

# The cultural policies of arts education – a policy analysis approach

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*“L'éducation artistique et culturelle a-t-elle pour but de préparer les enfants à habiter poétiquement à terre” à transformer leur rapport au monde et à eux-mêmes, ou à améliorer leurs performances dans les différentes disciplines scolaires?”*

Jean-Marc Laubet

## **A personal note**

As authors, we are both institutionally involved in the field of applied research in arts education. We know what it means to be commissioned to carry out arts education research – or not. And we know colleagues around in a similar situation. By that we are confronted with a systematic bias of existing research which – by evoking generic universality – is in quasi constitutional temptation to neglect the quite non-generic interests to make use of these results.

Accordingly we regard this contribution as a chance to step back for a moment and to take into account a wider societal and political context of the issues of our daily business. As this approach – at least in the field of arts education – has not yet been discovered systematically the reader will not find any final results but an insight in a work in progress.

## **1. Status quo**

In the course of the last years arts education has slowly become an issue of cultural policy. Mainly when questions of cultural participation and audience development are tackled an increasing interest also among cultural policy researchers can be detected to consider also arts education activities. For example, during iccpr 2006 an own section on cultural participation<sup>1</sup> and a panel discussion with the title “the growing importance of cultural participation” could be organised. Also the COMPENDIUM

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<sup>1</sup> [www.iccpr2006.com](http://www.iccpr2006.com) The section included contributions from Brown, Geoffrey: Comparing the online services offered by European cultural Observatories and other agencies; Economidou, Marina: Why economically disadvantaged families in London go to theatres? Kouri, Maria: Introducing Audience Development in the Volksoper Wien; Moersch, Carmen: Interface: Art – Mediation; Moeschler, Olivier: Festival of the Sciences and Arts? Oggenovski, Saso: Relation between audience and theatre institutions and its influence in the theatre repertoire policy; Reason, Matthew: School theatre trips: For life, for learning, for fun? Schuster, J. Mark: Comparing participation in the arts and culture; Shimamura-Willcocks, Yuka: Living together, exploring “way of life”: promoting museum audiences; Sterry, Patricia: Developing designed environments in the cultural heritage sector for family group audiences; Volkerling, Michael: Creative education and regional innovation policies: A case for closer integration? Wimmer, Michael: Linking “Culture and Education” – A survey to map out the existing co-operative structure in culture, education and youth in European cities

initiative on cultural policies and trends in Europe<sup>2</sup> is meanwhile displaying a chapter on cultural participation and consumption including “arts and cultural education”.

Up to now the issue of arts education research was mainly brought forward from the representatives based in the educational realm. Their specific approaches were mainly focusing on the formulation of convincing arguments how to maintain and improve the respective infrastructure in and out of school. These advocacy intentions considerably influenced the scientific character of the content, methods and results of conventional arts education research, which in most cases is seen as something in its own right, or more likely as part of the self-assertion strategy of the author anticipating his or her assumed readers – as an unquestionable attainment.

So it is not astonishing that these efforts often were not taken seriously in the academic arena. And indeed even the most prominent representatives of this kind of research deplore a dominance of advocacy instead of basic and independent research and a preference of illustration instead of analysis. Anne Bamford, for example, professor of arts education at the Wimbledon University of London, who has produced a first “global research compendium on the impact of the arts in education”<sup>3</sup> states lacks of sustained course of action, of comprehensible baseline data, of analysed best practice models and of consistency in terminology, methodology and framework of quality that make comparing research difficult.<sup>4</sup>

These structural deficits go together with an “economic turn” not only in the western societies as a whole but also in cultural policy research. More and more research related to arts and culture is meanwhile focusing on the economic dimension of cultural management and on cultural industries and by that on the transformation of arts production in cultural goods and services to be supplied on cultural markets. In this respect it seems remarkable that – as cultural policy research always tended to do – the main perspective of observation remains on the side of production whereas the demand side and by that analyses into factors of influence in the consumption of what has been produced are still seen as more or less subordinate.

This is even more questionable when there is a lot of evidence that economy today more than ever is strongly based on elaborated knowledge of consumer attitudes as a main resource for success on the market. Obviously in the field of culture the point of reference – as a reminiscence of the artist as a genius of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – is still the character of self-realisation of the producer whereas the consumer/recipient is perceived just as an abstract factor, for example in the role to legitimise public funding. This insistence in the cultural policy focuses mainly on production without taking into account the context in which production takes place led to a deplorable disassociation from cultural theory, thus also from the context of education.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless the arts funding system exemplarily in the UK executed by the English Arts Council made clear that there is an increasing political intention to use arts

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<sup>2</sup> [www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)

<sup>3</sup> Bamford, Anne (2006): The Wow Factor, Münster, Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> Bamford, Anne (2008): Evaluation the „Wow“: Arts education research; ppt.-presentation for European Workshop for Experts in Arts Education: the UNESCO-Road Map for Arts Education and its Impact on Europe, Wildbad Kreuth.

<sup>5</sup> With all its theoretical implications which comes out of the German term „Bildung“.

production for external, not primarily artistic needs.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly a high number of artists and other representatives of arts institutions are meanwhile trained for and engaged in educational and other social activities. At the same time a significant number of new initiatives on the field of audience development occurred with the intention to improve the public standing of arts institutions. They are highly dependent on a comprehensive knowledge of the cultural attitudes of (potential) consumers or recipients.

The biggest challenge in this respect might be the sliding transformation of arts and culture into creativity and innovation for which the flagship project of the English Government “Creative Partnership” with a strong educational bias is a good example. In this programme, artists are engaged to work with students because of many reasons; presumably a rather minor is the evocation of curiosity towards the arts. The latest evidence of this development can be observed in the preparation of the “European Year of Creativity and Innovation” by the General Directorate for Education and Culture of the European Commission, which will take place in 2009.<sup>7</sup> Starting from a rather art specific view point the following documents show a continuous loss of artistic references. The year is now about “boosting Europe’s capacity for creativity and innovation for both social and economic reasons” whereas quite at the end of the document “artistic creation and new approaches in culture should also receive due attention, as important means of communication between people in Europe”.

Coming back to arts education research many of these contradictory developments accumulate in this still rather precarious expert field. The very few research efforts up to now are highly influenced by hope production and/or by an instrumental use of the arts in the context of educational output and thus social and economic output orientation.

Our starting point of looking at arts education from a more cultural policy view is the assumption that a more deconstructionist look at the research infrastructure in national and international contexts and its underlying policies – actors, rationales, methods and outcome – is required. This policy analysis seems to us a necessary step to further professionalise the field of arts education research as an interdisciplinary interface between cultural policy and education policy research – not in the sense of art education in service of policy goals, but, on the contrary, in the sense of a policy analysis in order to inform substantive art education.<sup>8</sup>

## **2. The socio-political context: From culture for all to the winner takes it all?**

From a central European point of view it was in the 1970<sup>ies</sup> when politics were embraced by cultural policy as a tool for establishing social equality. Cultural policy measures should support not only the reallocation of material goods but also of

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<sup>6</sup> In this connection a passionate public debate pro and contra takes place. As an example a quotation from the Website of the English Arts Council: [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk): “Fundamentally public funding should go to good, interesting, ground-breaking High Quality art and NOT be used as an instrument of social policy except as a by-product. To impose social policy agendas across all the arts though is to emasculate and dilute the focus of artists making art.”

<sup>7</sup> <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/482&format>

<sup>8</sup> Hope, Samuel (2004): Art Education in a World of Cross-Purposes, in: Eisner, Elliot; Day, Michael D. (eds.): Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education, New Jersey 2004, pp. 3-113, p. 95.

immaterial, symbolic, thus cultural ones. Up to that time so-called “high culture” was accessible just to a small range of the population whereas the big rest of the population was seen more or less “without culture”.

The intention went in two directions. On one hand arts education should open the doors for a broader range of people to take part in the cultural programmes of the traditional institutions and on the other hand they should be motivated to create and express “their own culture”. Influenced by the considerations of the British Cultural Studies these efforts coincided with a theoretical discussion to open the definition of what is culture towards a wide notion of culture as a totality of “how people live and work” (Wolfgang Fritz Haug).

These political concepts came to its end during the 1980<sup>ies</sup>. It became evident that in times of fundamental economic changes cultural policy cannot afford social justice. The available empirical data showed clearly that cultural participation – at least in the traditional cultural institutions – remained narrowly connected with the level of education as a whole and not specifically with the level of arts education provision, by that representing or maintaining the social status

When politics originally has widened the notion of culture in the direction of everyday life of all members of society it did not follow these intentions by consequently including the cultural attitudes of those who are not professionally engaged in the arts in cultural policy measures. Instead of politics it became the audiovisual industries which carefully studied the cultural attitudes of their (potential) consumers and taking into account their respective assessments to enlarge the markets where cultural goods and services are exchanged.

In realisation of the emancipatory dynamics of capitalist development the cultural industries produced a cultural democracy with an up to now unknown diversity of cultural offers for everybody admittedly according to the individual particular social status. Up to now, the consequences of this economically driven development for the permanent cultural learning of the consumers are widely non reflected.

For that certainly a high political price had to be paid due to a paradigm shift from equality to competition or more specifically from the arts as an attainment in its own right to the dominance of cost-benefit-analyses of the value of the arts. One of the immediate consequences for arts education is for instance that more and more representatives of arts education (and with them arts education researchers) are running arts education programmes without any relation to the arts as an elaborated system. In their furore to produce output the arts seem to be just cumbersome and impedimental.

Taking into account that in different languages the content of the notion of “the arts” might be slightly different it remains astonishing when for example Anne Bamford in her global research compendium uses a quotation of D. Richardson defining the arts “broadly and simply as being anything made by humans”. His only limitation: “The arts involve skills in creating something that is beautiful and/or moving in its form.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bamford, Anne (2008): p. 20.

From this arbitrariness it is only a little step to get rid of the inconvenient, critical and unsettling character of the professional arts system and instead of that to identify the arts with everything that has to do with creativity, innovation, furthermore flexibility, mobility, entrepreneurship. With this transformation we are right in the middle of a new European slang which finds its point of reference in the so-called Lisbon goals to make Europe the most competitive and by that economically most successful continent on the planet. To reach these goals a new generation of work forces must be educated and selected. And indeed their qualification in terms of the acquisition of key competences will be decisive and arts education is running to make visible that it is able to contribute to this struggle for economic growth.

Searching for new ways of professional realisation a growing number of artists and other representatives of arts institutions are following this trend and/or are forced to do so by cultural and educational policy constraints. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that their participation – at least up to now – did not lead to a noteworthy deepening of the theoretical and conceptual framework of arts education. On the contrary a deep mistrust of many activists in reflecting arts education activities can be stated which – consequently – finds its continuation in an advocacy-driven arts education research.

It is again a quotation of Freedman and Hernandez in “The Wow Factor” pointing at the fact that “national curriculum guidelines for arts education look remarkably similar across countries”.<sup>10</sup> The assessment of Anne Bamford: “The result of this internationalisation is that there appears to be relatively fixed common goals that are generally accepted internationally”.<sup>11</sup>

Maybe this finding is a little premature. Although it finds its equivalent in the unwillingness of many arts education representatives – is it on regional, national or international level – to take into account that arts education provision takes place in very different societal, economic and political settings. Only to compare the situation in different European countries like Germany, France, Spain, Italy or Austria where in some of them its societies have to learn to deal with considerable demographic changes (with all their social, cultural and also aesthetic implications) whereas other countries, especially in Eastern Europe are confronted with contrarian developments – especially when a younger and ambitious generation seeks ways to leave the country. Some prosperous countries like in Scandinavia or the Netherlands spend a lot of public money for arts education provision (and invest also in research) to safeguard national cultural identity against all tempests of globalisation whereas others – which were not only characterised by their communist regimes but also their traditional comprehensive arts education infrastructure – are as so-called new democracies struggling for maintaining at least a basic infrastructure for some isolated but tireless activists. Not to speak of possibly different political intentions if arts education is provided either in democracies or in totalitarian regimes – even in the case the curriculum guidelines look similar.

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<sup>10</sup> Freedman, K./Hernandez, F. (eds.) (1998): Curriculum, culture and art education: Contemporary perspectives, New York.

<sup>11</sup> Bamford, Anne (2008): p. 30.

### 3. The historic context

This structural blindness leads to questions about what remains from arts education when it is freed from advocacy: Is there really something neutral in its character that allows some doubts if there is an intrinsic value in arts education without taking into account the context in which arts education takes place?

To look deeper into this question we first of all would like to point at an impressive historic continuity in searching for good arguments. In 1901, 1903 and 1905 – at the eve of the anti-democratic Prussian Reich staggering into the atrocities of the First World War, three so-called “Kunsterzieherstage” (conferences on arts education) took place in Germany.<sup>12</sup> In the conference reports you can find more or less the same wording in terms of advocacy that is still used within the international public debate up to today. At the same time Ellen Key formulated her legendary statement arguing for a “Century of the Child” which then became one of the basic documents of the highly aesthetically driven reform pedagogy.

The inability to take into account the respective political framework in which these then modern pedagogic approaches were conceptualized left a vacuum for their liability for totalitarian seductions promising an optimal realisation. Looking at the provision of arts education on a comparative level we cannot close our eyes towards the fact that almost all dictatorial regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave arts education a very high priority. Obviously the Nazi- as well as the Soviet-regime both knew keenly about the political importance of arts education. Is it the mass choirs in the former Soviet Union praising the glory of comrade Stalin or is it the extensive program of the Nazis “Kraft durch Freude” (Force through Joy) – the goal was always the same: How to instrumentalise the arts in education to make the people active supporters of the regime.

To exemplify this, here is one quotation from a Nazi-document: “The aim of German music education is to be a serving intermediary between the arts and the people...German musical culture has to be understood to be the nurturing of the highest musical patronage in its totality and its quintessential purity. For this we want to acquire the German people by systematic education”.<sup>13</sup> The Nazis made use of arts education in a very purposeful way by distributing their aesthetic priorities as broadly as possible. To listen to music and to make music also in remote areas became a broadly accepted pleasure supported by rigidly organised artistic and pedagogical forces.

You might think in democratically organised societies the context is irrelevant. We do not think so. There is no reflection about arts education without taking into account the particular cultural, social and political context in which it takes place. And therefore we propose to use also historic comparisons to discover the ideological dimensions of cultural education provision of today.

Just one example describing the cultural implications of the post-war situation at the Balkans makes it clear how influential the political context for informal arts education learning still can be today: There is a film by Pepe Danquart and Miriam Quinte called

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<sup>12</sup> Kunsterziehung – Ergebnisse und Anregungen des ersten, zweiten und dritten Kunsterzieherstages 1901, 1903 und 1905, Voigtländers Verlag in Leipzig, 1092. 1904 und 1906.

<sup>13</sup> Amt Deutsches Volksbildungswerk (1943): Musikalische Volksbildung, Hamburg.

“After Saison”. The filmmakers accompanied the so-called Koschnik-Mission. Hans Koschnik was assigned by the European Union to coordinate the re-unification of the Croats and the Muslims in the city of Mostar, which was before the war an ordinary and vibrant city with a hybrid culture, combining Muslim, Catholic and Serb tradition with the people living together quite peacefully. To make a long story short: Koschnik failed because of Croat resistance and no support from the EU-countries.

In the film the viewer is confronted with an old Muslim man saying: “...before the war we already forgot everything – to turn towards Mecca every morning, praying, religion as something to practice every day... this kind of cultural attitudes became unimportant here: We have been people from Mostar, living with others in Mostar and commonly educated as people of Mostar. Now, after having been divided by constraint, we had to learn again by force what was already gone. As we squat in a Muslim ghetto we have to observe and to comply with the religious rules... the songs, we forgot long ago... the rituals we have to learn newly and practice...this was dead a long time ago.”

This story makes clear how important it might be not just to learn in terms of arts education strengthening identity – which was originally provided to divide people – but also to forget and overcome trained cultural attitudes which are not appropriate in a pluralistic society. Similar stories you can hear from people of Sarajevo and other cities, where religious and arts education took place with devastating consequences.

While this happened, in other European places not too far away arts education projects took place. For example in Kosice-Sacra/Slovakia – following an arts education research project on the so-called “Mozart-effect”<sup>14</sup>, new-born babies were equipped with huge ear-phones to listen to Mozart and Vivaldi<sup>15</sup> in order to improve their well-being and to foster harmonious development.

#### **4. Towards a policy analysis of arts education**

Coming to some handhold for a political analysis we start with the hypothesis that arts education is not a fact but a political construct. Admittedly, based in a complex political, social, economic and cultural context the relationship between arts education and policy developments is not mono-causal but ambiguous and therefore often not easily to be evaluated. This is the more true, when most of the programmes offered are based on the intention of developing the individual, by that selling the illusion of “natural equality” while systematically ignoring the structural differences between children and young people coming from different social, economic, geographical, ethnical, cultural or religious backgrounds.

##### ***The ideological character of best practice***

This becomes evident in the constant recapitulation of praises of “best practice models”, when a limited number of pre-selected children can benefit from various arts education efforts, which are carefully monitored, whereas the largest part remains outside. However disillusioning it might be, critically taking into account that those efforts might not change the world could help to establish a more professional

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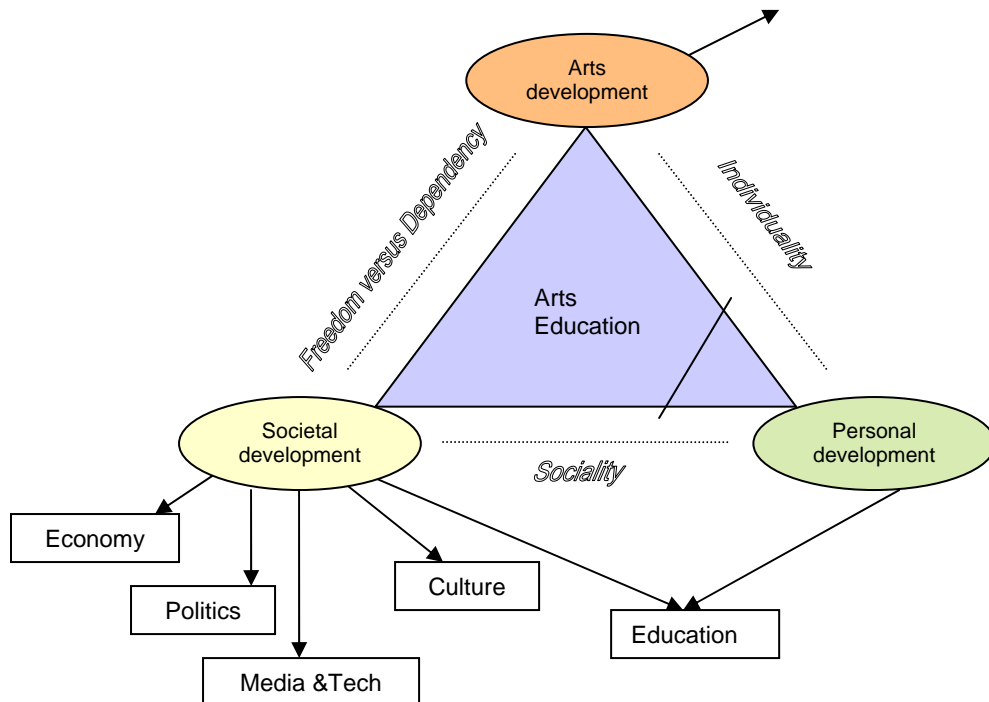
<sup>14</sup> Campbell, Don (1997): The Mozart Effect, New York.

<sup>15</sup> <http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2007/01/04/26412.aspx> (accessed: 17 June 2008)



approach to the field. Claiming that arts education could influence the social sphere and ignoring the existing context of social structures and inequalities might on the other hand prove counterproductive. Starting from a policy analysis approach thus means starting to proactively (re-)politicise the field from within instead of merely reacting on the policy demands in a compensatory instead of a structural or cooperative way.

### Policy triangle 1



In the process of our research for this paper, we developed a triangle model that could serve as a template for a description of the policy field of arts education. Our assumption is that arts education always takes place somewhere within the triangle spanned by interests representing different goals in terms of artistic, personal and societal development. These corners are connected by aspects of individuality, sociality and the tension between freedom and dependency.

According to our daily experience the three corners represent different spheres of values, terminologies, concepts, professional self-conceptions, ways of communication and assessments what arts education research should be about. Nevertheless it can be assumed that arts education and its systematic reflections take place somewhere within this policy field triangle which is stretched by the three corners, standing paradigmatically for the three different ways how to deal with arts education

### **Artistic Development**

On top, there are the arts as an elaborated system of artists, arts institutions and higher arts education institutions. From a traditional point of view this domain is often



identified as a luxury, by that as volatile, unsettling, useless or elitist – outside the everyday life of the majority. Against these traditional attributes throughout the last years, the aesthetic incorporation of societal development became more and more dominant.<sup>16</sup> This led both sides to search for common approaches, for example when programmes like “arts and economy”, “arts and media”, “arts and health” or “arts and cultural diversity” were implemented to make use of the aesthetic know-how of the arts world for social development.

As these new relation takes place in a stress-ratio between artistic freedom and economic, political or social dependency these new “coalitions” are not undisputed, for example when a growing fear is articulated that the arts are going to be instrumentalised for social purposes.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, for an increasing number of artists the participation in economic enterprises became part of their professional live and also higher arts education institutions are increasingly providing trainings in business and market-oriented competences.

More than that: under the title “art in context”, new artistic approaches have been developed that are searching for a new relationship between artists and the societal framework in which arts activities take place.<sup>18</sup> In this context, the mutual antagonism between the arts and education seems to be particular hardheadedness. Fe when the Austrian artist Rainer Ganahl speaks of education as its hated antonym<sup>19</sup>. As a consequence – depending on the arts training traditions in different countries – only a minority of artists is willing to engage in the field of “arts and education” as a way of artistic realisation. One of the most prominent examples is the concept of Pierangelo Maset at the University of Lüneburg/Germany who developed a concept of artistic practice indispensably connecting arts production, arts theory and arts education.<sup>20</sup> Similar approaches can meanwhile also be found at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, mainly as a counterweight compared to the traditional training system of art educators.

What seems to be remarkable is that up to now there are no significant efforts to improve arts-driven arts education research approaches – that go beyond the collection of good practice. This ignorance is slightly changing when it comes to increasing needs to reposition arts institutions within their communities. Especially in countries where public funding programmes are confronted with political de-legitimizing, audience development and by that also arts education programmes have become a major part in the strategic planning. As a result, more and more arts institutions take into account results of research which are useful for the maintenance of existing and the acquisition of new audiences. As most of these institutions do not see themselves as educational institutions, arts education research commissioned by this sector is – with some exceptions in the Anglo-Saxon countries, still an exception.

## ***Societal Development***

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<sup>16</sup> Fe Jeremy Rifkins speaks of the current development in terms of “cultural capitalism”.

<sup>17</sup> The example English Arts Council and its strong social bias in terms of funding have already been mentioned.

<sup>18</sup> By that a number also of academic institutions had been implemented engaged in “arts in context”: Fe at the Carnegie Mellon University's Center for Arts Management and Technology, Institut für Kunst im Kontext at the University der Künste Berlin, and many others.

<sup>19</sup> Ganahl, Rainer (1996): Der Erziehungskomplex, Generali Foundation, Vienna.

<sup>20</sup> Maset, Pierangelo (2002): Praxis Kunst Pädagogik. Ästhetische Operationen in der Kunstvermittlung, Lüneburg.

As already mentioned, the left angle, representing the societal context is influenced or rather dragged by the weight of various power relations in economy, politics or culture... When it has been stated that the social and artistic sector are readjusting their precarious relationship, the question is if this is also true for the social sector and the chances for personal development. In general it can be stated that social development, throughout the last years has led to increasing social inequality, dividing societies in a smaller number of winners and an increasing number of losers. This goes straight against all promises of the arts education sector, that its programmes would provide more social equality. Instead of that there is evidence that arts education provision can unintentionally lead to increasing social inequality for example by the production of good practice which is mainly based on those who already hold the necessary social, educational, cultural or other relevant prerequisites /capital for participation.

Altogether the “economic turn” in modern societies has led to a comprehensive adaptation of all social spheres to comply with economic benchmarks expressed in the question: “Is it useful?” and, if yes, “In which way is it useful for whom?” Against this economic hegemony a weakening of political influence can be stated. As a consequence even representatives of traditional political areas like education are latterly searching for legitimation in terms of “utility”, “impact” or “output” which might be understood in the dominant economic discourse.<sup>21</sup> And these are then also the expectations when it comes to assignments for arts education research which finds its benchmark of quality in the provision of convincing arguments for the utility of arts education programmes appropriate to stand the question of their possible and real economic relevance.

This story is even more complex: The “economic turn” indicated above is accompanied by a technological revolution which turns our perception of the world upside down as far as the digital media are going to infiltrate the last corners of human existence. As a result particularly an increasing generation gap can be observed: on one side the adults are defending their own cultural pessimism by promoting traditional ways of arts education and, on the other side, the youngsters are already on another planet where the new media, aesthetics, entertainment, education and personal self-fulfilment have led to a new world-view.

As an expression of and source for this mixed economic, technological and media turn, the cultural industries are offering an up to now unknown range of manifold cultural goods and services. Compared with traditional arts education programmes in and out of school it can be assumed that the provision of culturally loaded brands on the consumer markets is perceived as attractive and by that influential for developing cultural identifications and aesthetic preferences. By that, products of the cultural industries become the reference when it comes to the affiliation with different lifestyles. Representatives of traditional arts education programmes have not yet recognized that they have to stand this kind of competition or at least relate to it. And so it is not surprising that only few seem to be interested – in a positive, or neutral, decisively non-hostile sense – in the impact of this kind of informal and seemingly playful way of arts education.

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<sup>21</sup> One of the major representations of this trend was the organisation of a European and international research symposium “Evaluating the Impact of Arts & Cultural Education” which took place in January 2007 in Paris at the Centre Pompidou: <http://www.cnac-gp.fr/streaming/symposium/en/>

As a consequence of the increasing cultural and by that aesthetic character of capitalist development more and more agents from industry and business are demanding cultural and creative competences of their workforce. In this respect the educational systems are massively constraint to further develop in terms of including aesthetic dimensions as a core issue. Otherwise students will not find their place on the labour markets of the future. Of course this provision of cultural competences can have emancipatory implications for those who had been up to now systematically excluded. On the other hand it must be clear that the intention is not to produce equality but to herald a new round of competition by producing a rich reservoir of a creative work force based on competition in order to choose among the best qualified.

### ***Individual Development***

The angle concerning individual personal development (“Persönlichkeitsbildung”) completes the triangle on the right side. Though driven mainly by the traditional education institutions it might seem the weakest and most minor link in the triangle. Nevertheless it has to be seen as the most important point of reference for arts education efforts. Still based on concepts of “Bildung” in the tradition of German idealism, the representatives are using a lot of energy and effort to construct their own world which is at most complementary to the existing one. By keeping up this categorical division between an ideal and a profane perspective they systematically fail to acknowledge that the social sector massively influences what education, and therefore also arts education is about.

Accordingly arts education as an expert field is in permanent threat to become a closed shop (illustrated by a transversal line in the sketch) when it insists in observing just the individual development outside the context in which this development takes place. The price is to become a kind of compensatory refugium or sanctuary in terms such as stated on UNESCO Austria’s homepage “in regard of the process of globalisation, arts and cultural education seems to be an adequate way to give the individual the opportunity to choose freely and to act critically and self-determined”.<sup>22</sup>

In this respect, it is quite remarkable that most of the representatives of this sector have a more or less safe professional background themselves, mainly as teachers and public administrators, freed from the daily adversities of our rough and competitive societies he big rest has to cope with. In this capacity they are the main contributors to the current discourse, for example as participants in national and international conferences.<sup>23</sup> By that, they are responsible for the composition of most of the documents relevant to arts education that circulating at the moment, whereas people with other, more precarious societal backgrounds normally do not find access in this kind of discourse.

It is not surprising that arts education research is mainly commissioned by representatives from this sector. As arts teachers, for example, they are searching for arguments to maintain or even improve their influence within the traditional education system; as administrators they are in increasing need to legitimize the allocation of

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<sup>22</sup> [http://www.unesco.at/bildung/bildung\\_kultur.htm](http://www.unesco.at/bildung/bildung_kultur.htm)

<sup>23</sup> The most important of these conferences was the UNESCO-World Conference on Arts Education, which took place 2006 in Lisbon passing a Road-Map on Arts Education [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=26967&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=26967&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

public funding. Therefore a revolutionary challenge cannot be expected from that side.

Our assumption is that this sector is characterised by both, a privileged status of the advocates in a traditional education system and the feeling of permanent precariousness that is generated by the dynamics, interests and power relations of the current societal development. The result is a constant state of defence, trying to maintain the sanctuary by reacting with idealistic rhetoric on the demands and pressures of societal development. To alleviate the pains of this tension seems to be an important, certainly hidden agenda for arts education researchers.

## **5. The role of research in the policy triangle**

Let us now have a look at the research infrastructure and its role and relationships in the policy triangle more closely. If arts education is a politicised field, then also research related to that field is politicised. This means, we have to start analysing the relationship between the actors in the field and their specific interests in research.

### ***General tendencies and systematic gaps***

In general, we note a lack of academic cultural policy research in the field of arts education. Apart from some emerging studies about visitor behaviour or cultural participation (some are listed at the beginning of this paper), we hardly find any cultural policy driven studies that deal with arts education in a narrower sense on academic ground. By this lack of independent academic research, we find the majority of work commissioned by an interest-led stakeholder. Mostly, there is a direct link, if not an identity between the funders of the research and the funders of programmes to be evaluated, which is critical when it comes to the objectivity of the “evidence” generated. If research is mainly interest-driven – what are the interests in and expectations of the different actors grouped around the three angles of the policy triangle?

### ***Research in individual and societal developments***

Roughly, we can divide research in two groups: one is dealing rather with the influence of arts education on the individual development, drawing on experts from various scientific disciplines dealing with humans – from cognitive science and psychology to neurology, even genetics.<sup>24</sup> Research in this context has the tendency to look at individual developments abstracted or even isolated from the socio-political context. On the other hand, we find research deriving from approaches in the societal field, mostly looking into the economic value of arts education, but also in the social value, for example when it comes to crime and drug prevention, anti-racism and integration.

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<sup>24</sup> See Fe a recent research project by the Dana Foundation, “Learning, Arts and the Brain” (report released in March 2008). Research leader Michael S. Gazzaniga states: “Genetic studies have begun to yield candidate genes that may help explain individual differences in interest in the arts” and “Adult self-reported interest in aesthetics is related to a temperamental factor of openness, which in turn is influenced by dopamine-related genes”. <http://www.dana.org/news/publications/detail.aspx?id=11220>

Research deriving from educational sciences can be described as an interface between individual and societal development, for example when tests on the cognitive skills of students are measured against the competitiveness of nations, such as in the comparative OECD-PISA-testing programmes<sup>25</sup> and related studies. This creates numerous tensions, for example when very rigid education systems in countries like South Korea create better output, though the individual pupil's well-being and personal development might suffer. South Korea has for example the top suicide rate among OECD countries<sup>26</sup>, while the country has continued to strengthen its position in the PISA testing. The UK's rating on the last PISA – despite (or because?) spending a lot of money on creative education programmes has declined, leaving the top 10 for both maths and reading.<sup>27</sup>

Though there is an obvious systematic error in conventional comparative testing systems when it comes to the assessment of arts and creative education, UK government school evaluation agencies (OFSTED, the Office of Standards in Education)<sup>28</sup> and NFER<sup>29</sup> carried out various studies into the effects of creative programmes on learning and competences. There are even controversial efforts to install a PISA-assessment for cultural competences at least in the German speaking countries<sup>30</sup>, driven by efforts to rank artistic and cultural disciplines on the same level as subjects that are tested.

### ***Economic interest in research – Creativity as the magic word***

Directly linked to the politically driven approach to improve educational performance is an economic interest in education as a system to produce adequate workforce for the global market, also equipped with key competences – the obscure idea of creativity among them. The education system relates to that by creating a competitive surrounding and by embracing the concept of creativity in learning. This new alliance becomes visible if we look at reports like “Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the U.S. Workforce?”<sup>31</sup> surveying both school superintendents and business executives. The report states that “overwhelmingly, both the superintendents who educate future workers and the employers who hire them agree that creativity is increasingly important in U.S. workplaces (99 percent and 97 percent, respectively), and that artstraining – and, to a lesser degree, communications studies – are crucial to developing creativity.”

The report has been created by a business and management consultancy, in collaboration with the leading arts advocacy organisation, Americans for the Arts and

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<sup>25</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment, [www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org)

<sup>26</sup> [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/158160.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/158160.html), 18 Sep., 2006.

<sup>27</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/education/7126562.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7126562.stm) 4 December 2007.

<sup>28</sup> The Office for Standards in Education, Children Services and Skills OFSTED (2006): Creative Partnerships: initiative and impact. The Office for Standards in Education, Children Services and Skills OFSTED. <http://www.creative-partnerships.com/resources/resourcefiles/172183.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> National Foundation for Educational Research.

<sup>30</sup> These intentions were discussed last year at the conference „Evaluation kultureller Bildung?“ in Wildbad-Kreuth, 13-15 Mai 2007;

[http://www.educult.at/fileadmin/files/Infoplattform\\_MW/MW\\_Publikationen/Artikel\\_BOEWKE\\_Mai\\_2007.pdf](http://www.educult.at/fileadmin/files/Infoplattform_MW/MW_Publikationen/Artikel_BOEWKE_Mai_2007.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Lichtenberg, James; Woock Christopher; Wright, Mary (2008): Ready to Innovate: Are Educators and Executives Aligned on the Creative Readiness of the U.S. Workforce?

[http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information\\_services/research/policy\\_roundtable/ready\\_to\\_innovate.pdf](http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information_services/research/policy_roundtable/ready_to_innovate.pdf)  
The Conference Board, Research Report 1424.

the American Association of School Administrators. It is one example of seemingly overlapping interests.

However, when taking a closer look, it is evident that school administrators and business executives have a different notion of creativity: “Employers say problem-identification or articulation best demonstrates creativity, while school superintendents rank it ninth. Superintendents rank problem-solving first; employers rank it eighth. These discrepancies bolster the view that while schools teach students how to solve problems put before them, the business sector requires workers who can identify the problems in the first place.” This gives a hint that though interests might overlap; different structural settings lead to different expectations of the role of arts education.

The education researcher Ken Robinson describes the economic interest in a change of the educational system, where structures are regarded as confronting with the idea of creativity and innovation: “We now have a school curriculum that teaches ten subjects but only limited ways of thinking. We need an education that values different modes of intelligence and sees relationships between disciplines. To achieve this, there must be a different balance between the arts, sciences and humanities in education and in the forms of thinking they promote. They should be taught in ways that reflect their intimate connections in the world beyond education.”<sup>32</sup>

It seems that research cannot bridge the triangular tension between an education system based on a rather rigid structure of discipline and organisation, the concept of arts education, based on concepts of humanism and individual development and the economic interest that sets the standards, challenging both others.

### ***Political interest in research***

The research done on Creative Partnerships, the British Government’s flagship programme to foster creativity in schools that has been created in a response to the government report, “All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education (1999)”<sup>33</sup>, gives also good examples of politics or administration taking interest in arts education research. The reasons for this are either the assessment of a specific policy program or the preparation of new policy initiatives. The dynamics of political field create a number of tensions between basic research principles and the influence of policymakers, demanding simple, sellable results in a short period of time.

If we look, for example, at the research commissioned by the governments of Flanders, Denmark, Norway or the Netherlands to Anne Bamford and the Engine Room at Wimbledon University, it was probably part of her success to be able to pinpoint complex issues to recommendations that can easily be understood and can be grasped by politicians, administrators and the broader public – if they are then implemented, is another question. We found little research regarding the implementation of policies and recommendations that have been phrased, reworded and discussed sometimes more than once – for example, in the case of the UNESCO Road Map we refer now to the ninth version. In the case of the Road Map, a recently

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<sup>32</sup> Robinson, Ken (2001): *Out of Our Minds. Learning to be creative.* S. 196f.

<sup>33</sup> National Advisory committee on Creative and Cultural Education NACCCE (1999): *All our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education.*



organised European symposium on Arts Education in May 2008<sup>34</sup> has shown that, whether proposed recommendations are implemented or not, largely depends on the question of national resources and political goodwill.

Notably, there is a high interest of countries in producing more research that already prioritise arts education programmes. Thus, also on the research level, inequalities are reproduced. However, as we have stated before, it is unlikely to benefit to the progress of the field if we produce the x-hundredth case study referring to best practice that shows the wonderful job done by some engaged teachers and the sparkle in the pupil's eyes.

Anne Bamford criticises that most of the research seems to be dealing with immediate effectiveness or impact of programmes without having observed long-term, sustained developments or thoroughly analysed the impact on institutions and structures instead of referring to individual best-practice models.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, we find little material that can be described as basic research, meaning the collection of empirical data referring to the situation of the arts at schools, teacher qualifications, resources, range of methods, forms and (young) people involved, number of co-operations between arts institutions and schools etc. One pioneering example might be the project "Arts Count"<sup>36</sup> by the New York City Department of Education.

### ***What does it have to do with the arts?***

It has already been mentioned that we find a striking lack of research deriving from the arts world – and vice versa. The cited reports do not take into account the interests of the arts world that has a very different notion of creativity, which relates to the German term that does not translate adequately in English: art as creation or "Gestaltung", which is a value in itself, also referred to "intrinsic" or "arts for arts sake". The UK qualification and curriculum assessment authority QCA identifies 5 behaviours that children demonstrate when they are being creative: Questioning and challenging, making connections and seeing relationships, envisaging what might be, exploring ideas, keeping options open and reflecting critically on ideas actions and outcomes.<sup>37</sup> Does it matter, then, if the student is studying a math problem or reflecting on a sculpture, as long as the listed competences are the outcome of the learning process? The difference is that the sculpture might serve as an aesthetic tool – and yet, on the other hand, already Aristotle has stated that "The mathematical sciences particularly exhibit order, symmetry and limitation; and these are the greatest forms of the beautiful."

The question remains: what does this have to do with the arts? Very little, one could assume, except from an amputated notion of the arts as means for a certain purpose, whether it is instrumental or extrinsic – to react on the societal demands or intrinsic,

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<sup>34</sup> The UNESCO Road Map and its Impact on Europe. Wildbad Kreuth, 27-29 May 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Bamford, Anne: Evaluating the 'Wow': Arts education research. Presentation for the conference "The UNESCO Road Map and its Impact on Europe", 27-29May, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/TeachLearn/Arts/artscount.html>

<sup>37</sup> <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/learning-across-the-curriculum/creativity/howcanyouspotcreativity/index.aspx> . This is similar to Lois Hetland's and Ellen Winner's (2007) concept of studio thinking, listing eight studio habits of mind: Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education.



remaining within development of the individual. The arts world, on the other hand, shows little interest in the recipient or person to be educated. From within the arts world, apart from some exemptions, there is no great effort to build a relationship or to integrate the “non-artist” in the production process. The few approaches embracing arts, education and research – for example by Pierangelo Maset or the idea of art in context – have been mentioned in this paper.

## 6. Instead of a résumé or more food for thought

At this point, we are far from being able to give definite answers or a résumé. Three basic theses emerged, linked to questions that we would like to pursue further:

1. Research in the field of arts education seems to be largely de-contextualised and interest-led. Despite of that, it produces universalist claims. There is also a lack of independent academic and/or basic research in the field, at least in Europe.<sup>38</sup> Also in the case of the US, where presumably most academic research is produced, Samuel Hope states that: “Still it remains questionable whether the field of arts education has sufficient policy analysis capabilities given the scope and magnitude of its efforts and responsibilities. [...] Governmental policies are not developed in a vacuum. All policies are based on ideas, and ideas are conceived, developed, promoted, and funded. Ideas grow from a basic point of view or core beliefs are the foundations for policy frameworks that compete with each other. Understanding these frameworks and their interaction is critical.”<sup>39</sup>

### Questions

How can independent research and thus quality research in the field of arts education be stimulated that takes critically into account the socio-political context of programmes and their long-term, sustained impacts? Related to that: do research findings impact on political actions and by that complete the policy cycle?

2. We presume that there is an increase in research – and also an increasing demand in research<sup>40</sup> – because of an “economic turn”, demanding legitimisation of investment in the form of output, that puts administrators, policymakers and other stakeholders (for example private foundations) – and by that also researchers as contractors under pressure. This leads to a number of tensions, for example when it comes to questions about objectivity, liability, sustainability,... Because of that, we find numerous examples of research into best practice, and almost no research into systematic deficits or shortcomings of arts education and related structures.

### Questions

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<sup>38</sup> For the US, see Eisner, Elliot; Day, Michael D. (eds.) (2004): Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education, New Jersey and Bresler, Liora (ed.) (2007): International Handbook of Research in Arts Education Series: Springer International Handbooks of Education, Vol. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Hope, Samuel (2004): p. 94.

<sup>40</sup> For example expressed at the European symposium on the impact of the UNESCO Road Map, 27-29 May in Wildbad Kreuth, with a workshop on research. <http://www.unesco.de/2295.html?&L=0>

Is there a room for the critical mind? Can arts education programmes and related research contribute to the development of critical attitudes, challenging the existing systems of belief and paradigms?

3. Thirdly, we note a rootedness of arts education in traditional, established institutions – is it in schools or out of schools. This is linked to a conservative notion of what art is about and where art happens, that has little to do with the contemporary developments both in the arts world and in the life of young people. Also, it has little to do with the dynamic developments in the social, technological, political and economic sphere. Thus, arts education tends to create compensatory sanctuaries for “the true good”, an idealistic, yet outdated world. This is contradictory to a concept of artistic avant-garde, which promotes the concept of artistic freedom, both a forecaster of and critical respondent to societal developments. It is also contradictory to a notion of arts as exceeding structures and disciplines, an ancient idea that has been known since the time of Leonardo da Vinci.

**Question**

Can arts education develop into an alternative to the rigidity of structures and institutions, instead of falling into the shortcomings of being either compensation or tool for socioeconomic developments?

4. Fourthly – and linked to the third point – we find a striking disinterestedness or even cultural pessimism and hostility when it comes to the impact of cultural industry products on our aesthetic sensibility and cultural learning. Again, this is a question of generation, but also of prejudices and an outdated notion of “high culture” and “popular culture” that is, at least in the rather hermetic discourse of arts educators and related stakeholders, rarely challenged.

**Question**

How can the contemporary developments of technology and media – not in their economic, but also in their artistic and aesthetic context – be taken into account when it comes to the development of contemporary concepts of arts education?

***And last, but not least...***

...an important question that stands for itself: What reasons and implications does it have, that arts education is evidently largely organised and carried out by females – is it arts teachers or arts mediators? What would/could research tell us about arts education as a means for gender specific attribution, some might say social discrimination?