

Research on Arts Education, and Knowledge Sharing

Building creative capacities and cultural awareness for the 21st Century through Arts Education requires informed decision-making. For decision makers to accept and endorse the implementation of Arts Education and Arts-in-Education, it is necessary to provide evidence of its effectiveness.

It can be argued that creativity as expressed through culture is the world's most equitably distributed resource. However, research indicates that certain education systems can stifle creativity while others can promote it. The assumption is that Arts Education is one of the best media for nurturing creativity (when the methods of teaching and learning support it), but the mechanisms for this are not well documented and the argument is therefore not well received by policy makers. Further research into this area is therefore needed.

While there has been some research into Arts Education as an educational field, and evidence supporting the benefits of integrating the arts into education exists, in many countries this evidence is scarce, anecdotal and difficult to access.

While there are many cases of successful design and implementation of arts education programmes, they often fail to convey their theoretical assumptions or fail to adequately document their outcomes. There are therefore few best-practice case studies which can be used to support advocacy processes. This lack of a readily accessible body of information is deemed as a major setback for improving practice, influencing policy making, and integrating the arts into educational systems.

As discussed, the nature of learning activities in Arts Education includes the creating of art, as well as reflecting on the appreciation, observation, interpretation, critique and philosophising about creative arts. These characteristics of the nature of teaching and learning in Arts Education have important implications for research methods in art. Researchers in Arts Education must look, think, and observe both from an artistic and pedagogical perspective.

Such research can take place at the global, national, and institutional level, or be discipline-based, and should focus on such areas as:

- Descriptions of the nature and extent of current Arts Education programmes.
- The links between Arts Education and creativity.
- The links between Arts Education and social abilities/active citizenship/empowerment.
- Evaluations of Arts Education programmes and methods, in particular of the value they add in terms of social and individual outcomes.
- The diversity of methods for delivering Arts Education.
- The effectiveness of Arts Education policies.
- The nature and impact of partnerships between education and culture in the implementation of Arts Education.
- The development and use of teacher education standards.

- Assessment of students' learning in Arts Education (evaluating best practice in assessment techniques).
- The influence of cultural industries (such as television and film) on children and other learners in terms of their education in the arts, and methods to ensure the cultural industries provide citizens with responsible kinds of Arts Education.

Implementing Arts Education research should involve the following steps:

- Creating an arts research agenda and seeking funding to support it.
- Organizing seminars for research on Arts Education in order to promote research efforts.
- Conducting surveys of research interests among arts educators.
- Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration on research methodologies for Arts Education.

Finally, and more specifically, research into Arts Education can be undertaken by universities and other institutions in collaboration with a clearinghouse (or "Observatory") which collects, analyzes, repackages and disseminates information and knowledge about Arts Education. Clearinghouses are a reliable source of data for advocacy and lobbying. A clearinghouse can collect information on a specific area of interest (e.g. performing arts education), or can have a geographical range (e.g. arts education in India).