

Policy and practice in visual art education in Eastern and Central Europe – comments on MONAES findings

Andrea Kárpáti

Citation: Kárpáti, A. (2018). Policy and practice in visual arts education in Eastern In: Ijdens, Teunis, Bolden, Ben & Wagner, Ernst (Eds.) *International Yearbook for research in Art Education*, Vol. 5. Münster, New York: Waxmann, 206-269.

Introduction

This brief overview of some of the issues discussed in the MONAES survey intends to provide an Eastern and Central European (ECE) perspective to further the analysis of MONAES findings that allow for multiple interpretations. Among the participants in one or both surveys, identified mainly through a search of English language professional literature 10 ECE countries were represented by 21 respondents. Many experts could not be identified as their publications appear in educational research journals of a non-art focus or one that is published in another language. Therefore, it is not surprising, that among the respondents from Central and Eastern European countries, the number of journal authors (33%) and in handbooks and yearbooks (zero) is lower than average for the sample. The majority of this group teaches arts in higher education and were identified as participants of international conferences, organizations and networks.

“Findings firstly suggest a high degree of consensus among arts education experts around the world – at least the experts from the 55 countries who took part in the MONAES surveys – supporting the perspective that arts education experts are a community of professionals sharing common practices, types of work, a common body of knowledge, and common values and ideas about what arts education means, what it includes, and about its benefits.” (Chapter II-2) This is a statement that seems to need some further scrutiny.

Are the opinions of a teacher trainer with daily involvement in educational practice and empirical research of content and methodology similar to an artist who teaches painting or instrumental music, or is involved in educational politics? Is the professional knowledge base of these experts similar, or even: do they show any overlaps? ECE experts in the MONAES sample, representing mainly the artist community, declare that there is little research activity and barely any nationwide innovation projects in art education in their countries. But are they aware of journals to look for such? Do they attend conferences where their countrymen present their findings? This author has no empirical evidence to decide. Still, based on views expressed by them in the MONAES survey, the type of education and current professional affiliations of experts participating in the study seem to affect their views on the current situation of arts education and these views may be different from those of art education researchers.

The disregard of existing research by ECE experts of the MONAES sample certainly calls for more communication among those who are engaged in arts education in the studios and

rehearsal rooms and those working at schools and in research labs. There is one issue, however, that experts of different backgrounds and professional capacities share: their conviction about the *high value of arts education*. They are all advocates of their profession, ready to defend its interests from curricular restrictions and budget cuts.

This chapter is based on the opinions and publications of researchers and teacher trainers of visual arts education from ECE countries (see names and affiliations in the Acknowledgements and authors in the References and Kárpáti, to appear). These experts are ‘practitioner-researchers’, and as such, they may compensate for the low share of this category in the MONAS survey. Their visual arts focus may also be a limitation when discussing a study about education in all art forms, but their leadership role in research and innovation in their countries may add new insights to the artists’ perspectives expressed in the MONAES study.

This brief contribution to the interpretation of findings focuses on issues that investigators of the survey found intriguing and worth of further study:

1. Is *innovation in non-formal education dominant* in ECE countries – as contrasted with curriculum related innovations?
2. Are there any efforts to *increase the impact of art education on society* and target underprivileged groups?
3. Is *national awareness / emancipation* highly valued as a benefit of art education, and are there current R&D efforts focusing on this theme?

When interpreting results about the significance of developing arts and aesthetics competencies, MONAES findings suggest that ECE countries with a higher degree of central regulation of education seem to value arts education more than other countries with more liberal educational policies. Here, an important distinction seems to be necessary between *educational policy* and *curricular regulations*. Arts education seems to be an area that is beyond detailed control of educational authorities – maybe because of lower prestige, a situation also indicated by MONAES experts. When comparing curricula from 36 European countries, Kirchner and Haanstra (2015) found that *visual art education curricula show more similarities of content and methodology than differences*. Therefore, the Common European Framework of Visual Literacy (Wagner and Schönau, 2016) could be developed and is being used Europe-wide.

Although this author doubts the existence of connections between educational control and the importance of the arts in education, other concepts identified by the survey to rise with central regulation, such as *motivation and enjoyment* and the importance of *interculturality and identity*, may be justifiable. In countries with high level regulations, the arts are an important source of motivation and enjoyment as well as a major channel for the expression of liberal ideas. *National identity* has traditionally been rooted in folk and fine arts (Kárpáti, 1999), and it has always been an important theme in arts curricula of nations whose achievements in culture are much more substantial than their GDP. Valuing literature that is written in languages spoken by very few people outside the borders of a country, cherishing music and visual arts rooted in the folk traditions of the land are certainly important for ECE countries – but central regulation of education may not be the explaining factor for these preferences. It is *history* that seems to be a more important explainer.

Is innovation in non-formal education dominant in ECE countries – as contrasted with curriculum related innovations?

Pedagogical practices of arts education vary with settings and educational levels. In the ECE, non-formal visual art education in cultural centres and clubs free of curricular content and methodology prescribed for schools, innovative educational practices flourished that used personalised, mentoring instruction and a wide variety of styles and techniques characteristic for modern art. These venues used to be safe havens for artists whose style and ideology were not in line with the state-supported art of the 1950s and 1960s. After the political changes of the 1990s, art preferences of the ruling elite changed quickly and profoundly, and many artists “in exile” in art centres left to take university professorships. At the turn of the century, non-formal art education took its previous place in the educational landscape, providing education for those interested and (to some degree) talented in the arts (Kárpáti, 1998, Gaul and Kárpáti, 2013).

At present, non-formal arts education seems to gain importance again as innovative training sites that can react much quicker to new trends and techniques. In Austria, for example, media education has strong networks of informal art education providers and digital technology are also integrated in several areas of education, including the arts (BMBF, 2012). In Hungary, peer learning in Cultural Learning Communities (Freedman et al., 2013, Kárpáti et al., 2016) involves tens of thousands of young people who learn a popular art genre like multimedia clip or cosplay costume design through non-formal training, mainly in peer learning groups. In Romania, formal and (abundant) informal learning sites seem to have the same pedagogical focus (teaching the visual language of the Age of the Image). In the Russian Federation, a national research project targets the integration of popular culture in the spiritual and moral development of youth (Savenkova, written communication, 2017).

In most ECE countries, state funding is regularly available for arts schools that receive financial support for their educational activities from the ministries of education. The Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of The Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, has been researching activities of a wide range of non-formal learning options for all art forms. These institutions build professional communities of teachers through in-service training and shared resources. Similar in-service training programs provided in informal settings also exist in Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, too.

As for recognition by experts, this author has not encountered negative perceptions. It is the *innovative aspect of non-formal art education* that slowly changing school reforms cannot cope with, our Austrian respondent remarks. The educators this author consulted also emphasize the *student-centred, personality development oriented methodology* of informal learning environments that seem to be in sharp contrast with often rigid and impersonal school art education where curricula-as-realized often diverge from curricula-as-intended. Students who are inactive in formal art education may turn out to be highly diligent painters or designers in an art club. For teachers, the interest and dedication of students who voluntarily participate in their free time makes non-formal learning opportunities a desirable educational context.

The curriculum in ECE countries is still discipline-based, and the harmonisation of arts disciplines – “*Kulturelle Bildung*” – is mostly theoretical, (with the exception of Austria, cf. Billmeyer, 2008). Non-formal art education, on the other hand, offers a wide range of

interdisciplinary activities. An example: the increasingly popular STEAM approach (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) is most prevalent in these settings (Fenyvesi and Tuuli, 2017).

As for the quality of education in these “amateur” groups, our visual arts respondents did not have reservations. The personnel who is engaged in offering non-formal art education largely overlaps with school staff, so the professional quality of such training is not lower. Experts from Romania and the Czech Republic emphasized that educational authorities value formal art education more than informal, so, the opinion of practitioners and those of policy makers may differ in this respect.

Are there any efforts to increase the impact of art education on society and target underprivileged groups?

From among the four types of benefits that the MONAES study asked experts to rank as more or less important, ECE experts seem to consider skills in arts and aesthetics and appreciation and participation in the arts most important. A look at classic models of art education in this area reinforces MONAES findings: *developing* arts skills is at least as important as the *motivation and enjoyment* value that arts education involves. Czizek’s visual arts methods, the Foundation Course of the Hungarian masters of the Bauhaus – now an inspiration for innovation in Hungary – or Kodály’s relative solmisation system, all are based on learning basic skills and enjoying creative practice thereafter. Benefits related to transcultural and intercultural awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity as well as democratic benefits (citizenship, democracy and political awareness) are also included in the curricula, but are not directly related to the arts.

Health, well-being and other instrumental non-arts benefits are not mentioned as central objectives in the MONAES survey, but in some ECE countries, these issues are of significant interest to arts education researchers. In Russia, methods of art education are combined with art therapy in inclusive education programs for the involvement of children with special needs in arts practices with the rest of their class. Innovation programs are evaluated through skills development studies in order to develop a national program of arts based integration (Savenkova, 2014). In Austria, development projects target children and youth with behaviour problems and special needs. The arts are optimal means of laying the foundations of self-reflection and metacognition as well as developing creative and communication skills of socially disadvantaged youth (Laven, 2015).

In the Czech Republic, arts based interventions for underprivileged youth are one of the priorities of arts education research. In the studies, interculturality and social awareness appear as interrelated methodological concepts (Uhl Skřivanová, 2013 Special needs projects, 2017). In Romania and Hungary, arts education has a long tradition in supporting the sociocultural integration of underprivileged minorities. For example, the Hungarian “Genuine Pearl” Foundation and the Snétberger Foundation have been active in helping Roma youth to realise their gifts. Country-wide support programs and EU-funded research and development initiatives target the problem of early school leavers through arts based activities (Kárpáti, 2013, Kárpáti et al., 2014). In the Russian Federation, drama education often targets socially sensitive issues and thus contributes to sensitising students to problems their peers may have. In the Czech Republic, the inclusion of mentally and physically challenged students is a national program financed by the Ministry of Education. The major objective is integration

now, so programs for the individual treatment of special needs seem to have become of secondary importance. The arts are part of both types of these inclusive interventions (Uhl-Skrivanova, 2013).

Interdisciplinarity is another issue related to the increase of impact of art education. In Austria, where “*Kulturelle Bildung*” is an important educational objective, the arts are often used to illustrate concepts in other disciplines or serve as a motivational resource for learning non-art content. Beneficial effects of arts learning on motivation and educational achievement are investigated by a new PhD program at the University of Linz, established by M. Hohenwarter and Zs. Lavicza to investigate arts-based educational strategies. Interdisciplinarity studies in education involve the level of positive transfer between arts and science skills; if and how the arts are beneficial for ICTs and technology education in general; and the effects of self-assurance, motivation to learn and empowerment of children through arts training on transdisciplinary competences like communication skills, empathy and tolerance.

There is, however, much more to be done for the recognition of the importance of the discipline and increase its share in the curriculum as indicated also in a related OECD study (Winner et al., 2013). As our expert from Romania notes, “Benevolent efforts may have failed so far because they intended to raise good Romanian or Hungarian citizens. If we realize how to raise good Roma citizens instead, we will be much more successful! . . . Our educational system should rely more on the arts to develop flexible thinking, creativity and the desire to take initiatives in a changing economic environment. I consider the arts as the most important disciplines for the development of such capacities necessary for the workforce of the future” (Sándor Muhi, written communication, 2017).

Is national awareness / emancipation highly valued as a benefit of arts education, and are there current R&D efforts focusing on this theme?

As MONAES findings indicate, in ECE countries, the arts have traditionally been considered effective means of building national identity. When you speak of *national cultural awareness* with citizens of these countries, it is their great artists, musicians, dramatists or filmmakers whom they mention as “national characteristics”. (Landscape comes second: the Carpathian Mountains, the Lake Balaton...) After the defeat of the revolutions of 1848-49 in Budapest, Prague and Vienna, it was the arts that maintained national identity in the Habsburg Empire. The *Romantic Nationalism* movement in the arts, characterised by the music of Chopin, Dvořák and Liszt, paintings of Kupka, Munkácsy and Madarász, and poems of Botev, Petőfi or Prseren was instrumental in maintaining national consciousness. An example for the role of the arts in shaping national identity after the defeat of the 1848-49 Hungarian Revolution: exhibitions of Romantic Nationalist painters in Budapest attracted tens of thousands of visitors wearing ribbons in their (subdued) country’s national colours on their overcoats. Franz Liszt composed his Hungarian Rhapsodies as a tribute to the heroes who died for national independence, and Chopin’s music in Poland was an inspiring part of nationalist gatherings as were poems by Petőfi in Hungary (Berend, 2003). In Hungary, nationalistic tendencies in education increased after World War I, and at art classes, cultural relics of detached parts of the land were shown and “Historic Hungary” maps were drawn.

In the 21st century, in times of peace, national identity is still embedded in the arts and emphasized in arts education. (Fulkova et al., 2009, Fulkova and Tipton, 2013). Values of

interculturality: appreciating cultural diversity, dialogue among cultures, and transcultural awareness is important, but, as MONAES findings revealed, whereas the interculturality benefits are rated as high as in other countries, national awareness is valued significantly higher in Central and Eastern European countries and the United Kingdom (with Scotland, a paradigm example of the maintenance of national culture) than in Western countries. MONAES experts rated this feature especially high in secondary education, but our experiences indicate that it is there in the teaching practice of primary level arts education as well.

How do experts from the Central and Eastern European countries connect national and intercultural benefits of arts education? It is a difficult question in a world still full of prejudices and ignorance. When coming from Holland, you do not have to prove the value of the arts of your country – it is general knowledge as Rembrandt or Van Gogh are parts of the European cultural identity. But if your capital is constantly mixed up (as Budapest, Hungary and Bucharest, Romania), if it is a soccer or tennis player the only name coming to mind when your country is mentioned, an no artists or scientists come up, you feel inclined to safeguard your cultural heritage as no one else will.

It is due to their history, perhaps, when the arts were symbols of freedom and hope for new beginnings after (frequent) defeats, that ECE countries assess the value attached to the role of the arts as relief in post-disaster and reconstruction in post-conflict situations much higher than others in the MONAES survey. Presumably, these findings cannot be explained by public and professional discourse on arts or these countries' national emancipation from Soviet-style internationalism and their political and social transition. With more than a thousand years of history as substantial cultural entities of Europe, Central and Eastern European countries do not seem to suffer from a never-ending cultural minority complex caused by 40 years of Soviet internationalism. Their independence fights have a much longer tradition. Emphasis on national awareness in arts education, therefore, is driven by a positive effort to establish themselves as culturally relevant nations, and not a negative distancing act from a tragic, but in historical terms, rather short period of their past.

As the MONAES study indicates, national awareness is an important goal of cultural and education policies worldwide. For art educators, however, "National awareness ranks in the middle of the list, below the expressive and arts skills benefits but above the political and social benefits. Acknowledging and promoting *cultural diversity* is often considered to be at odds with promoting national awareness, at least in some European countries where multiculturalism has met with a strong nationalist countermovement." (Chapter II-IV) As our brief overview indicates, national awareness seems to be a core value in ECE curricula also, but the findings of MONAES call our attention to problems associated with the curricular emphasis of this thematic area.

A fair curriculum design solution would be the *integration (and not juxtaposition) of raising national awareness and the appreciation of cultural diversity*. National minorities in ECE countries (like the Germans and Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia or the Slovaks, Croatians and Serbs in Hungary, and the Roma in almost all these countries) should be able to find their own cultural landmarks in curricula that develop their cultural identity. Although MONAES findings do not indicate a conflict between promoting national awareness and intercultural dialogue, tensions in this area are obvious and arts education can render a useful service for better understanding the coexistence of majority and minority cultures of the same land.

Arts education may perform its important social role only if it enjoys social prestige. According to the MONAES survey, arts education is valued relatively high in Central and Eastern Europe. The importance attached to this field and its role in raising national awareness may be related.

Conclusions

MONAES findings are encouraging: respondents from Central and Eastern European countries seem to be involved more strongly with social and economic issues in arts education than experts from other European countries. However, there is another interpretation of this optimistic result: “we may also regard experts’ perceptions of the situation in their countries as a measure of their own satisfaction or dissatisfaction, or even of a compliant or critical professional attitude. In that case the experts from Africa, Latin America and the United Kingdom could be called the most critical professionals, and experts from the Central and Eastern European countries, Canada and New Zealand the least critical.” (Chapter II-4)

In this brief survey, a critical interpretation of some findings of the MONAES study, an excellent catalyst for (inter)national debates, was offered. First, an interpretation for Eastern and Central Europe as a sociocultural entity was suggested – a version of regional identity that may be disputable but perhaps a more justifiable option than the “former Communist” label. Then, the synergy of formal and informal arts learning institutions, the role of art education as an agent of national awareness in ECE and its relation to multiculturalism was discussed.

Examples indicated how underprivileged children and youth are targeted by arts education interventions – an area where more intensive arts education is imminent. The main contributions of the ECE region to the theory and practice of art education seems to be the development of a *creative synergy of local and international visual culture*. Eastern and Central Europe is still a cultural concept, but in no way a unified pedagogical entity. Historic and current influences interact and, as MONAES results show, must be considered for further improvement.

References

Note: all internet links have been last opened 06. 01. 2018.

Berend, I. T. (2003). Romanticism and Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe. In: Berend, I. T.: *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century*. San Francisco: University of California Press. Chapter III.

Billmeyer, F. (2008). *Paradigmenwechsel übersehen. Eine Polemik gegen die Kunstorientierung der Kunstpädagogik*. Hamburg: Hamburg University Press.
http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/volltexte/2008/44/pdf/HamburgUP_KPP19_Billmeyer.pdf

BMBF (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Frauen). (2012). *Unterrichtsprinzip Medienerziehung – Grundsatzertlass*. Wien: BMBF
https://www.bmb.gv.at/ministerium/rs/2012_04.pdf?61ed1f

Freedman, K., Hejnen, E., Kallio-Tavin, M., Kárpáti, A. & Papp, L. (2013). Visual Culture Networks for Learning: how and what students come to know in informal art groups. *Studies in Art Education*, 54. 103-115.

Fulková, M., Tipton, T., Ishikawa, M. (2009). Through the eyes of a stray dog: encounters with the other (culture). *International Journal of Education through Art*. 5, 111-128.

Fulkova, M., Tipton, T. (2013). Zde Jsem. Here I Am. In: Mason, R. & Buschkuehle, C.-P. Eds.: *Images & Identity. Educating Citizenship through Visual Arts*. Bristol, Chicago: Intellect.

Fenyvesi, K., Lähdesmäki, T. (2017). *Aesthetics of Interdisciplinarity: Art and Mathematics*. Birkhäuser – Springer Nature, Basel.

Gaul, E., & Kárpáti, A. (2013). Kunstunterricht in Ungarn – eine zeitgenössische Perspektive. In: Bering, K., Hölscher, S., Niehoff, R., & Pauls, K. Eds.: *Visual Learning: Positionen im internationalen Vergleich*. Oberhausen, Athena Verlag. 201-220.

Kárpáti, A. (1998). The Changing Nature of Eastern European Art Centres: Assessment issues and the clarification of goals. In: Congdon, K., & Boughton, D. Eds.: *Evaluating Art Education Programs in Community Centres: International perspectives of Conception and Practice*. Connecticut: JAI Press. 133–149.

Kárpáti, A. (1999). When Pedagogy Becomes Politics: Folk Art in Hungarian Art Education. In: *Beyond Multicultural Art Education. International Perspectives*, edited by Boughton, Douglas and Mason, Rachel, 61–75. Münster, New York, London: Waxmann.

Kárpáti, A. (2013). Travellers of the Mind: Zur Rekonstruktion von Roma-Identitäten durch ästhetische Erziehung. In: Bering, Kunibert, Hölscher, Stefan, Niehoff, Rolf, Pauls, Karina Hrsg.: *Visual Learning: Positionen im internationalen Vergleich*. Oberhausen, Athena Verlag. 313-323

Kárpáti, A. (to appear, 2018). Art education in Central and Eastern Europe. In: Freedman, K. Ed.: *International Encyclopaedia of Art and Design Education, Vol. II: Curricular aspects of art & design education*. Oxford and New York: Wiley Blackwell Publishers

Kárpáti, A., Molnár, É. & Munkácsy, K. (2014). Pedagogising knowledge in Multigrade Roma schools – potentials and tensions of innovation. *European Educational Research Journal*, 13 (3), 325-337.

Kárpáti, A., Freedman, K., Heijnen, E, Kallio-Tavin, M., Castro, J. C. (2016). Collaboration in Visual Culture Learning Communities: Towards a Synergy of Individual and Collective Creative Practice. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*. DOI: 10.1111/jade.12099.

Kirchner, C. & Haanstra, F. (2015). *Europäische Kunstlehrpläne und Kompetenzdimensionen im Vergleich. Ergebnisse einer Expertenbefragung im Rahmen von ENViL*. <http://envil.eu> → Ergebnisse.

Laven, R. (2015). Mit Selbsta Ausdruck wegen Selbstentfremdung. In: Billmayer, F. Ed.: *Schwierige SchülerInnen im Kunstunterricht*. Flensburg: Flensburg University Press. 149-155.

Liessmann, K. P. (2011). *Theorie der Unbildung*. Szolnay Verlag Meyer-Drawe: Wien

Savenkova, L. (Ed., 2014). *The education of the person in the world of culture: integration in pedagogy of art - Moscow: MAGMA-Ranhighs*

Special needs projects in art education in the Czech Republic: Image – Identity, <http://www.image-identity.eu/>; Tarantula, <http://tarantula.ruk.cuni.cz/KVV-84.html>

Uhl Skřivanová, V. (2013). Liftfaßsäule der tschechischen Kunstpädagogik im öffentlichen Raum. In: Burkhardt, S., Meyer, T., Urlaß, eds.: *Convention. Ergebnisse und Anregungen*.

München: Kopaed. 256-261.

Wagner, E. & Schönau, D. (Eds., 2016). *Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Visual Literacy - Prototyp*. Münster-New York: Waxmann Verlag

Winner, E., Vincent-Lancrin, S. & Goldstein, T. (2013). *Art for Art's Sake? The Impact of Arts Education*. Paris: OECD.

https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceeri/ART%20FOR%20ART%E2%80%99S%20SAKE%20OVERVIEW_EN_R3.pdf

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following experts to this paper: *Dr.phil. MMag.art. Rolf Laven*, Professor, University of Teacher Education Vienna; *Dr. Luibov G. Savenkova*, Vice-Director of the Institute of Art Education and Cultural Studies of The Russian Academy of Education, Moscow, Russian Federation; *Sándor Muhi*, Lecturer, Babes-Bolyai University, Szatmar Branch, Romania; *Dr. Vera Uhl-Skrivanova*, Department of Art Education, Pedagogical Faculty, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic.