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Children as Co-Creators of Art in Non Governmental Organization Projects

Abstract

This paper will discuss *children as co-creators of art* as a concept slowly gaining ground in Romania, from the point of view of the *art in education organization,* a type of NGO that has emerged in the last ten years to fill the need for cultural and artistic interaction of children and teenagers, a need not fulfilled by the mandatory education school system by itself. We will include four important topics: *Art in schools: creativity and education, children as audiences and as co-creators of art, research on children and young people's art experiences*, and the perceived impact of the two year project *Support Culture in Education (2014-2016)* from an NGO perspective.

Our methodology will be to describe and compare interviewd and questionnaires answered by eight art education organizations. We will also be using grades and (self)assessment offered by these associations to asses the art education in schools and the impact of NGOs, as well as data collected by other cultural institutions. Our aim is to offer actors in the field, as well as public administration an overview, although not exhaustive, of the current state of art education in Romania and to reveal some "good practice models" of what art in education can be. We hope this paper will trigger a more in depth and data based research on the impact of a quality art education on Romanian and international pupils.

Keywords: *children as co-creators of art, Romanian art-in-education, life skills, critical thinking, visual arts, architecture and theater workshops, museum education, artists in educational settings*

1. Introduction

The Romanian public schools system is based on a primary, lower-level secondary and upper level secondary education system for pre-university schooling [1] Since 2012 the Ministry of Education has introduced the manadatory preparatory grade (or grade 0) where pupils undergo a transition between kindergarten (which is optional) and primary school, with the purpose of allowing pupils who have not been to a kindergarten to be at the same level with those who have. This measure rose the total years of manadatory education from a previous 10 years up to 11 years. The upper level secondary grades, known as the 11th an the 12th grades of high school, are optional and are generally pursued either by pupils who study a *vocation* (a profession that doesn't necessarily require higher education and is based on certain skills) or by those who wish to continue to higher education or university.

The concept of *art in educatio*n or sometimes *art education* as used by international experts in the literature of the last 50 years is a paradigm shift that has been conducted and is still being conducted in several European,

1 According to the ISCED education framework https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education

North American and other countries following a Western model in education, in conjunction with extracurricular art and culture activities and collaboration with museums and museum education programs, changing the role of the arts from technical skill-based towards thinking and acting skills-based.

> Besides fostering a closer connection between museums and schools, curriculum changes have transformed the way art is taught. When the main focus of art education was art-making (Burnham and Kai-Kee 2011), or more specifically on art as "a practical, non-academic, skills-based subject" (Selwood, Clive, and Irving 1994: 42), the goal of visual arts education was often seen to be imitating masterpieces by making sketches and following technical instruction". (Yuan 2019)

In this paper we will use the term *art in education* to refer to a new way, relative to the Romanian context, of including the arts in the educational process of children. We include here both the curricular and the extracurricular activities that children are exposed to within their schooling that involve creative pedagogies with hands on artistic practice on the part of the children, that makes them co-creators or creators of art, and with a critical thinking practice that allows them to be participants in a theoretical framework of inquiry into the role and history of the arts in society (Craft, A., Cremin, T., Hay, P., & Clack, J., 2014). We will also include in the large umbrella term of *art in education* the notion of *arts intergration* seen as a means of transfering skills and thinking modes from the arts (drama, music, dance, visual art) to other school disciplines (language arts, mathematics) for the purpose of reaching a deeper level of engagement, learning and reflection than would be possible without inclusion of the art form. (Anderson, 2015: 6). *Culture in education* will be used here to describe activities and programs that include exposure to arts and culture, and create awareness of local and international cultural manifestations via museums, art institutions, theater participation, heritage monuments visits etc. but that do not necessarily involve children in the roles of creators. *Art education* will be used to refer to the mandatory school hours taught in public schools that do not necessarily reflect innovative pedagogical practices or theory.

As the Finnish researcher Hannu Simola states, historic analyses of educational systems and their understanding as part of wider historic, social and political contexts, are neccessary to understanding a national education system's processes, needs and possibilities. (Simola, 2005) Romanian art education can most likely be traced back to the value that art and culture in general is given in Romanian society and to the pedagogical and ideological basis on which the mandatory education has been introduced in Romania and on which principals it has largely operated since then. However, as the scope of this article does not include a historical analysis of the role of (or the lack of) the arts in Romanian society and of cultural experiences as a whole, we will focus on the present state of art and culture education, with the little information we have from a statistical point of view, and with the relatively rich qualitative information we have from our field study.

As the authors remark in their introduction to "Programs, networks and institutions supporting culture in education across Europe. Background paper for (Romanian) public decision-makers*" there is currently little*

connection between awareness of cultural and artistic needs and public policy in Romania. There seems to be little connection between the schools' needs with regards to art education and public policy with regards to including the arts to a larger degree in the primary and secondary school systems. There seems to be however an awareness about the link between art education of children and the public's find(ing) meaning in artistic experiences and cultural heritage." (Cruceanu, Holen, Iacob, 2017: 4) [2]

Although there is and there has been since at least since the 50's a school hour to two hours per week of visual arts education in the primary school and one hour per week up to the 10th grade for all mandatory schooling, its de facto contribution to visually and culturally educate pupils is to say the least, controversial. Music has been also represented by an hour per week, while theater, dance, architecture or film education have been lacking completely. On the other hand the so called Palaces of Children[3] have been offering extracurricular activities for children and youth since the socialist period, including visual arts and theater.

We will eneavor in what follows to shed some light on the interplay between the status quo and recent paradigm changes that have begun to take places in the past 10 to 15 years in Romanian culture, shifting from *art education* to a larger role for the arts as *art in education*.

2. Methodology

This study will focus on a multi-disciplinary view on *children as co-creators of art*, including in visual arts, architecture, heritage education, film, theater or dance, and some of the projects described here are interdisciplinary as well.

The study method was based on qualitative research, focused on eight NGO representatives' structered interviews, among which 1 was also an art teacher with experience from within the public school system and 1 was a cultural policy expert. As UK researcher Richard Hickman noted: "*The arts are said to be concerned with, to some extent, the notion of tacit knowledge and intuitive knowing; I would suggest that such phenomena are not amenable to quantitative investigation. That is not to say that there is no place for quantitative research methods in the arts, but it helps explain the preponderance of qualitative approaches*" (Hickman, 2008: 16) We recognize as weakness or limit of this study that we do not have any student interviews for the described projects and topics (although the student assessment and feedback methods were present in some of the described pedagogical processes), due to the overview character of this study and at the same time due to its time and resource constraints.

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2 The publication is part of the project Culture in education, project financed by the EEA grants 2009 – 2014, through the NGO Fund in Romania. Culture in education was coordinated by the Association CubicMetre – resources for culture and developed in partnership with "Sintagma" Centre for Education and Training, Gabriela Tudor Foundation, the Foundation for an Open Society, and the National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale". For official information on the EEA and Norway grants visit www.eeagrants.org and www.fondong.fdsc.ro.

3 State run institutions in charge of extracurricular activities remnant of socialist times

The study was conducted within a confirmatory, and constructivist framework , assuming an interpretative methodology and as a "theory of action"(Anderson, 2015), that of the relatively low quality of art education in the Romanian public schooling system that has started to undergo change with the intervention of *art in education* NGO's and that needs to continue to undergo positve change. It is constructivist to the extent that it recognizes the construction of meaning by the interviewed participants.

> The notion that reality is socially constructed – 'constructivism' – has a particular resonance for those working within the arts and it is within this world-view or paradigm that many, perhaps most, arts educators operate. (Hickman, 2008: 16)

and it proves interpretative as far the author also interprets the findings and the meanings constructed by the participants in the study.

This method has been chosen as it can be directly connected to research funding and policy making and implementation. In 2012, in the United States, an expert at the Institute of Education Sciences urged the arts community to develop and present studies with a clearly articulated "theory of action", stating that connecting the arts to evidence-based funding would help solidify the link between arts education and academic achievement and bolster support for the arts. (Anderson, 2015: 20) This paper is written precisely in this spirit and with the overt intent to create awareness of and attract public attention and policy to the field of art in education.

For this purpose we have choosen to conduct interviews with some of the organizations most relevant for the study, as well as other actors involved in the interaction between schools and NGO-s and analyzing and synthesizing the results thereof.

2. The Status Quo of Art Education in Romanian Public Schools- Questions of approach and quality

The question of the quality of art education[4] in public schools is an international discussion. In many countries the debate centers around questions of utility and value of art in schools as well as of skills transferability from art to non-art disciplines. (Anderson, 2015)

In the United States for example the arts became a serious discipline as early or as late as 1994 through the "Goals 2000-Educate America Act". But the question throughout the 90's seemed to be whether or not art could be instrumentalized as a skill and topic transfer discipline, as opposed to a valuable discipline in itself. Thus it remained in the 90's a low quality endeavour based on "topic enhancement" and "basic skills objectives"

4 For the purpose of brevity and for reasons of time constraints we will only refer to public school visual art education, with the exclusion of music education.

(Stake, Bresler, Mabry, 1991: 304) Throughout the 2000's studies found that art education did not necessarily involve transfer of skills to other school discplines. (Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan, 2007) Arts integration in more recent times in the USA was related to *thinking processes* that could be transferred in other area of life and work rather than specific skills and in 2002 the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations proclaimed rather positively that arts integration was only valuable if taught complementary to art education in schools. (Anderson, 2015)

In the UK there existed the discussion on the "creative decade" from 2000-2010 when there was a high emphasis on creativity especially via the arts in schools[5] and the change in educational policy following that decade. Funding had been cut for art education in public schools and the future of art in education as „pedagogy for creativity" seemed to be in relative danger. (Craft et. al, 2014)

To our knowledge there is little or no literature on the theoretical basis of art education in Romanian public schools. However from studying the curricula of primary and secondary schools and the visual art teacher training courses at university level (Dumitrescu, academic year 2018-2019) we find that the primary content of visual art education in public schools seems to be the so called 'plastic' or 'visual language' comprising foremost 'the dot, the line and the shape'. The main objectives of primary teachers training for a national projects entitled 'The Rural Project' were: 'to recognize elements of visual (plastic) language in art images, to identify various modes in which to realize plastic expressivities via elements of plastic/visual language', to create and analyze visual images via elements of plastic/visual language". The self-evaluation test for the first chapter consisted of analyzing in writing ways in which a dot could be constructed, the role of the "plastic dot" in a composition and the possiblitiy of obtaining plastic effects via the dot.[6] (Cristea, 2007) There seemed to be no reference to notions of creative pedagogy, in which children were part of the creative process of teaching and learning, no notion of co-enquiry or even enquiry outside of the "artistic message" based on visual language, no notion of multi-modal learning. (Craft et. Al, 2014). In short, no traces of contemporary art pedagogies are to be found in the various Romanian visual education class curricula.[7]

Furthermore, international discussions such as the instrumental versus the instrinsec rol of the arts in schools (Brewer 2002) and the notion of arts integration in the school curriculum (Anderson 2015) do not seem to have entered the Romanian public school system. What has been a big step forward from within the system itself has been the implementation of *Scoala Altfel/School Done Differently or A Different Kind of Shool* since 2012, a week long program during the school year that has increased the possibility for schools to opt for cultural activities. (Măntăluță, 2013) This has been made structurally possible, if not financially, by the Ministry of Education.

5 Following the Creative Partnerships model of collaboration between artists, teachers and chidren in UK schools

6 Translation from Romanian into English by the author

7 See also Romanian Ministry of Education : *School Curriculum for the subject Visual Art Education for grades 5-8, 2017*

Nonetheless, the main attempts have been made to bring the discussion of art education to a contemporary level are on the part of a limited number of cultural institutions via museum education and the specialized art in education NGO-s, a recent phenomenon of culture professionals who take on a activist and pioneering roles of furthering the arts in society via its youth.

We have raised the question of quality in art education with the professionals who are most active in improving this quality via structured interviews and questionnaires[8]. These are founders or members of organizations who have been active for 5 to 10 years in Romania and have a hands on experience collaborating with the state education system with regards to artistic education and who have been, in majority, involved in *Support Culture in Education*, a two year- multi-city, award winning project.[9] They are also in majority nationally and internationally active artists and art professionals.[10]

The eight NGO representatives interviewed/questioned non-profit organizations[11] have been asked to contribute with a grade on a scale from 1 to 10 and motivate their answer. The questions were: *How do you rate art education in Romanian schools, on a scale from 1-10,* 1 being low level, 5 being medium low and 10 being high level of quality. To the question *what is being accomplished and what is lacking?* In responding all of the interviewees focused mainly on the lacking parts. We interpret that as part of the NGOs focus on improvement and the subjectivity of the active actors in the field. Following the mandatory visual art class assessment by NGO practitioners, based on their professional experiences with schools in Romania during a time frame of 5 to 10 years, we have calculated a final grade derived from seven answers[12] at 4,8 points out of 10. The respondants have described several reasons for the relatively low grading.

Two of the ten reasons were repeted by several respondents: t*he lack of updated teacher training and the lack of specialized art teachers* were named by three respondents as a major reason for the low art education quality level. Another reason repeated by two respondents was the lack of a student centered approach to education. The rest of the answers did not repeat, but there were some overlapping points, such as the *lack of financial support for schools* and the *lack of facilities*, which could also be interpreted as connected to the teacher training issues.

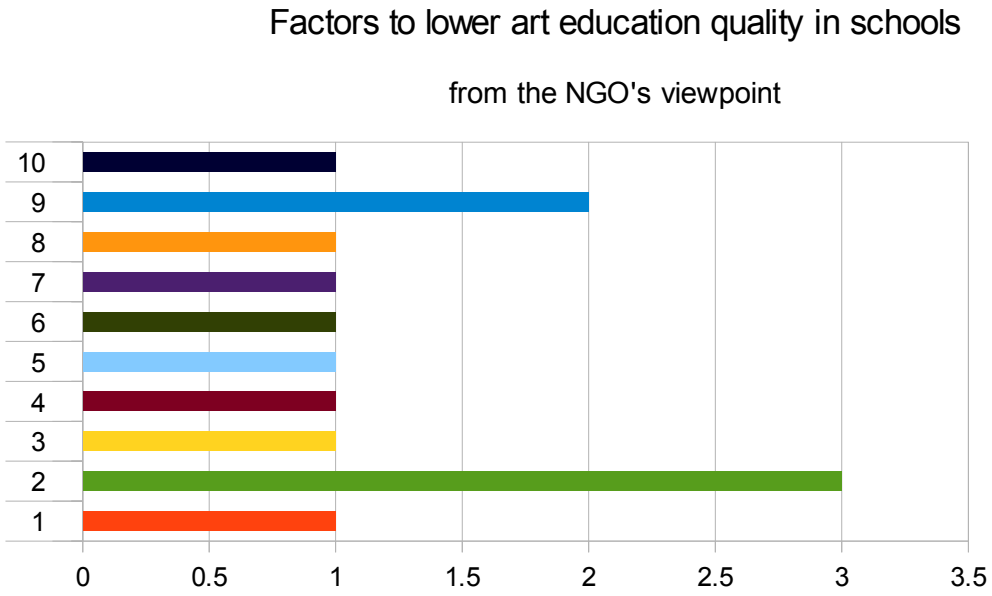
8 Two out of eight interviewees chose to respond in an interview form and the rest sent the answers in writing in English

9 National Administration of the Cultural Fund (AFCN) prize and Romanian Cultural Radio Prize 2015

10 One of them also worked as an art teacher for more than two years in a Romanian public school

11 Teach for Romania(their art teacher interventions in schools), Da De Ce Association, ADO Association, M3Culture, 37 Association, De-a Arhitectura Association, Matka Association, ArtCrowd-Artists in Education Association

12 One respondent refrained from grading



1. lack of financial support for the schools
2. lack of updated teacher training/ no specialized art teacher
3. large differences between schools' qualitative level
4. low level of value of art in society
5. low level of the subject's curricular content
6. lack of facilities
7. corruption
8. general out of dateness of the school system
9. lack of focus on the pupils
10. excessive parental involvement in teachers' pedagogy

One of the respondents, a visual artist who in conjunction to her NGO related work has also taught visual art education from within the system to secondary students for two years in two Romanian towns in Muntenia (Southern) region of the country motivated her 5 point out of 10 grading of the art education classes as follows: *"There are very big differences among school programs even though – within the state system there is a unique*

curriculum. From my experience there are many schools that lack specialized art teachers or employ teachers that have a weak specialization. Other schools develop strong extracurricular artistic activities and projects." (Mirela Ivanciu Interview 2019) Another respondent, an architect who has co-founded an architecture based art education NGO working across Romania also rated art education in schools at 5 out of 10 points. She stated: *"There is a constant curriculum for all ages, but obsolete, unattractive to students. Art is viewed as something un-useful for the mass and relevant only for the gifted ones."* (Mina Sava Questionnaire 2019) An additional NGO co-founder, an art historian who worked mainly in a small town in the Western part of the country rated the level of art courses in schools as low as 1 point, arguing that the major problem was teacher training, especially pedagogy courses. *"The art teachers are failing at connecting art classes with reality, adapting to new technologies and pupils' interests."* (Irina Damian Questionnaire, 2019) From the point of view of these art in education NGO professionals, art education in public schools is at almost half of the level of a desired level.

3. Improving children's learning experiences and their exposure to art and culture-model projects

These findings beg the next two questions of this study: *How then can we improve children's learning experiences and their exposure to art and culture? And what has been done so far by NGOs in collaborations with schools and cultural institutions?* Many NGO-s in Romania have conceived activities especially for *Scoala Altfel/ A Different Kind of School* week per year. The other possibility for NGOs to operate within schools are in the afterschool programs of state and private schools and in the CDS, (School Decision Curriculum), through which they can propose a course and the school has to accept it. This is also the way most of the respondent operated in the public school system.

One of the main motors for furthering the "cause" of art in education was the Culture in Education[13] platform, initiated by MetruCub Association that:

> aimed to support the development of cultural programs with an educational dimension, including *art in educatio*n projects as defined here, in Romanian schools through the development of a professional network of people and organisations, and the creation of resources about practices and public policies in the field. Since 2016 it started to actively support the incubation of *long-term* (at least one school year) and *quality* culture in education projects developed in partnerships. (MetruCub Association 2019 self presentation)

The question addressed to the interviewees of this study was how and if they were impacted by *the Support Culture in Education platform in terms of skills as art educator/organization leader.* 5 out of 8 respondents acknowledged the role of Support Culture in Education Project (2014-2016) in shaping the collaborative abilities and professionalization of their practice, 1 did not know about its existence and on 2 respondents it had a mild, if

13 started in 2013 as *Support Culture in Education,* continuing now with the title Culture in Education, powered by MetruCub Association. The financial support for the *Support Culture in Education* project ended in 2016

positive impact[14].

We will further discuss art in education in schools or as a collaboration between art education NGO-s and schools, as creative pedagogy, by asking 6 respondents to what extent they employ children as audiences for art and children as co-creators of art. In the following descriptions we will also take into account the following key concepts by the UK researchers Craft, Clack, Cremin and Hay in their 2014 study "Creative primary schools: developing and maintaining pedagogy for creativity": *co-enquiry and co-construction*, *attention to creative dispositions*, *learner agency* (ownership), *quality of learning*, o*pen-ended activities*, *multi-modal learnin*g which we connect to interdisciplinary and multi-sensory learning. To make the answers more to the point we asked the respondents to name one main project their organization implemented and to self-asses the project and motivate the grading, similarly to their general public school art classes assessment.

As UK researcher Lisa Roberts stated about museum education:

> The task of interpretation was first and foremost a task of connection: getting visitors to connect to what they see, on whatever terms that might be. At issue was the legitimization of personal experience as a source of meaning different from but no less valid than curatorial knowledge. (Roberts 1997: 70)

A project that could be considered a good example of connecting personal experiences to an artistic process was the *Visual Journal*[15] project made in two schools with disadvantaged students in Muntenia county by a visual artist and art teacher working within the *Teach for Romania*[16] program in disadvantaged schools. The project was implemented with high school students in which they had to keep an art journal for a whole year following specific guidelines. Each student had to choose a theme and gather visual and text information on that theme for one semester in a journal format. The main purpose of the project was to increase connection and motivation for exploring the visual world and visual communication in a manner that was accessible to them, as well as to focus on a subject relevant for their life. For the pupils the outcome were significant more in terms of personal development – exploration of their main interest as teenagers. She would rate the project at 8 to 9 points, some students reacted very well, some less, but the project had a very high potential. "*For a teacher it is always perfectible, a very versatile project. Not all students loved the project, but they were able to think of the theme from different angles*."(Mirela Ivanciu Questionnaire, 2019) By writing down their experience and by using visuals to enhance their journal writing, pupils were able to increase their self-reflection, to feel more in charge of their lives and their output (pupil agency). It also allowed them to think of art making in a more fluid and informal way. A possible minus of the project was its intimate quality that made it difficult to present to others and thus not open to collective critique and discussion, an important aspect of art in education. (Winner,

14 As this is a study on NGOs and their view of art in education we have not attempted to analyse the impact on teachers and students.

15 Title given by the autor of this paper

16 *Teach for Romania* is an exception to the usual way NGOs colaborate with schools in Romania, Being part of an established international NGO, TFR has a long term partnership with the Ministry of Education through which it trains and employs teachers from outside the system to work for two years as a regular subject teacher, but by TFR standards and methodologies.

Hetland, Veenema, Sheridan & Palmer, 2006)

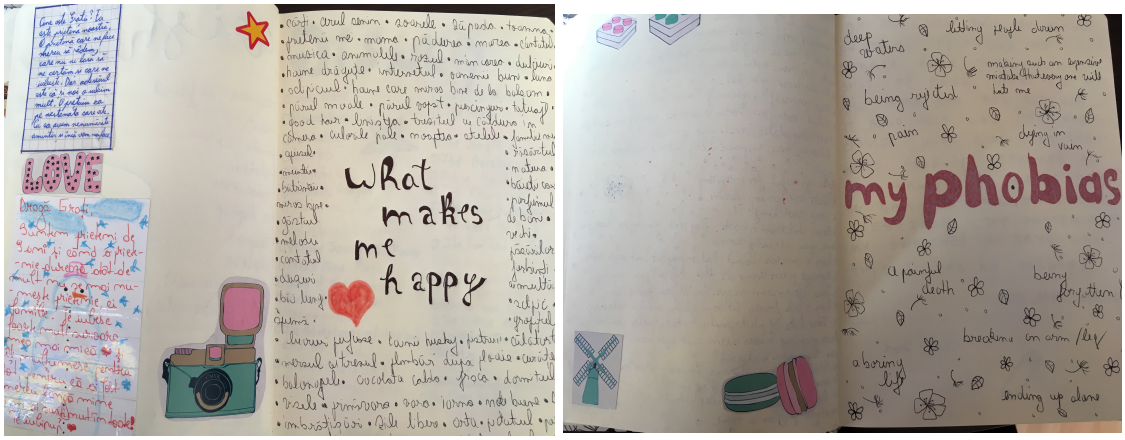


Figure 1. Upper secondary school pupil *Visual Journal*, Visual Art Education Class, 2016-2017, © Mirela Ivanciu, Teach for Romania



Figure 2. School Projects Exhibition, National Museum of Contemporary Art/MNAC, Bucharest, 2015, © De-a Arhitectura Association

De-a Arhitectura Association worked mainly in public schools, offering 150 classes per year in architecture and build environment for the 0 to 12th year grades, on understanding design thinking, build project issues and social involvement.They have had a nationwide impact as they were supported by the Architect's Order and the Architect's Union of Romania[17] and have been offered as a one year long course and as a partnership between a volunteer architect and the class teacher and included in 2019 around 4000 participating pupils per year since 2012. One of their main projects outcomes for primary schools has been the collaborative creation of a model city or a model of their city. (Figure 2) The outcomes for teachers were the discovery of new teaching metods, and some discovered unexpected gifts in their pupils. The outcomes for students were

17 These are the main form of organization for architects in Romania and the volunteer architects receive points for participating in the education projects that will further their careers

discovering new subjects, having fun learning, understanding the reason why they learned some theoretical topic related to architecture, enriching their visual culture and social attitude. With regards to the notion of children as co-authors of art the *De-a Arhitectura* respondent, the leader of the organization, stated that "*Co-design (instead of co-creators) is better called in our field.(...)Children are creative, if they are allowed to, but lack critical and practical thinking practice that leads to a lot of frustration with a real project. As audience they perform better, have an instinctive way to perceive well designed places, objects and buildings, but only if they are asked to be critical and emphatic."* (Mina Sava Questionnaire, 2019) With their emphasis on all of the bellow key concepts: co-authoring (through creating the city models as teams of pupils with specific roles), co-enquiry and co-construction (by collectively asking questions on the role of architecture in a city), attention to creative dispositions (by letting pupils decide how to use materials and composition), learner agency (by collectively owning the end result and presenting it to a public), quality of learning (by involving both professional architects and specialized pedagogues), open-ended activities (by always creating a different end result), multi-modal learning (by working with scale, proportion, space and their own bodies), the projects of *De-a Arhitectura* could be considered actual models of *art in education* and *arts integration* with regards to teaching and learning design and architecture, as well as developing "higher order cognitive skills (Bresler, 1994: 34) in public schools.

One of *Da De Ce Association's,* an organization that focused on museum education and art education for 3 + year olds, projects was named "*Kamishibai – Let's say hello to stories*". It took place in schools and aimed at the collective creation of a story and the public storytelling of this story by a class of primary school children using the kamishibai method (an old Japanese storytelling method which uses illustrations and a wooden frame to create a story). The children met with 3 visiting artists in order to fulfill their role: a storyteller/writer with whom they created an original story, a visual artist with whom they made around 15 illustration per story and an actress who taught them how to interpret the reading of their own story. In the respondent's view, the leader of *Da De Ce*, the positive outcomes of this workshop for the pupils were the negotiation of personal imagination with the group collaboration, in other words social skills, as well as the opportunity to experience freedom in an organized setting, in other words creativity. In the respondent's view, the success of this project consisted of the fact that they created a methodology that described every phase of working with children in this project, but also because they collaborated well with experienced staff. (Raluca Bem Neamu Questionnaire, 2019) . She rated this project at 10 points. As the pupils collectively made their own work of art we can consider this project a project where children were both audience and co-creators of works of art, as well as a project that developed all of the key concepts emphasized by Craft et.al. for creative pedagogy.



Figure 3. A Kamishibai workshop with writer Iulia Iordan in a public primary school, © Da De Ce Association

ADO Association[18] , a theater organization based in Bucharest, works with the participatory theater format, making theater plays with and for children and perform them with them. A recent example was a theater play entitled “Still on the road, on the road.”, that was presented at Replika Educational Theatre Centre in Bucharest in 2019. In the three week intensive workshop children wrote and performed based on their migration family stories in the town of Telciu (in Transylvania, in the center of the country), part of Telciu Summer School 2019 . The pupils were in the lower-secondary school and were part of families with migration histories, like most in the area. The metod adopted by *ADO* members was to assist the pupils in telling their own narratives in a safe environment, by spending time with them and by using theater methods to trigger their creativities. Again, as in the case of the other projects, professional artists worked with the pupils from beginning until the end of the project, assisting with acting and directing techniques and casting them as both audience and co-creators of their own art, and even so more, as creators of their own personal narratives. The representative of ADO rated the activities accomplished between 7 and 10. (Katia Pascariu Questionnaire, 2019) The social and even activist aspect of this project can be observed, as the final play was performed in front of an audience of theater gowers, becoming an artwork in its own right that discussed a very “hot” topic in Romanian contemporary society. The pedagogical methods belonged to the theoretical framework of “creative peadagogy” discussed above, with one only possible minus for future reference, that of the project taking place within the school but during summer holiday, in an extracurricular format, and being difficult to implement with a large number of pupils at any one time.



Figure 4. *Still on the road, on the road*- theater workshop based on the participants' life stories, with children between 10-15 years, part of Telciu Summer School 2019, © Cristian Grecu

Another project to be discussed here from the point of view of a creative pedagogy in collaboration with

18 ADO stands for ”Artă pentru drepturile omului”, Art for Human Rights

the public school system, is the *Front Line Projec*t within the *Contemporary Art Circle program,* created by a heritage and contemporary art in education organization based in Bucharest and Târgu Ocna, *Asociația 37/37Association*, in 2014. The project was located within a college in Târgu Ocna, a small city in Bacău county (Moldova region, Eastern part of Romania). The team started the program with lectures and workshops about contemporary artists that later were transformed into visiting artists workshops with the school secondary school pupils. In 2018 they built the *Front Line Project* around the WWI centenary within their community by inviting contemporary artists to work with the pupils in getting to know the local history[19]and creating online guided tours. The pupils got to know and work witthin their community, work and interact with artists and think up and edit 5 online cultural tours. One example is a workshop held by a visual artist focused on the destructive nature of war translated into installation art. Pupils in the 11th grade who had no previous extracurricular activities at school and were considered a ”difficult” class, were invited to make installation art that reflected their views on war and violence. The pupils were all considered co-creators of all the concepts. Acording to the leader of *37 Association* they were more focused on the process of the students working next to artists, than on the objects created, maintaining that there was a common journey for artists and kids to work and discover things together. On a scale from 1 to 10, I the respondent, the leader of the project, considered the succes rate of the project at 8 points. The project did not manage to get the parents involved in the project, neither other teachers from the school, lacking time and interest. (Irina Damian Questionnaire, 2019) In spite of these minuses, the project can be considered a good example of arts integration of high quality as it involved open-ended results, multi-modal learning via historical information, the collective creation of guided tours and of installation art works. Furthermore the entire process was sensitive to the pupils' creative dispositions and freedom was given while maintaing specific guidelines, and while also involving higher order cognitive skills like analyzing their own artworks and reflecting collectively on the work process. History and art making were intelligently intertwined and a sense of local identity and respect for local history was taken into account as well as the agency of the individual learners. We can only remark that the resources involved were relatively high (the artists traveled from Bucharest to Târgu Ocna) and again the number of pupils that could be involved was limited.



Figure 5. *The Front Line Project*, installation art workshop with artist Lea Rasovszky, 2018, © 37Association

19 Târgu Ocna was a battle field site in WWI

The final project we will discuss here as a possible model for future art education projects in public schools was initiated *by ArtCrowd-Artists in Education* organization has worked in schools during *Scoala Altfel /School Done Differently* project week from 2012 until 2016 . In the school years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 we developed and tested a one year course for 6 to 12 year olds entitled *Țomapan/Scattergories-Art History and Practice for children* that introduced children to important themes, names and techniques of art history, combining theory with practice. The course was implemented in two after-schools in Bucharest with approximately 140 students from 1st to 6th grade, taught by professional visual artists with teaching expertise. The project was successful in the sense that students were enjoing it, but unsuccessful from the point of view of its continuity. "*None of the two schools requested for the second year, invoquing other course options and ArtCrowd did not have the neccessary investment or funding to continue on its own resources. The course had been funded by the parents themselves. On a scale from 1 to 10 I would rate it at 7."*(Delia Popa Questionnaire, 2019) The innovation of this project consisted in the introduction of art history as linear, non-chronological in primary schools and as a useful tool for dwelving into topics relevant to the ages taught, such as animals and nature, humans and their cities, monsters and the meeting between reality and phantasy. The minus of the project was the communication with the schools and the lack of value given to art activities by these schools, making the project less effective.



Figure 6. *Scattergories-Art History and Practice* workshop in an afterschool program, „Monster" drawing after Hieronymus Bosch, 5th grade pupil, 2015, © ArtCrowd

After having defined a number of current international standards of quality of art in education and after

we have briefly presented six projects relevant to how the future of art education might look in public schools in Romania and beyond, the final questions to be asked in this paper are: *How might we be able to create standards of quality in art education in such as way that the processes and methodologies of the positive models can be continualy assessed and improved on one side and on the other scaled and dissiminated into a wider school population?*

To that purpose we askedt he respondents from the eight NGO-s the following question: *Does your organization use research as a tool for assessing your own performance and that of the school system? Do you have your own system of student' and your educators' assessment and the organization's at large?* One respondent stated that their organization has been evaluated in a NEWTT[20] program. One stated that they used research by public institutions such ISE, ARACIP[21], or publicly available tools and reports such as *Eurostat, Barometrul Cultural*[22]. She has also used as resource reflexive practitioners, interviews, discussions with other practitioners and international projects. Her conclusion with regards to quality was that "(financial) *resources really matter, less resources allow less ideas to come to life"*. One other responded that there was no tool available, nor many scientific researches in this area, and that the continuous development and improvement of the teaching resources was made by the participants. Another observed that the total lack of public support, obliged the organization to be focused on projects of artistic practice, rather than on research.

Another respondent testified that in theater assessment (coming from the audience) was part of the process, and that they also used publications as assesment, as well as dissemination of their practices. Finally the 8th responent had used feedback questionnaires from the beginning of their activity to understand what worked and what did not. It also helped in assessing the degree of difficulty of the workshops for the different ages. (NGO Questionnaires 2019)

These responses show that very little consistent, long term research and assesment has been done by the NGOs themselves in a way that can be made available for researchers and public policy makers or by other actors in the field up to the present. The fact that some organizations used assesment and training to increase the quality of their programs shows that the level of professionalization of the NGO work in art in education is increasing, but at the same time more research for improving standards of quality for mandatory art education via NGOs is necessary for these to become effective on a bigger scale.

5. Conclusions

Children as co-creators of art as a central formative tool in curricular and extracurricular a*rt in education* activities in Romania is at the beginning. While in many European countries there have been programs

20 NEWTT consists of piloting and testing different alternative pathways to teacher certification in 5 European countries, co-financed by the European Union through the Erasmus+ grant

21 ISE is The Institute of Education Sciences, ARACIP is The National Agency for Quality in Education

22 Eurostat is European Statistics Center, Cultural Barometer yearly measures the cultural participation of Romanians, available at www.culturadata.ro

implemented into the national curriculum, such as the *Cultural Rucksack*[23] in Norway and the transdisciplinary Open School[24] system in Denmark, where artists and art and culture professionals have a more direct involvement in education, in Romania there have not been any art and culture specific programs so far. While the public school art education seems to be at a relatively low level due to several factors we have described in this paper, thanks to the Education Ministry supported Scoala Altfel/*School Done Differently* national program, there has been a shift in the way art and culture institutions can access the school system and viceversa. In the past five to ten years there has been a registered need for this type of education (Botnariuc, Iacob, 2016) at the level of schools, teachers and pupils, as well as at the level of public authorities.

We have shown in this study that there are a number of established art in education organizations that have implemented high quality projects in the public school system making the notion of children as co-authors/co-creators of art their main credo and practice. Also, as shown in this paper, thanks to the two year +, NGO led project *Support Culture in Education*, the NGO actors have been able to connect, exchange, train and develop their common scope, at the same time as increasing the quality of the art related programs they offered to schools. However, as seen, the lack of quality art teacher training, the insuficient focus on pupils, the lack of facilities and resources, as well as other related factors keep the level of art education relatively low. We can only stress the need for a critical mass in support for the " model" projects, before asking broader questions such as what international collaborations and public policy measures are necessary to increase art education's social impact both in Romania as well as internationally.

23 https://www.kulturtanken.no/

24 https://brightthemag.com/hellerup-denmark-personalized-learning-innovation-lessons-from-a-school-without-walls-96689f456a5d

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Art in Education in Romania A Not-for-profit Organization's View Point- Questionnaire

Please tell us a bit about your experience with art in education from the point of view of your organization by responding to these questions.

1.How do you rate art education in Romanian schools, on a scale from 1-10? what is being accomplished and

what is lacking? Has it changed since you started your activity?

2.When was your organization founded and to what purpose? What where the most ardent needs you/it wanted to address then? What age group and demographics were you/was it targeting?

3. Please consider the following topic and your organization's experience vis-a-vis this topic:
Art in schools: creativity and education. Have you worked with schools and in schools?
Please give a relevant example and your own assessment of the project. How successful was your project on a scale from 1-10? What was the purpose/scope of the project? What do you think were the outcomes for the students and the staff?

4. Please consider the following topic and your organization's experience vis-a-vis this topic:
children as audiences and as co-creators of art. Have you made relevant projects in these 2 areas? How successful was your project on a scale from 1-10? What was the purpose/scope of the project? What do you think were the outcomes for the students and the staff?

5. Please consider the following topic and your organization's experience vis-a-vis this topic:
artistic research on children and young people's art experiences. Does your organization use research as a tool for assessing your own performance and that of the school system? Do you use scientific data in a productive way? Do you have your own system of student' and your educators' assessment and the organization's at large? How do you see artistic research and how does it (if it does) apply to your work with students?

6. How (and if)did the Support Culture in Education platform impact your organization, your skills as art educator/organization leader and ultimately your students/target groups?

7. How sustainable do you think your work is and how scale-able is your work?Testing financial sustainability models, public funding versus private customers models. Who can and will pay for these services in your experience?

Thank you!

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