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Key points for understanding educational issues

ARTS EDUCATION, WHAT FOR?

Outings to the movies, field trips to the museum, artists' talks in classrooms, drama workshops... artistic and cultural activities are everywhere in schools. Although the discourse surrounding them generally seems unanimously positive, in practice the issue is far more complex. What do these activities aim for, and how did they come about? What effects do they have on students, and how do they link up with extra-curricular activities? What types of interactions with cultural institutions, and with artists, do they imply?

FROM SENSORY EXPERIENCE TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING?

Arts education (in French "*éducation artistique et culturelle*" - EAC), from a student standpoint, is often viewed as learning through experience, a concept inspired by John Dewey. It purports to open up the imaginations of students, to contribute to their training, in addition to the sense-related experience itself. From a societal perspective, UNESCO points to the ability of EAC to increase society's creative capacity and to develop social cohesion, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

A matter of definition

What is culture?

Two definitions co-exist:

- One is restricted to intellectual and artistic activities and productions, thus likening culture to the arts,
- The other is more anthropological, whereby "*culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. In addition to art and literature, it encompasses lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.*" (UNESCO, 1982)

A three-part learning process

EAC generally includes three dimensions:

- Meeting and accessing works of art and artists - aesthetic experience,
- Practicing artistic activities - artistic experience,
- Building up **knowledge** and skills through the study of works of art - cultural and reflexive experience.

The significance of each of these three components can vary throughout one's education. They can take place within or outside school, with teachers, guest speakers, facilitators or mediators.



According to Anne Bamford, [...] EAC refers to "the different activities aiming to pass a cultural legacy on to young people, and to allow them to understand and create their own artistic expression." [...] A double tension, inherent to EAC, therefore plays out [...]: between inclusion in school curricula and creation of spaces of freedom and expression on the one hand, and between education in the arts and education through the arts on the other." (Bordeaux, 2016)



A FRENCH PUBLIC POLICY BETWEEN EDUCATION AND CULTURE

The history of EAC in France sits at the intersection of the fields of education and culture, and involves various actors and organizations, from local to national authorities:

- The late 1960s saw the beginning of a phase of **experimentation**, stemming from the will to open schools up to artists, and to reach out to cultural activities outside schools, for instance with adjusted schedule classes (CHAM – "*classes à horaires aménagés*"), founded in 1974.
- The 1980s brought in **formalization (institutional innovation)**, with the 1983 agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, and the 1988 bill on teaching artistic activities. This bill included the introduction of art majors in high schools (drama, cinema, dance) and cultural classes (heritage classes, art classes).
- The 1990s were marked by the **development of local EAC policies**, and new schemes (such as "*Lycéens au cinéma*" – high school students at the movies) open to a broader student population, which promoted school- and region-based partnerships.
- The 2000s stood for the generalization of EAC, with the Lang-Tasca strategy, further schemes and the creation of the High Council of artistic and cultural education ("*Haut Conseil de l'éducation artistique et culturelle*").
- The 2010s were spent on the **consolidation** of the policy, and the "EAC pathway" was institutionalized in the school reform bill of 2013, with the aim to coordinate education and activities throughout students' academic careers, from 3 to 18 years old, both within and outside school. The target has been set for arts education to reach 100% of students by 2022.

| | ÉCOLE | COLLÈGE |
|--|-------|---------|
| STUDENTS CONCERNED BY ART EDUCATION PROJECTS | 82% | 62% |
| CULTURAL OUTINGS OR VISITS | 92% | 99% |
| CONTACT WITH ARTISTS | 62% | 85% |
| CHOIR PRACTICE | 56% | 84% |

(DEPP & DEPS, 2019)

Cultural democratization or democracy?

Two main trends traditionally co-exist when it comes to considering the goals of cultural policies:

- **Cultural democratization**, which contains a normative, universalizing and strongly hierarchized view of culture, and leads to a form of State proselytizing in favor of acknowledged establishment culture.
- **Cultural democracy**, which questions pre-existing artistic hierarchies and instead posits a broader relativist definition, thus restoring the value of specific and popular cultures as well as lesser-known artistic forms, for instance by giving more space to the tastes of different communities.

Cultural policies have evolved over time, and democratization has given way to a co-existence between the two goals.

The global rise of STEAM...

Since 2000, the notion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) has taken on a predominant role in many countries, especially English-speaking countries, with a view to alter school curricula and make the workforce more competitive. It recently opened up to STEAM in order to include the arts.



... and of specific school curricula

Arts are at the core of the school curricula of the International Baccalaureate and of different American states, such as California. In Germany, *kulturelle Bildung* (cultural education) in its broadest definition, both inside and outside schools, is seen as a prerequisite for cultural participation.

ARTISTIC PRACTICES DIVERSELY STRUCTURED AS ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

Different artistic practices are diversely present and structured within schools, and as such are more or less dependent on academic norms and expectations. Some fields are structured into academic subjects, such as music or visual arts, whereas other artistic fields are present in schools, integrated into the academic teaching, without being considered as separate school subjects as such: literature and drama in the French curriculum, dance in the P.E. curriculum, and the history of arts has been a cross-cutting subject since 2008. Some cultural activities, which fit into the curriculum while taking place outside the classroom, namely through partnerships or remedial programs, lead to reflect on the professionalism of teachers and guest speakers (e.g. artists). Lastly, "leisure" activities can be further removed from the school context (museum workshops during free time or cultural "junior clubs" run by youths themselves).

Thus, EAC fits perfectly into two trends within the French education system [...]. The first is the search for curricula more closely related to social "reference practices", reflected in the development of thematic instruction through "introductions to" ... to civil duty, to sexuality, to the media or to sustainable development. The second is the tendency to delegate to extra-curricular programs some of the issues which the institution is unable to resolve within its ordinary perimeter, such as school dropout, violent behavior, the integration of migrant or disabled populations. (Barrère & Montoya, 2019)

ARTS EDUCATION, A SOLUTION TO MAJOR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES?



EAC is sometimes viewed as a restorative solution addressing major learning difficulties, particularly through artistic projects. It therefore offers an "instructional detour", aiming to teach academic knowledge or methods using artistic subjects, for the purpose of transposing them into a traditional academic context (Bonnéry & Renard, 2013). Yet the gain for students is not systematic: in order for the "pedagogy of detour" to work, it must be designed in didactic terms, and the targeted transposition, the intellectual articulations and underlying academic contents must be made explicit. Such a process is a necessary step towards ensuring that all students are able to interpret art pieces and activities in a way which might be academically profitable.

The academic benefit of introducing culture into schools then suffers from the fracture between "thematic culture" and "academic subjects" [...]. Indeed, children are tasked with operating on their own the transposition from theme to subject. For children from working-class homes who are ill-prepared through familial socialization [...] to interpret various life experiences from an academic standpoint [...], such a transposition remains difficult. (Netter, 2018)

AN AMBIGUOUS RELATION TO STUDENTS' TASTES

To what extent does the curriculum of EAC adapt to its recipients? Repertoires and works pertaining to “youth culture” are increasingly being included in EAC, for instance in music classes and visual or film education programs. Yet their aim is fundamentally other, as the point is to operate a shift in students from an “ordinary” or ethical consideration of these cultural productions to an intellectual and aesthetic analysis, the latter holding a more legitimate status.

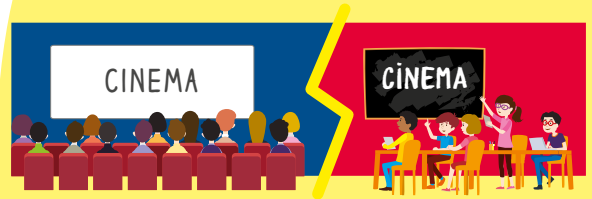
PARTNERSHIPS, AN OPENING OR AN EXTENSION OF SCHOOLS?

EAC is in line with the development of partnership programs aiming to tackle new educational issues, in a more case-based and localized manner. Such programs are the result of strong institutional policies, yet also attract artistic and cultural structures or actors towards partnerships with schools. Nine out of ten middle schools and three out of four elementary schools are concerned by such partnerships, a proportion which is higher still when schools are large and/or in urban areas. Almost 100% of “priority education network”-labelled middle schools have at least one EAC-related partnership. Such a term covers a large array of activities, whether occasional or regular, ranging from field trips to cultural institutions to inviting artists into the classroom. Thus, partnerships are also ground for potential conflict: is it all about re-creating school in the outside world, or on the contrary about inviting other perspectives and approaches into the classroom?

“Middle school headteachers often report receiving requests for outside partnerships, whether in the fields of culture, art or “civic duty” (sustainable development, health, etc.). Many of these requests come from non-profit organizations, which these educational initiatives as an opportunity to expand their activity. (Baluteau, 2017)”

ARE GUEST SPEAKERS AND ARTISTS OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL FRAMEWORK?

The nature of partnerships can vary, ranging from all-inclusive packages, entirely delegated to the non-academic partner, to long-term collaborations. Who of the teacher and the speaker is in charge of content, and holds epistemic authority? Who is in charge of discipline? Which rules apply, those of the school or those of the cultural institution? The example of the field trip to the museum is a case in point: the outing can be more or less related to school curricula (to knowledge) or on the contrary to the museum’s collections (to objects). Although art educators often reject academic norms, the latter remain nevertheless the reference point and are often imitated, for instance by adopting the lecture or discussion form. Artistic institutions aim to familiarize children with ways of thinking and seeing, and with a spectator’s stance, which can be either similar or dissimilar the student stance which schools require. Artists speaking and working in schools epitomizes opposing views among teachers and artists, some considering that a fundamental divergence exists between educators and outside actors, while others see a certain continuity.



10%

OF STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN CINEMA EDUCATION PROGRAMS EACH YEAR

“*École au cinéma*” (“elementary schools go to the movies”), “*Collège au cinéma*” (“middle schools go to the movies”) and “*Lycéens et apprentis au cinéma*” (“high schools and apprentices go to the movies”) feature among the most established and most important EAC programs, and add up to approximately 4 million ticket sales each year for participating movie theaters. These programs stem from a partnership, both on a local and a national level, between the Ministry of Education and cultural institutions, as well as actors from the movie industry and local authorities. These partners directly enter the schools; teaching material is prepared by the movie professionals or academics specializing in cinema specialists, who are also guest speakers. “*Unlike in other fields of EAC, [...] the aim is not so much the democratization of a cultural practice (going to the movies is very common among young people), but rather the democratization of a specific aesthetic approach to such a practice. Indeed, cinema education programs aim to guide teenage spectators’ habits, often well established, in such a way as to turn them into eclectic enlightened spectators.*” (Barbier et al., 2020)

Training programs both for schools and for cultural institutions

- EAC is now integrated into elementary school teachers’ basic training,
- Advanced training is offered by local delegations in charge of arts and culture (DAAC - “*délégations académiques aux arts et à la culture*”), and training for teacher trainers is offered by the EAC resources department (PREAC - “*pole ressources pour l’EAC*”),
- Training for artists in the classroom: university degrees from the training center for musicians in schools (operating for 30 years, all over the country), and degrees for artists working in schools (since 2010, in Paris only),
- For mediators and art educators, specific training programs to organize school visits to cultural institutions.

The National Higher Institute for Artistic and Cultural Education (INSEAC, “*Institut national supérieur de l’éducation artistique et culturelle*”) is set to open in September 2021 in Guingamp. This action was initiated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, with the aim to structure training and research in the field of artistic and cultural education at the national level.

SOME REFERENCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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