

Art and Education – The Inseparable Sisters

If we assume that the essence of school is the interaction between the teacher and the student, then it must be specified what kind of person the teacher is to be. The teacher is what mainly influences the school's effects, and the nature of that interaction influences the style and the way of teaching. If students are to be ready to solve problems and to adapt to new challenges, they must be equipped, apart from knowledge and skills, in creativity, the ability to create. They also need criticism in order to accurately assess the world views, ways of living their lives, and relationships with other people that they create. The teacher must also be creative and constructive. He or she must also be more critical, for not every change is good, and not every innovation has beneficial effects.

What area of human activity is based on creativity? Art! Without this trait, this power, this inner equipment one cannot pursue art. Art can't also be pursued without the ability to create, to bring new worlds and associations to life, and the ability to experience it. Constitution of an aesthetic object requires constructive work of imagination. It is thanks to this work that a lifeless picture acquires meaning, starts to move, and lives with the life of our imagination. It exists because of us, thanks to our effort, thought, and love for beauty.

Since this is the case, since we possess such a tool, a question arises: how are we using art in schools? Things don't look good. Usually it all comes down to music classes, and arts and crafts. But art should be one of the great ways of educating open minds and promoting noble sensitivity. Polish studies teachers rely on artistic texts but usually submit them to critical analysis. The work's "temperature" fades away, as do the reader's feelings and emotions. Very few teachers challenge their students to create a script or a creative story. In short, schools treat art perfunctorily.

But it doesn't have to be that way. There were many projects that used artistic activities. Several years ago, Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne "Teatr Grodzki" did a project „Sztuka wehikułem edukacji” ("Art as a Vehicle for Education"). One of its goals was to test art in adult education. Experiences from the workshops conducted in four countries were collected in a book that presents practical advice for teachers and trainers (the publication is available at <http://teatrgrodzki.pl/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Sztuka-wehiku%C5%82em-edukacji.pdf>).

Activities in the Polish group were conducted in two related blocks: educational and artistic. Introducing various forms of art (painting, posters, music, film, songs, and theatrical plays) as means of cognition was very important. Of course in this case creating art was outweighed by its perception. But even perception of art alone engages a person's intellect, imagination, and emotions. Inclination toward educational material, and defining what should be the object of cognition was the result of the task performed during the artistic classes. For instance creating an outdoor performance depicting the founding of Vilnius became the basis for searching information about what life in Lithuania looked like during Giedymin's reign, legends and

stories about the ruler, historical appraisals of this figure, paintings, monuments, etc. Among other things the participant learned about: requirements of such event's structure, rules of constructing a script, principles of stage movement, and necessary elements of stagecraft. They were using that knowledge in the theatre workshops, and while they were working, they were searching for answers to more questions. This, in turn, was influencing the theme of the educational activities.

All this was necessary to collectively create a theatrical performance. The participants were gaining and using knowledge and their own increasing aesthetic experience to move the audience with their play. What deserves an emphasis is the collective nature of the work, and the ability to freely express oneself and create on the basis of one's own world view and lifetime experience. One cannot be an artist without being free, but revealing oneself and presenting one's own visions and ideas requires an integrated group and a friendly atmosphere. The fear of the teacher, the fear of being made fun of and ridiculed prevents us from being sincere, and thus from being creative. Creating conditions to overcome these threats is the task of the person in charge of the classes. Less criticizing and pointing out mistakes, and more inspiration and indicating space for improvement favours development of self-expression and voicing of opinions. Final thoughts: we talk a lot about values, but very little about the fact that we should be their guardians. Beauty without people who love it, experience its charm, and without conversations and emotions invoked by art, landscape or deed (yes, there are also beautiful deeds) ceases to exist. Then, instead of beauty, what enters the stage of history are advertisements.

There were many projects that widely used artistic activities. However, next to numerous advantages, they have one significant flaw. They are all temporary. They all come to an end, and their achievements and developed methods are scattered across multiple web pages. The project "Art as a Vehicle for Education and Social Inclusion" is an attempt to collect these achievements and experiences in one place, and to create a community of people who use art in education. The web page <http://artescommunity.eu> shows how to use various forms of art. It includes the following areas: theatre, drama, literature, music, photography, multimedia, visual arts, dance, craft, film, school education, adult education, vocational training, and educational pathways. The web page allows you to learn about other people's achievements, publish your own accomplishments, discuss, and exchange information. It connects institutions engaged in education, as well as people who believe in the extraordinary educational power of art, and share the passion of making the world a better place and responding to the needs of the changing world. The great value of the presented ideas is the fact that they have been tested in action. It's worth seizing this opportunity, also in order to see how many people believe in the worth and potential of art in education. "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?" – this is the title of a painting by Paul Gauguin. It's worth remembering these questions while creating teaching concepts. Just like the painting itself – disturbingly beautiful.

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