.

(See Case Study in the Annex)

- **Teacher level**

Effective partnerships are also fruitful for teachers. By inviting artists, with their experience and expertise in movement, words, sound and rhythm, images, to develop a project, on a partnership basis, in in-school and extra-curricula programmes, teachers can benefit from new experiences which can enrich their teaching methods. In-school projects might involve collaboration between the artist, the teacher, and the school, and are designed to match the age of the participants, the teaching methods, and the duration of the classroom activity.

In some cases, cultural institutions provide comprehensive online teaching resources for teachers, arts educators, families and students.

(See Case Study in the Annex)

There are many challenges to the development of such partnerships. Budgets for anything related to Arts Education, if they exist, may be centralized in one ministry or department with little opportunity (or willingness) to share them with another. Government bureaucracies, at all levels, are sometimes narrow in their perspectives with little motivation for cooperation. And, of course, there are differences in the individual and structural “cultures” between the educational and cultural fields.