

## ELIA Working Group Arts Education – Discussion Topics 21 November 2018

### Introduction

The **ELIA Arts Education Working Group** has been actively examining the state of the art in Arts Education with a view to producing new themes for policy dialogue for use at European and national levels.

It is clear that discussions around the Arts and Arts Education have become somewhat polarised in recent years and have been characterised by a dominant economic discourse at the expense of other perspectives. The central role that artistic intelligence can play is often undervalued and it is perhaps necessary to reassert some of the intrinsic values we can bring, as well as some of the added value offered by Arts Education.

The lag between the pace of technological change and the response of civic society in general is becoming more noticeable and helps to explain some of the dilemmas that seem to arise on an almost daily basis. The relatively slow rate of change within educational institutions has also been observed by many but continuous formal and informal learning is equally seen as a vital location for engaging with these broader societal, economic and cultural changes.

Navigating through these fast-flowing forces is increasingly difficult but also a core concern for educators and policy-makers. In so far as this involves far older tensions between Art, Science and Technology, we might step back a little and reflect on the shifting role of artistic and creative intelligence, especially regarding Arts Education, in order better to consider how best to develop the skillsets and competences we increasingly need; firstly to sustain ourselves; and thereafter to sustain innovation trajectories that are best suited to addressing our wider societal, economic and cultural concerns within a world heavily influenced by transformational technological deployments.

The need for new skills for the new economies that are emerging is clear. This is just as true of traditional industrial sectors as it is of new ones. Indeed, the new 'economies of meaning' that are emerging will require us all to have greater access to different understandings of commensuration and the ascription of value in the broadest sense, as well as greater access to the process of disambiguation, that is of making meaning. These changes are already visible in the shifting demands from employers and indeed many working in educational institutions are now very familiar with the challenges involved in educating students with clusters of skillsets for undertaking occupations that do not yet formally exist. A society where the arts and cultural awareness are trained from a young age, will exhibit entrepreneurship, economic growth, resilience, democratic participation and a strong European identity. It is our contention that a renewed focus on the role of Arts Education from pre-school all the way to secondary school would help to address many of the issues mentioned above.

Our working group would like to identify, describe and develop several core arguments that can be put forward with a view to spreading them across different policy inputs and dialogues over the coming years.

For example, ELIA has already undertaken advocacy work regarding the European Commission and Council of Europe on key competences. ELIA, AEC, CILECT, SAR worked together on a position paper on the doctorate on the arts. It is formulated as a point of reference for policymakers, university leaders, curriculum designers and research funding agencies. It is addressed to universities of art and science alike, helping the former to secure recognition for their endeavours (with national funding bodies, legislature, etc.) and helping the latter to learn about the research developments within the art university sector.

There is now an opportunity to extend this advocacy role still further regarding, for example, work on:

- OECD Education 2030 Framework
- OECD Critical Thinking & Creativity Group and the forthcoming 2021 Pisa Declaration
- EIT proposal for a new knowledge community (KIC) for the Cultural & Creative Industries.

### **Initial themes for discussion**

Some initial ideas for further discussion at the ELIA Biennial in Rotterdam are listed in brief below. A Working Session has been organised and participants will be asked to consider these initial themes, to help clarify them further, to add examples and to suggest other themes.

#### **1. The Arts are an evolutionary necessity**

Arts Education offers a door to developing meta-cognitive skills, primarily because that's what you must engage to understand and use symbolic languages such as music, visual arts etc. This is why we make and listen to music, enjoy looking at pictures, make plays. So, an evolutionary necessity in order to develop the brain.

#### **2. Studying and practicing the Arts brings focus**

Arguments can be made for the skills that are developed personally by playing an instrument, performing a play or reading a book. Our age is characterised by attention theft, or deficit in educational terms, but this problem is one where we have much to offer. Such activities can counter-act attention theft.

#### **3. There is no digital literacy without creative literacy**

Educational systems that maintain Arts Education in the right perspective consistently perform better: they contextualise as a matter of course, they enable and allow individuals to creatively experiment, reflect, fail, and learn to succeed. As we move forward, many of our existing systems largely fail to identify and prepare us for what is coming. The formal recognition of the value of creative literacy in diverse contexts is a crucial factor and of enormous value within approaches to systems thinking. As EO Wilson noted: *"The love of complexity without reductionism makes art; the love of complexity with reductionism makes science."*

#### **4. The Arts are a creative facilitator**

Adding the Arts to STEM initiatives is crucial, where the role of Arts Education is as a 'creative facilitator'. Our emerging economies need more STEAM.

## 5. The Arts provide the possibility of balance

One might argue that the primary goal of the Arts is to achieve balance. This is found in older rhetorics but somehow this crucial function does not always receive sufficient emphasis:

- balance is for the self (development and awareness)
- balance for self and society (civic skills)
- balance between self and technology (social aspects of ICT)
- balance between time well spent and time poorly spent (attention theft)
- balance between work and life (Industry 4.0)
- balance between reliable and unreliable information (critical thinking)

## 6. Artistic Intelligence: the next paradigm

Using the notion of ‘artistic intelligence’ complements arguments following, for example, ‘multiple intelligences’ and meta-cognitive skills, but gives a name to artistic or creative intelligence. The centrifugal role of this is best understood by those in Arts Education. Our new economies will become economies of meaning, with multiple values beyond (though including) economic ones. Our alumni should be trained to be well-placed to locate these paths to meaning and value, in every sense. And with Industry 4.0, as we start to redefine what a new work/life balance might be, it becomes much more pressing.

## 7. We are creative institutional facilitators

Here the role of art universities in facilitating all this can be described. Perhaps also on how we collaborate ourselves with other types of schools following the 5 schools- argument:

“The infrastructure school which is concerned with the technological architecture, the public school which is concerned with the accessibility of knowledge creation, the measurement school which is concerned with alternative impact assessment, the democratic school which is concerned with access to knowledge and the pragmatic school which is concerned with collaborative research.”

## 8. Additional themes to add

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