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AUTHOR Barbosa, Ana Mae Tavares Bastos  
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## ABSTRACT

Education should be the most efficient way of arousing the individual's cultural consciousness. A concept of "interculturality" now exists, signifying the importance of the interaction between different cultures. There must no longer be a distinction between the "high class" culture of the erudite and the "low class" culture of the lower social strata. It is necessary to recognize all of the influences upon the culture of the developing nation, even those influences that spring from former colonizers. Identity of self evolves through knowledge of the other. It is impossible to understand a nation's culture without understanding its arts. Any sound education develops personal expression and social integration, and art in particular contributes to such development. To be effective, art education must relate artistic production with aesthetic appreciation and historical information. Education must pay attention to visual literacy, to prepare children to understand and evaluate all sorts of images. Furthermore, in learning to appreciate and decodify works of art, children develop creativity. Art education also mediates between art and the general public. Training in art is important economically as well, in that many jobs relate directly or indirectly to art. Art is also critical for emotional development. It is impossible to conduct emotional and intellectual education without art. (SG)

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CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

**"The role of education in the cultural and  
artistic development of the individual:  
developing artistic and creative skills"**

by

Ana Mae Tavares Bastos Barbosa  
Director  
Museu de Arte Contemporanea da  
Universidade de Sao Paulo  
Sao Paulo, Brazil

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THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL:  
DEVELOPING ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE SKILLS

Education for the development of different cultural codes

Education should be the most efficient way of arousing the cultural consciousness of the individual, beginning with the recognition and appreciation of the local culture. However, formal education in the western Third World has been completely subjugated to European cultural codes and, more recently, to North American cultural codes.

Indigenous culture is only allowed into the school in the form of folklore, the curious and the exotic; always as a second-rate culture.

In contrast, it was in Europe itself that, during the period when the modernist ideals of art were being forged, that attention was drawn to the high value of other cultures, whether from the East or West, such as the appreciation of Japanese prints or African sculptures.

Thus, modern European artists were the first to question in practice the dominant Eurocentrism, and they were the first to create the arguments in favour of multiculturalism, despite analysing the culture of others from the perspective of their own value patterns. In the twentieth century, and following decolonialization, liberation movements created the political possibility for people who had once been dominated to recognize their own culture and their own values.

Cultural literacy, cultural identity and cultural ecology

The search for cultural identity became one of the objectives of the formerly dependent countries whose culture, up to that time, had been institutionally defined by the central metropolitan powers and whose history had been written by the colonizers. However, cultural identity is not a fixed or frozen norm but a dynamic process, enriched through dialogue and exchanges with other cultures. In this sense, cultural identity is a concern for the developed world too.

Despite this fact, the preoccupation with encouraging culture through education has undergone a different approach in the industrialized and developing worlds, revealing different meanings through semantic differences. While, in the Third World, we speak of the necessity of searching for cultural identity, the industrialized countries are talking about cultural literacy and cultural ecology. Furthermore, in the industrialized world the cultural question is centred on giving global and general information about different fields of knowledge (cultural literacy), and devoting balanced attention to the different cultures of each country (cultural ecology). In the Third World, however, cultural identity is the central concern and now means the necessity

of being able to recognize oneself or, ultimately, the basic necessity of survival and the construction of one's own reality.

The three terms referred to above converge to a common point: the notion of cultural diversity. Without the flexibility to face the cultural diversity existing in any one country, it is impossible to foresee either cultural identification, a global cultural literacy or a cultural ecology.

#### Cultural diversity: multiculturalism, pluriculturalism and interculturalism

Here, in order to define cultural diversity, we have to navigate again through a complex network of terms. Some talk about multiculturalism, others about pluriculturalism, and we still have the most useful term - interculturalism. While the terms "multicultural" and "pluricultural" mean the co-existence and mutual understanding of different cultures in the same society, the term "intercultural" signifies interaction among those different cultures.

This should be the aim of education concerning cultural development.

To achieve such an aim, it is necessary for education to pass on knowledge about the local culture, the culture of the various groups making up the nation and the culture of other nations.

#### Interculturalism: high and low cultures

As far as the local culture is concerned, it can be seen that only the erudite level (high-class culture) of this culture is allowed into the school. The cultures of the lower social classes continue to be ignored by educational institutions, even by those involved in educating the lower social classes themselves. We have learned from Paulo Freire to reject cultural segregation in education. The decades of struggle to rescue the oppressed from their ignorance about themselves have taught us that a libertarian education will only succeed when the participants in the educational process are able to identify their cultural ego - and be proud of it. This does not mean the defence of cultural ghettos, nor withholding erudite culture from the lower classes. All social classes have the right of access to erudite cultural codes because these are the dominant codes - the codes of power. It is necessary to know them, to be conversant with them, but they will continue to be alien knowledge unless the individual has mastered the cultural references of his own social class. Social mobility depends upon the interrelationship of the cultural codes of different social classes.

#### Interculturalism: the culture of the colonizer and of the oppressed

Cultural diversity assumes the recognition of different codes, of different social classes, of different ethnic groups, of different beliefs and different sexes in a nation, as well as dialogue with the different cultural codes of various nations or countries - even including that of the former colonizers. Radical nationalist movements that set out to strengthen the cultural identity

of a country in isolation have often overlooked the fact that their past was already contaminated by contact with other cultures and that the history of the colonizers and the colonized was inseparable. Their history, therefore, included that of the colonizer. In the same way, the colonizers cannot forget that, historically, they have incorporated cultural concepts obtained from contact with the oppressed.

### Interculturality and the culture of others

The demand for identification - "that is to be for an OTHER - entails the representation of the subject in differentiating the other of OTHERNESS". "Identity is to be for one's self and for the OTHER; therefore, identity is found among our differences".<sup>1</sup>

The function of the arts in shaping the image of identity confers on it a distinctive role among the complex aspects of culture.

Identification is always the production of "an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image recognized by the OTHER".<sup>2</sup>

### Role of the arts in cultural development

Through the arts we find the symbolic representation of the spiritual, the material, the intellectual and the emotional features that characterize a society or social group, their mode of life, their value system, their traditions and beliefs.

Art, as a presentational language of the senses, transmits meanings that cannot be transmitted through any other kind of language, such as discursive and scientific languages.

We cannot understand the culture of a country without familiarity with its arts. Without knowledge of the arts of a society, we can only have a superficial knowledge of its culture.

Those who are engaged in the vital task of bringing about cultural identification cannot achieve a significant result without knowledge of the arts.

Through poetry, gesture, image and sound the arts say what history, sociology, anthropology, etc., cannot say because they use another kind of

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<sup>1</sup> Iloni, R. Remembering Fanon: self, psyche and the colonial condition. In: Kruger, Barbara; Mariani, Phil, eds. Remaking history. New York, NY, Dia Art Foundation, 1989, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

language - the discursive and scientific languages, which by themselves are not able to convey cultural nuances.

Among the arts, visual art, with the image as its materia prima, makes it possible to visualize who we are, where we are and how we feel.

Art in education, as self-expression and as culture, is an important tool for cultural identification and development. Through the arts it is possible to develop perception and imagination, to seize the reality of the environment, to develop a critical capacity enabling perceived reality to be analysed and to develop creativity in order to change the reality that had been analysed. "Remembering Fanon", I would say that art enables a man or woman no longer to be a stranger in his/her environment nor an alien in his/her own country. It overcomes the state of depersonalization by putting the individual where he/she belongs.

#### Art education and the consciousness of citizenship

Art develops personal expression and social integration - the aim of any sound education.

The main achievement of social integration should be an awareness of citizenship. Past experience proves that, without the knowledge of history and art, education for citizenship becomes merely an academic exercise. An example of art fortifying the consciousness of citizenship can be seen in the "Escuelas al aire libre" of Mexico (from 1916 to 1926). After the first years of glorifying the accomplishments of the revolution (1910), it was through the efforts of the artists travelling around the contry stimulating the learning of art, teaching Mexican art and awakening pride in Mexican culture, that the cultural activities of small communities did more for the cohesion of the country than the federal government could ever had done.

#### Art in education as culture and expression: a question of method

However, it is not simply by including art in the curriculum that the magic of making the individual flourish and the citizen behave as a constructor of his/her nation comes into play.

Besides reserving a place for art in the curriculum, which is far from being achieved by the Member States of UNESCO, it is also necessary to care about how art is conceived and taught.

In my own experience, I have seen the visual arts being taught mainly as geometric drawing still following the positivist tradition, or art in schools conceived as the commemoration of feasts, as the production of stereotyped gifts for mother's day or father's day, and as "laissez faire" lessons.

The lack of trained personnel to teach the arts is a crucial problem, leading us to mistake improvization for creativity. Theoretical anaemia

dominates a type of art education that is failing to lead to knowledge. When I talk about knowledge, I mean knowledge in and about the visual arts organized so as to relate artistic production with aesthetic appreciation and historical information. This integration corresponds to the epistemology of art.

Knowledge of art takes place at the intersection of experimentation, decodification and information. In the visual arts, being able to produce an image and being able to read an image are two interrelated skills.

### Visual literacy

In our daily lives, we are surrounded by images imposed by the mass media selling products, ideas, concepts, behaviour, political slogans, etc. As a result of our inability to read these images, we learn from them unconsciously. Education should pay attention to visual literacy.

Teaching visual grammar and syntax through art and making children aware of human production of the highest quality is a way of preparing them to understand and evaluate all sorts of images, and of making them aware of what they are learning from those images.

A curriculum that integrates artistic activities, the history of art and an analysis of artistic works would lead to the satisfaction of the child's necessities, interests and growth, and, at the same time, would respect the subject matter to be learned, its values, its structure and its specific contribution to culture. In this way, we would achieve a balance between the two dominant curricular theories: child-centred and subject-centred.

This curricular balance began to be defended in the United Kingdom by the "Basic Design Movement" during the 1950s when Harry Thubron, Victor Pasmore, Richard Hamilton, Richard Smith, Joe Tilson and Eduardo Paolozzi developed their art teaching. They associated artistic activities with learning design principles and scientific information about seeing, all with the help of technology.

Their students studied visual grammar, its syntax and its vocabulary, dominating formal elements such as point, line, positive and negative space, division of area, colour, perception and illusion, signs and simulation, transformation and projection in the images produced by artists and also by the mass media and advertising. They were accused of rationalism, but today, after almost seventy years of expressionist art education in the schools of the industrialized world, we have arrived at the conclusion that free expression is not sufficient preparation for an understanding of art.

### Art appreciation for the development of creativity

Appreciation, educating the senses and evaluating the quality of images produced by artist is a necessary complement to free expression in order to make possible the continuous development of creativity among those who, after

leaving school, will not become producers of art. Through appreciation and decodification of works of art, we develop fluency, flexibility, preparation and originality, the basic processes of creativity. Furthermore, the education of appreciation is fundamental for the cultural development of a country. This only happens when a high quality of artistic production is associated with a high degree of understanding of that production by the public.

#### Art education: preparing the public for art

One of the functions of art education is to mediate between art and the general public.

Museums and cultural centres should be the leaders in preparing the public for understanding works of art.

However, few museums and cultural centres make an effort to facilitate art appreciation since guided visits are so boring that the trip to and from the museum is often far more meaningful for the children.

But it is important to stress that museums and cultural centres have an irreplaceable contribution in minimizing the feeling of inaccessibility of a work of art and the inadequacy of the observer.

Those who have not received formal education are afraid to enter a museum. They do not feel knowledgeable enough to cross the threshold of the "temples of culture".

It is time for museums to abandon their ivory tower behaviour and to assume their partnership with schools because only the schools can give students from the lower social classes the opportunity and the confidence to enter a museum.

Museums are places for concrete education on the cultural heritage that should belong not only to a socially and economically privileged class, but to everybody. Museums are ideal places for coming into contact with the patterns used to evaluate art throughout its history and which can prepare a critical art consumer both for yesterday's and today's art, as well as for the artistic manifestation of the future as well.

Knowledge of the relativity of evaluation patterns over time makes an individual flexible in creating appropriate patterns to judge what he does not yet know.

Such an education, able to develop self-expression, appreciation, decodification and evaluation of works of art produced by others and of the architectural environment associated with the historical context, is necessary not only for individual growth and the enrichment of a nation, but is also an important tool for professionalization.



Art for professional development

Large numbers of jobs and professions are directly or indirectly concerned with art. We could mention, for example, all the professions connected with commercial art and advertising, broadcasting, cinema, video, the publication of books and magazines, the production of records, cassettes and CDs, sound and set design for television, and all those fields of design for the fashion and textile industry, graphic design, interior design, etc. I cannot conceive of a good graphic designer who is not a creative individual and who does not possess some information on the history of art such as, for example, about the Bauhaus.

Not only graphic designers but a lot of other related professionals would be more efficient if they knew about art, had participated in it, and had developed analytical skills through the interpretation of works of art in their historical context. I have heard about some research that discovered that TV cameramen were more efficient if they had had systematic contact with art appreciation. The interpretation of works of art and historical information are inseparable, one being the historical diachronic approach to the object and the other being the vertical synchronic projection of it. The intersection of these two lines of enquiry will produce a critical understanding of how formal and visual concepts appear in art, how they have been perceived, redefined, redesigned, distorted, discharged, reappropriated, reformulated, justified and criticized in their formative process. This thinking process illuminates the practice of art, even if this practice is merely cathartic.

Art for emotional and reflexive development

Those who defend art in school merely to liberate emotion should remember that we can learn very little about our own emotions if we are not able to reflect about them.

Through education, the subjective, the interior life and the emotional life should progress - but not at random.

If art is treated not as knowledge but only as a "cry from the soul", we are providing neither cognitive education nor emotional education.

Wordsworth said: "Art has to do with the emotions, but not so profoundly as to reduce us to tears".

Synthesis

It is impossible to conduct emotional and intellectual education without art, either formal or non-formal, either for the elite or for the people, because it is impossible to develop the mind without developing the divergent modes of visual thinking, and of the presentational knowledge that characterize our understanding of the arts.