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ART AND CULTURAL EDUCATION IN ALBANIA

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Abstract

The arts and cultural education became an important topic of global and European circles in the field of education and arts since its content and mission fall on the intersection of cultural, education and scientific sector. Culturally diverse and knowledge based society and in order to ensure a high quality of their lives and active participation in the society individuals must acquire different skills and develop specific competencies through education. The Arts and cultural education play a significant role, esp. in the light of development and promotion of creativity and innovation. Arts and cultural education as a fundamental individual's right must be a part of lifelong learning, therefore we aspire to develop this field as one of the pillars of education and thereby ensure a consistent development of individual's cultural awareness and literacy. High quality cultural-education projects and programmes must be provided in all field of culture, as well as for all target-groups, and thus ensure education about art, with art and through art. Moreover, everyone (esp. children and youth) must be provided with high-quality well-planned arts and cultural education which enables them to explore and to develop a critical stance towards different fields of arts, and to explore the culture and cultural heritage of their own nation, as well as other cultures; i.e. to promote inter-cultural dialogue. All of the above should contribute to the cultural awareness of individuals and the awareness of the diversity of cultural identities in our narrow and broad environment.

The research investigates the importance of arts and cultural education, communication, symbols, as well as the importance of other internal factors such as promotion and encouragement of cultural diversity, cultural exchange and dynamics of culture developments.

Keywords: Culture, Diversity, Cultural Education

Introduction

In this century arts and cultural education has become a significant topic in European and global circles in the field of education and culture, as evidenced by the emergence of several important documents. At UNESCO's first World Conference on Arts Education (March 2006), an important document was presented: the Road Map for Arts Education guidelines for arts education, which emphasize the importance of art education for building a society based on creativity. In the same year, another document, the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning, followed. It places *cultural awareness and expression* within the set of eight key competences. The importance of developing and promoting creativity and innovation in education and training as one of the fundamental, core functions and tasks of education of each and every person was particularly highlighted also by the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States (May 2008).

National policies for art and cultural education in Albania

Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (MTCYS), is the central institution for the compilation of the national cultural policies. Throughout the cultural-education, the citizens are actively involved in the social life. On this purpose, the priority of MTCYS is to make cultural products more accessible to public. Cultural education and education through the media are important parts of cultural policies. Cultural services should be accessible to everyone. Nowadays, we gladly state that apart from the judicial and political dimensions, the Albanian youth is widely oriented toward intercultural approach which makes them more open toward different cultures. This fact is also encouraged by the university exchanges and people involved in art and media.

The strategic role of MTCYS and its specialized structures is multidimensional:

- **Promoting** art in Albanian society, trying to give creativity an important role in the development of the country. Artistic creativity is an irreplaceable source of changes and freedom. There cannot be a stable development of Albanian society without giving the necessary attention to creativity.
- **Supporting** creative individuals or groups, offering them necessary information and accessibility. Of main importance is good transparency in management of public funds, the formula used for subventions, public competitions or scholarships selections.
- **Giving** the artists competence to improve and develop art infrastructure - physical and relational - stimulating the diversity in forms of financial support, cooperation and expositions.
- **Protecting** the art and artists through cooperation with Cultural Commission in the Parliament and other actors in order to find an appropriate legal frame which would improve their social status.
- **Planning**, consulting and coordinating the calendar of artistic offers, cooperating with local government in order to stimulate and increase the number of activities.
- **Informing** on the national and international sources and opportunities offered.

Throughout the transition years, the Ministry of Culture (nowadays MTCYS) have made an evaluation of actual legal frame in Albania with the purpose to bring it on par with the European one, aiming for improvement of institutional and infrastructural capacities. Pursuant with the “Art and Culture” law, 18.11.2010 two new public institutions were created: the National Comedy Theater and National Center for Art and Culture and were put under the MTCYS responsibility, like the institution of National Cirque.

The public art institutions which play an important role in the national cultural life and in the implementation of cultural policies are:

- Nation Theatre of Opera and Ballet
- National Theatre
- National History Museum
- National Gallery of Art
- The National Cinematographic Center
- The Institute of Cultural Monuments
- National Cultural Centre for Children
- Albanian Central Film Archive
- National Library
- National Center of Art and Culture
- National Comedy Theatre
- National circus
- Albanian copyright office

These institutions, which are autonomously administrated and have a legally established relationship with MTCYS, are located in Tirana, making the other cities poor in cultural activities. The state institutions need to reconsider restructuring as an important topic in the improvement of management and quality and increasing of the audience. Nowadays, they are totally independent related to the artistic plan, while they are still financially supported by the state budget and partly by the donators. They have an established artistic calendar which is approved by the Artistic Council. Their activities are followed by large audience, in which is significant presence of youth. The artistic level of these activities is easily comparable with the quality of the artistic shows of culturally developed countries.

In Albania the importance of arts and cultural education has already been emphasized by the National Strategy for Art and Culture. The National strategy/guidelines for arts and cultural education for the years 2007-2013 were prepared by the working group which was appointed by Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports and Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination of Albania (DEBASKON) in 2007. The group was composed of DEBASKON advisors, experts in individual fields of arts, representatives of cultural institutions specialized in different areas of art and the international experts and coordinators of culture and art education at the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports (MTCYS) and the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Including culture in the entire educational process and making it available to children and young people within the public cultural infrastructure reflects both the concern for systematic cultural education as well as for culture itself. In Albania the National Strategy it is particularly emphasized that we must take care of cultural identity and promote cultural diversity. Culture is the historical foundation of national identity, which is the central element of Albania visibility in contemporary Europe, emphasizing the importance of knowing and respecting one's own and foreign cultures and cultural diversities for sustainable development. The document sets forth that knowledge

about various fields of culture and promotion of culture- related creativities are the priority areas of education for sustainable development.

Its content and mission place arts and cultural education at the intersection of the cultural and educational sectors, making it the obligation of the MTCYS and the MoES to support it. Consistent with the Guidelines of the National Strategy of Art and Culture 2007–2013, both ministries strive together for active partnership between educational and cultural institutions, while being aware of the importance of partnership with other government sectors and institutions from various areas and requires the joining of forces of all social factors. The national strategy for arts and culture in the field of education clarify the role of culture and raise awareness of its importance in improving the quality of education and in developing the creativity of individuals, thus stressing the importance of art and culture for 21st century society. The guidelines point to the need for closer integration of culture, science and education, and to the importance of developing talent and creativity of each individual through arts and cultural education. The objectives of arts and cultural education are achieved through interdisciplinary connections and activities throughout the educational process in preschool institutions, primary and secondary schools. Achieving the objectives of arts and cultural education contributes to the development of culture in general.

Besides, the guidelines are important because they both define arts and cultural education and establish a common basis for understanding of this concept in education. They are intended for professional workers in preschool institutions and schools, employees of cultural institutions, artists, politicians, parents and the general public.

Art education and professional trainings

1. Professional scholar art education

Music is taught in elementary school, high school and university. During education, all musical disciplines are taught by qualified professors. Nowadays, the school system depends only on Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), while the new programs should stimulate the collaboration and the dependence of schools systems from both MoES and MTCYS.

2. Community education

Art education (musical) is a subject only in elementary school and it is considered to be less important. The strategy aims to develop the interest of youth towards arts and prepare them as future consumer of identified european kinds like theater, opera, literature, ballet, visual arts, multimedia, symphonic music, etc.

Art education in visual arts it is still on a very low level. In school system, this education is still basic and is developed in the framework of old artistic system. There is a need for urgent re-conception of this subject starting from books and training of professors who would be in charge of developing it. A transformation is also needed in musical schools which offer very low standard becoming institutions of cultural and intellectual regress.

Cinematographic education has no predecessors, stable structure or program. There are only a few cineastes who have a full education coming from the countries of east Europe and rarely from west, the rest have only followed some short time post graduate courses. Nowadays, there are the public schools of movies with the University of Fine Arts and the private one called Marubi, with Alba Film Studio. Even though these are important initiatives, they just started to deliver first students which, on one side, will guarantee the future standard in the Albanian cinematography and on the other one will be a direct reference for the success and development of these schools further on. There is evidence that a considerable number of albanian students are getting educated in private

western film academies. In order to support the development of these initiatives, The National Cinematographic Center has adapted administrative policies and structures which aim to attract, test and promote future cineasts. Actually, the system is suffering the lack of legal and structural synchronization of institutions, subjects and cinematographic functions in public and private levels.

Performing art has a large educative mission and plays an important social role because of its direct contact with the public.

3. *People training* with the modern forms of management and self management of art. There is need for the creation of a post graduation system for art management, training courses for the compilation and realization of projects in a local and national level and for cultural European programs.

Media and art

Media like radio and television are most important promoters of art and artists. Albania has a positive experience in this domain, even though there are some special radios or TV channels which tend to promote anti values, impacted by the informal trade or low cultural level of their owners. This problem leads to misinformation or miseducation of the audience.

The digital technology and social media allows people to have a direct impact in cultural creativities.

Definition of the concept of arts and cultural education

In different social environments, the concept of culture is understood in a number of different ways. Because of its complexity and various aspects from which it is viewed, it is difficult to define culture clearly and unambiguously. Culture comprehends artistic achievements, results of human labour, moral values, laws, beliefs, attainments and habits- it is therefore a set of achievements and values that are the result of human activity, thinking and creativity. The list of areas, in accordance with the objectives of arts and cultural education, includes and interconnects:

- reading culture,
- film and audiovisual culture,
- music,
- intermedia arts (multimedia),
- cultural and technical heritage,
- fine arts (painting, sculpture, photography, architecture, design, etc.) and
- performing arts (theatre, puppetry, contemporary dance, etc.).

The essence of contemporary arts and cultural education lies in its cross-curricular character art is embedded in all school subjects and different school activities. It provides a basis for every individual's creative involvement in culture and his/her understanding of its importance for the development of human society. It contributes to the overall development of the personality of every individual, shapes his/her sense of aesthetics, cultural awareness and expression, and encourages lifelong learning. It helps children and youth to get to know the culture of their own nation and build awareness of belonging to this culture; it encourages respect for other cultures and intercultural dialogue. The basic purpose of arts and cultural education is to awaken the desire and need of an individual to participate in cultural and, in

particular, in artistic expression – both in terms of their own creativity and taking pleasure in the artistic expression of others. Arts and cultural education contributes to the development of an individual's active involvement in art and culture and encourages his/her imagination, creativity, initiative, innovation, tolerance, etc. Developing these skills and abilities allows personal growth of the individual, encourages different ways of thinking and behaving and provides a basis for a society based on knowledge, creativity and tolerance.

Hypotheses:

1. *The role of arts and cultural education in the development and promotion of creativity and innovation.*
2. *The role of arts and cultural education in the increase of future art consumers.*
3. *The role of arts and cultural education as promotion and encouragement of cultural diversity, cultural exchange and dynamics of culture developments.*

The role of arts and cultural education

The role of arts and cultural education are closely interconnected and they mutually complement each other.

1. Implementing the fundamental human right to education and participation in the field of culture

International documents ensure that everyone can participate in cultural life as a creator, mediator or recipient/consumer of culture products and services. Culture is recognized as the quality indicator of an individual's everyday life. Quality arts and cultural education provides appropriate basis for implementation of this right in the process of education.

2. Developing creativity

Arts and cultural education promotes the development of the individual's creativity in accordance with his potentials.

3. Developing individual skills

Arts and cultural education promotes the development of emotional-motivational, social, cognitive and physical and motor skills. It stimulates imagination, initiative, freedom and critical thinking and enhances autonomy, awareness of cultural identity and so on. Thus, it allows comprehensive development of an individual.

4. Improving the quality of education

Introducing arts and cultural contents in the school curriculum contributes to the quality of educational work, it promotes cross-curricular integration and transfer of /knowledge and skills across different subjects and fields, and upgrades the objectives of general and professional-theoretical subjects, practical training and pre-school activity fields. Arts and cultural contents are meaningfully included in the life and work of the preschool institutions/school: it places the child/young person in the centre, develops his ability and talent and takes into account his interests.

5. Developing aesthetic sensitivity and critical attitude towards art and culture

Arts and cultural education contributes to the development of individual's sense/appreciation of aesthetics (beauty), formation of his/her fundamental cultural and artistic values, development of critical thinking and self-criticism as well as individual's active involvement in art and culture. Experiencing and re-experiencing cultural creations allows for the development of aesthetic values.

6. Expressing cultural diversity

Arts and cultural education encourages both individual's awareness or expression of his/her own culture and intercultural dialogue; it also makes it possible for him/her to learn about other cultures – through teaching and enhancing tolerance and understanding of diversity; it also contributes to an individual's social involvement.

7. Raising the level of cultural awareness

Quality arts and cultural education of children/youth raises the level of cultural awareness, as defined by the European Parliament and Council (a key competence is cultural awareness and expression). Cultural awareness of people is one of the conditions for their involvement in an open society based on autonomy and freedom of the individual. Thus, culture can become a social development integration factor.

8. Being aware of the importance of national cultural heritage

Arts and cultural education enables an individual to learn about and be aware of the importance of cultural heritage. It promotes the protection and preservation of cultural works that are relevant to national, European and world cultural heritage.

Access:

- There should not be barriers for anyone in art. A healthy cultural sector welcomes the new components and helps their development.
- A chance should be given to new artists to increase their visibility and to affirm them. There is a need for building up new galleries, new spaces and for better use of the current ones in public institutions and alternative areas where people can develop their projects and artistic work.
- Increasing the credibility and personality of youth in the eyes of national cultural institution and public.
- Everybody should have a direct, transparent and less bureaucratic access to the public funds.
- Educative school program should be established at art institutions
- A public found for the creativity development of youth should be made

The role of art and cultural education in public awareness

Raising awareness of the professionals and general public about the importance of arts and cultural education for society as a whole.

The following principles highlight the specific aspects of quality implementation of arts and cultural education.

The principle of cross-curricularity

Implementation of arts and cultural education as cross-curricular content in the curricula of all subjects and pre-school activity fields.

The principle of accessibility and information

- ⤴ Providing regional coverage of all forms of cultural and arts education (formal, informal, non-formal) and accessibility of cultural goods;
- ⤴ providing information on the programmes of cultural institutions at the national, regional and local levels.

The principle of quality and adequacy

Providing high quality choice/selection of arts and cultural activities and programmes that correspond to the development stages of children/adolescents.

The principle of equal opportunities and respect for diversity

- △ Providing equivalent/comparable conditions for the development of each child/adolescent;
- △ taking into account individual's age and group characteristics/ differences (with regard to gender, social and cultural origins, world view, etc.) and creating conditions for their expression.

The principle of freedom and democracy

- △ Considering individual's right to freedom of expression and his/her right to participate in the choice of activities in the field of art and culture;
- △ respecting freedom and responsibility of the author and recipient/consumer of the activity/work of art.

The principle of intercultural dialogue

- △ Providing opportunities for learning, creating, evaluating, (re)experiencing and representing one's own culture, perception, understanding and accepting diversity, overcoming culture prejudice, comparing cultures, education for tolerance and maintaining or building one's own identity and culture;
- △ integrating different cultures into educational work and ensuring authentic/experience-based learning about cultural differences.

The principle of the development-process approach

Ensuring process oriented learning, which promotes development of individual's own strategies of understanding, expression and thinking.

The principle of partnership

- △ Emphasizing the importance of partnership, integration and collaboration of different entities at various levels of society: their integration at national, regional and local levels, at the level of preschool institutions, schools and cultural institutions, between professional workers in education, between artists and employees of cultural institutions and between educational institutions and families;
- △ establishing partnership based on international cooperation;
- △ taking into account team planning and implementation, horizontal and vertical integration between the partners, cooperation with the social environment and specifics of the cultural environment.

The principle of professional competence

- △ Facilitating professional and cultural workers involved in education with opportunities to acquire relevant knowledge and skills in the process of education for the implementation of arts and cultural education;
- △ ensuring further education and training and upgrading of already acquired knowledge;
- △ providing opportunities for the professionals in education and artists and professionals in the field of culture to recognize the added value of mutual cooperation.

The principle of planning, monitoring and evaluating

Highlighting the importance of planning, based on the development-process approach, which includes monitoring and evaluating the activities in the field of arts and cultural education, in order to ensure successful implementation of these activities.

The principle of staying current and contemporary

Providing access to new and modern high-quality cultural and artistic contents, practices, genres, processes, etc.

The principle of promoting research work

Acquiring expert arguments about the importance of arts and cultural education.

The principle of providing material and spatial conditions

Providing adequate material conditions and space for the organisation and implementation of cultural and artistic activities.

The role of art didactic and methodic grounds on the cultural education

Experts in the field of education, culture and art enable and help children/youth to learn about various areas of culture: music arts, fine arts, theatre, dance, film, reading culture and cultural heritage. With a variety of didactic approaches they encourage creativity in expression and observation of the principle which stresses their active involvement in cultural activities. Through arts and cultural education, they try to familiarize the participants in the educational process with evaluation of art and culture, and try to develop their capacity for critical assessment. They are aware that the methods typical/characteristic of artistic experience and creation make an important contribution to the implementation of the curriculum. In this context, it is necessary that educators and teachers of all subjects be connected with each other and with general public/social art providers, and that they systematically involve arts and cultural education into activities in preschool institutions and schools (pre-school activity fields, teaching of a single subject, activity days, optional activities, interest activities, projects, etc.).

Expected results:

1. Improvement of infrastructure
2. Reforming the national institution of performing arts
3. Increasing the number of audience in the halls.
4. Guaranteeing the educational mission of performing arts.
5. Youth education with performing arts.
6. Promoting albanian artistic values inside and outside of Albania.
7. Improving the experience.

Cultural heritage: Except by the propaganda, a large number of educational activities related to our heritage is seen as priority, involving all the educational and scientific mechanism in a unique initiative. The cultural heritage is a property, a big obligation toward the past and the future, the material and spiritual continuity of a nation. The Albanian cultural heritage is rich in archeological, architectural, historical and engineering values. It also includes movable heritage like archeological objects, monuments, books and documents, numismatic, and weapons, artistic products and special things. The spiritual heritage includes the language, oral and musical folklore of all kinds and traditions.

Recommendations

Increasing the role of culture in our social life and creating possibilities for a large access of public in cultural values obligates us to lead our priorities toward:

- increasing the participation of public in cultural life;
- intervening in the educational system aiming the improvement of artistic education in Albanian schools;
- increasing the public awareness about the importance of cultural products in the improvement of their lives;
- increasing the financial support for cultural projects and orientation of finances toward the projects which give access to the participation of a large public.

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