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UNESCO Activities in the Field of Arts Education

Abstract. *The article addresses the work of UNESCO in the field of arts education. It considers goals of establishing this policy, and specific activities organized within the framework of international cooperation in the field of arts education. UNESCO recommended documents in the field of education and arts education in particular are studied. UNESCO programs for the development of arts education are presented. The author identifies the reason for the establishment of an international cooperation policy in the field of arts education. Based on the analysis of UNESCO documents, the author singles out the following reasons for the creation of such a policy: the development of human creative thinking; the promotion of social peace, tolerance and solidarity; and the promotion of sustainable development. The author also identifies two functions of arts education conceptualized in UNESCO documents: the instrumental function of arts education, i. e. its use as a tool and method in education, and, in fact, its peacemaking function. The author argues that the documents developed by UNESCO in the field of arts education have little impact on national education programs because of their non-compulsory nature. At the same time, the article draws attention to the implementation of specific projects under the auspices of UNESCO that despite the limitations of their influence are highly efficient.*

Keywords: *UNESCO, international relations, arts education, international cooperation, arts, education, recommendations, observatories, principles, projects.*

According to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the goals of the organization is "... to give fresh impulse to popular education, and to the spread of culture by collaborating with Members, at their request, in the development of educational activities..." and "... to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge (...), works of art (...) by

recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions, encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture..." It is obvious that these UNESCO activities clearly indicate that duties of this international organization include both the organization and development of interna-

tional cooperation in the field of culture and arts, and international cooperation in the field of educational and outreach activities¹. Moreover, like any universal international organization formed under the auspices of the UN, its main function is to maintain peace between nations (its peacemaking function). Thus, since its creation over 60 years ago UNESCO has worked to “mobilize the international community to support educational and artistic activities, with the aim to enhance dialogue and build peace among people.”²

Indeed, its Constitution states that the primary function of UNESCO, as of most agencies formed under the auspices of the UN, is a conciliatory function, as evidenced by the Preamble to the Constitution³. As a consequence, a primary goal of all activities of the organization — including activities in the field of arts education — is *peacekeeping*. This line of thought is also confirmed in research studies dedicated to the organization’s activities. Thus, for example, it is stated that “... art is a tool of tolerance, social solidarity and peacemaking in modern multicultural and interconnected societies. Young people should learn to love arts and practice it — and it will lead to a better understanding between them. This love of art must be cultivated from an early age and maintained throughout the whole of life. In our understanding, learning of creativity and arts contributes to the building of peaceful societies.”⁴ Thus, both the

Constitution and the scientific doctrine give all grounds to claim that UNESCO activities in any field (including in the field of arts education) have a peacemaking orientation.

However, if you do not limit the analysis of UNESCO activities to the analysis of general documents governing the operation of this organization, and apply to those that are aimed at the organization of international cooperation in the field of education (particularly, in arts education), you can find that the activities of this organization also pursue other goals.

Despite the long experience of the organization’s activities in the development of international cooperation in the field of education, culture and arts, the cooperation in the field of arts education has been promoted very recently, since education in this area is only a small part of general education processes (i.e., narrow activities in the field of general education). Nevertheless, the name of one of the Resolutions⁵ itself demonstrates how important arts education has become in today’s world, and why the organization has started to give special attention to this type of education. Indeed, the UNESCO Resolution entitled “The Promotion of Arts Education and *Creativity* at School as Part of the Construction of a Culture of Peace”⁶ in addition to focusing on the promotion of the peaceful coexistence of nations — which, as we have already noted, is the goal of almost any universal international organization — focuses on the promotion of *creativity* in the learning process. In other words, as stated by the Director-General of UNESCO, “Arts education is of paramount importance, due to the fact that it contributes to the development of the creativity of the mind, which, in turn, is an essential element in the development

¹ For more information on the aims and activities of the organization see, for example: UNESCO, UNESCO World Report: Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO, 2009, 409 p.

² L. O’Farrell, Sh. Schonmann, E. Wagner, International Yearbook for Research in Arts Education 2/2014, Waxmann Verlag, 2014. P. 18.

³ Thus, in one of the first lines of the Preamble to the UNESCO’s Constitution we find the following sentence: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Resolution adopted on the report of Commission IV at the 25th plenary meeting, on 16 November 1999.

⁶ “Promotion of arts education and creativity at school as part of the construction of a culture of peace”

of societies in which the central element is modernization, innovation and scientific and technological progress.”¹

This initiative of UNESCO aimed at the promotion of creativity, including through arts education, was not the first and only one. For example, based on the results of the conference on education held under the auspices of UNESCO in 1996, Jacques Delors prepared a report that later became well-known, entitled *Learning: the Treasure Within*, which systematized modern trends in the education system, one of which was the development of creativity in students. More recently, the Director-General of UNESCO Irina Bokova also drew attention to the need to develop such components in modern education systems as the stimulation for the development of creativity in students: “The world is changing — education must change too. Every woman and man today needs new skills to withstand the pressures of change, and to make the most of all its opportunities. This requires education for creativity, education for solidarity and education for sustainability.”²

As a consequence, these UNESCO documents see arts education as a means of adapting people to the changing world; as a means of stimulating creativity and, consequently, the innovation and modernization of the economy; as a means of changing people’s minds to implement the ideas of sustainable development in the activities of daily living.

It is worth noting that in addition to focusing on the development of creativity among the participants of the educational process, attention was also drawn to the interdisciplinary approach to arts educa-

tion in the early stages of the development of international cooperation in the field of arts education, namely, during the Paris Conference in 1999. Thus, the appeal of the Director-General of UNESCO at this conference states that the interdisciplinary approach in education is “fundamental to enabling young people to understand the universal nature of the world.”³ In other words, the organization’s official position on this issue is that arts education is seen as an interdisciplinary element of the education system. Moreover, the Director-General also noted that arts education contributes to the development of cultural diversity, which again confirms the importance of the peacemaking function in the eyes of the organization. Thus, in the early stages of the development of international cooperation in the field of arts education within UNESCO, the organization expressed ideas about the need to integrate arts education into the educational programs of technical, scientific and other general educational programs.

The interdisciplinary approach and the use of arts education in the teaching of other subjects demonstrate the two-pronged approach of UNESCO to this issue. Firstly, the organization perceives arts education as a tool or additional general education means (‘learning through the arts/culture’). The idea of this approach is to use art and arts education in the general educational processes as a tool of improving the quality of the educational process and its effectiveness. In other words, here we are talking about the use of arts education as a means of general education applicable in any teaching process, subject and science. Secondly, in addition to a purely instrumental approach, the organization encourages Member States to use arts education in national education

¹ UNESCO, Records of the General Conference. 30th session, Paris, 26 October to 17 November 1999, Vol. 1. Resolutions. UNESCO, 2000. P. 69, 70.

² UNESCO, Rethinking Education in a Changing World, Meeting of the Senior Experts’ Group, Paris, 12–14 February 2013, UNESCO. P. 23.

³ UNESCO, Records of the General Conference. 30th session, Paris, 26 October to 17 November 1999, Vol. 1. Resolutions. UNESCO, 2000. P. 70.

programs as a peacemaking tool. In other words, arts education itself ('learning in the arts/culture') should be used in order to maintain social peace and solidarity by forming open personalities in the educational process, who can get along in a multicultural environment.

Thus, initially, the international cooperation in the field of arts education organized within UNESCO was intended to encourage Member States to expand the role of arts education in their general education systems. So UNESCO was aimed at improving the educational process in order to create holistic personalities in the modern world, who are capable of innovative and creative thinking, critical assessments, and who have high communication skills at the interpersonal level. As a result, according to the organization¹, such an updated approach to education should not only contribute to the formation of social peace and solidarity, but also prevent the formation of standardized thinking, and facilitate the implementation of the ideas of sustainable development.

A significant contribution to the organization of international cooperation in the field of arts education and its development in Member States was made by two conferences that have been recently held under the auspices of UNESCO.

Two UNESCO conferences focusing on arts education that were held in Lisbon in 2006 and in Seoul in 2010 enabled the determination of the strategy for the development of modern arts education. Both conferences were milestone events for international cooperation in the field of arts education. Indeed, both conferences were attended by hundreds of representatives from nearly 100 countries, who shared their experience in the organization of arts education

at the national level. Moreover, the main contribution of these conferences to the development of arts education was made by the documents prepared according to the results of these conferences: the *Road Map for Arts Education* developed as part of the Lisbon Conference, and the *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education* made on the basis of the Seoul Conference.

UNESCO's *Road Map for Arts Education* developed as part of the World Conference on Arts Education held on March 6–9, 2006 in Lisbon is aimed at studying the role of this education in meeting the needs for establishing a creative potential, and emphasizes the importance of the strategies needed to integrate or develop arts education in the educational process. This document is intended to make all the actors (primarily participants in the education system) aware of the importance of arts education and its essential role in improving the quality of education. The document presents the most advanced and successful experience in the field of arts education. Thus, it is presented as a document intended for practical implementation, i.e. the adoption of specific measures in the educational systems of Member States in order to integrate or promote arts education in various educational processes.

This document is the first of its kind, as it is exclusively devoted to arts education. Indeed, the earlier documents of UNESCO related to arts education paid it only a limited attention, while their major part was devoted to education in general. Moreover, the document contains specific recommendations for the integration of arts education and its development in the general education system. These recommendations are intended both for Member States with a view to appropriate changes and adaptation of their education systems, and for teachers, parents, artists and principals of schools and other educational institutions, so that they

¹ UNESCO, *Rethinking Education in a Changing World, Meeting of the Senior Experts' Group*, Paris, 12–14 February 2013, UNESCO.P. 23

can take measures at their level for the integration or development of arts education.

The recommendations contained in this document are the result of numerous regional conferences and round tables, some of which were held under the auspices of UNESCO¹. In particular, the recommendations deal with the problems of the implementation and development of arts education in individual Member States, and propose a number of concrete measures to resolve these problems. The main recommendations are formed in relation to different actors (states, teachers, other international organizations, etc.) in the following areas: the adoption of specific measures for the implementation and development of arts education; the cooperation with other actors in the educational process; and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures taken.

The Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education was the final document of the Seoul Conference held on May 25–28, 2010 in the capital of the Republic of Korea. This document, as well as the Road Map, is dedicated exclusively to arts education and its role in the education system. However, unlike the Road Map, it is more concise and easy to present, and thoughts expressed therein are presented in the form of systematic principles, which undoubtedly contribute to the effective implementation of the goals laid down therein. The Agenda, as well the Road Map, contains recommendations for the different actors in the education system in order to “... realize the full potential of the high-quality arts education for the positive renewal of educational systems and the resolution of key social and cultural challenges...” Moreover, the text contains a number of recommen-

dations for the implementation of specific activities in the field of arts education, which gives it a high practical importance.

The preamble to the document notes the importance of arts education, which according to drafters of this text should “meet the needs of learners living in a rapidly changing world, characterized by remarkable advances in technology on the one hand and intractable social and cultural injustices on the other.” In other words, the document, as well as previous initiatives of the organization, insists on a peacekeeping mission (maintaining social peace and solidarity in a multicultural environment) of arts education, as well as on “the need for a creative and adaptive workforce in the context of post-industrial economies.”

The main part of the document, in fact, contains the goals for the development of arts education. There are three of them:

1. To ensure that arts education is *accessible* as a fundamental and sustainable component of a high quality renewal of education. This goal for the development of arts education is reflected in the implementation of measures taken to use it: as the foundation for balanced creative, cognitive, emotional, aesthetic and social development; as the constructive transformation of educational systems and structures; and as the system of lifelong and intergenerational learning.

2. To ensure that arts education activities and programmes are of a high *quality* in conception and delivery.

This goal for the development of arts education is: to develop agreed high standards for arts education that are responsive to local needs, infrastructure and cultural contexts; to ensure that sustainable training in arts education is available to educators; to stimulate exchange between research and practice in arts education; to facilitate collaboration between educators and artists; and to initiate arts education partnerships.

¹ For more information see, for example L. Joubert, *Educating in the Arts: The Asian Experience: Twenty-Four Essays*, Springer Science & Business Media, 2008.

3. To apply arts education principles and practices to contribute to resolving the social and cultural challenges facing today's world.

As part of this goal, Member States are recommended: to apply arts education to enhance the creative and innovative capacity of society; to recognize and develop the social and cultural well-being dimensions of arts education; to support and enhance the role of arts education in the promotion of social responsibility, social cohesion, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; to foster the capacity to respond to major global challenges, from peace to sustainability through arts education.

In addition to the above recommendations of UNESCO in the field of arts education (the implementation of these recommendations is carried out by Member States themselves, and their effectiveness, due to their non-binding nature, depends on Member States¹ that implement them), the organization in cooperation with Member States and other organizations implements a number of specific projects in this area. Despite their limited nature, it is these projects that have become UNESCO's specific contribution to the promotion of ideas about the development of arts education in the modern world, expressed in the above-mentioned instruments of the organization.

One of UNESCO's initiatives on the promotion of arts education in the world — which is implemented by the organization both on its own and in cooperation with other actors in the area of education and arts — was the organization of International Arts Education Weeks. This project orga-

¹ Thus, for example, according to UNESCO's survey on the implementation of the Road Map recommendations by Member States conducted in 2009, only half of the respondents used the organization's recommendations on the implementation and promotion of arts education when reforming their education systems. The main problem was the lack of public funding. UNESCO, Report of the Survey Results on the Implementation of the Road Map for Arts Education, Seoul, Korea, 2010. P.3

nized annually² on the last week of May was established by the Resolution of the General Assembly of the organization³. According to this UNESCO decision, the aim of such arts education weeks is to encourage Member States, members of the public, and professional organizations to organize relevant activities in order to promote arts education⁴.

The establishment of arts education chairs together with universities of different countries was another UNESCO project in the field of arts education.⁵ The first such chair was established at the Queen's University in 2007. The Chair in Arts and Learning was established at this university in order to create a system for the research, training and provision of information on arts education. Later (in 2010), UNESCO implemented a project on the creation of a similar chair at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nurnberg. The Chair in Arts and Culture in Education studies the impact of arts education on the social conditions of people. Both chairs work closely with UNESCO bodies and actively participate in the implementation of individual projects of this organization in the field of arts education.

A similar project was the establishment of arts education observatories. The project is based on the results of the UNESCO Expert

² According to the organization, the Week was not held in 2013 due to financial problems. L. O'Farrell, Sh. Schonmann, E. Wagner, International Yearbook for Research in Arts Education 2/2014, Waxmann Verlag, 2014. P. 18.

³ Resolution 36/C55 adopted on the report of the CLT Commission at the 17th plenary meeting, on 10 November 2011.

⁴ For more information on events during these weeks see: Final report, First celebration of International Arts Education Week (21–27 May 2012). http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/FINALREPORT_EN.pdf

⁵ These chairs are established jointly by universities and UNESCO on the basis of an agreement signed by the Director-General of UNESCO and the head of the respective university. General principles of creating such chairs were developed by UNESCO a long time ago as part of the Chairs Programme (UNITWIN / UNESCO Chairs Programme) existing since 1992. For more information on conditions of the creation of such chairs see: UNESCO, Guidelines and procedures for the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, ED/HED/UNITWIN/2006/PI/1 rev. 4 UNESCO, 2009

Symposium on Arts Education in Asia held in Hong Kong in January 2004. The outcome of this symposium was the Asia-Pacific Action Plan. Its main contribution was a call for the need to establish arts education observatories. Since then several observatories has=have been created: in Melbourne, Hong Kong, Singapore, Almaty, Seoul, and Christchurch (New Zealand). These observatories are designed to promote and diffuse information on arts education in order to influence arts education policy. The observatories closely cooperate with UNESCO on arts education and take part in various events organized by UNESCO, and their activities differ from the activities of the chairs in that they have a more applied (rather than scientific) orientation.

An important UNESCO project in the field of arts education was a project developed by the UNESCO Moscow Office entitled *Arts Education in CIS countries: Building Creative Capacities for the XXIst Century*. The project is implemented jointly by UNESCO and the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation of the CIS members (hereinafter IFESCCO), as well as by the relevant ministries (culture and education) and other culture and education institutions of the CIS, and is intended to advance the cultural and educational policy in the field of arts education, and improve the interaction between the culture and education ministries of the CIS countries through analytical studies in arts education.

The implementation of the project *Arts Education in CIS countries: Building Creative*

Capacities for the XXIst Century necessitated the signing of an agreement between UNESCO and IFESCCO on October 12, 2009. The main activities of this project were the analytical studies in the field of arts education in the CIS countries, and the comparison of national policies in these countries with the standards and recommendations of UNESCO set out in the *Road Map* and the *Seoul Agenda*, as well as the expression of specific recommendations for these countries to improve arts education. Cooperation within the framework of this project is quite dense and intense (in comparison with other projects) and led in particular to the creation of a network of interaction between stakeholders in the development of arts education, and even the creation of a joint institution — the Observatory on Arts Education in the CIS Countries.¹

So, the reasons for the creation of UNESCO international policy in the field of arts education are: the need to develop creative thinking in today's world; the promotion of social peace and solidarity in a multicultural environment; and the promotion of sustainable development. UNESCO recognizes the following functions of arts education: the instrumental function of arts education, i.e. its use as a tool and method in the study of general subjects, and, in fact, its peacemaking function, which is revealed in the process of learning the arts, and contributes to the development of tolerance, social peace and solidarity by forming open personalities in the educational process, who can get along in a multicultural environment.

References (transliterated)

1. L. O 'Farrell, Sh. Schonmann, E. Wagner, *International Yearbook for Research in Arts Education* 2/2014, Waxmann Verlag, 2014. R. 18.

¹ <http://ae.cis.iite.unesco.org/observatory/index.php/ru/>

2. L. Joubert, *Educating in the Arts: The Asian Experience: Twenty-Four Essays*, Springer Science & Business Media, 2008.
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