

ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION IN KINDERGARTENS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN SLOVENIA

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Abstract The The study, involving Slovenian preschool teachers in kindergartens and teachers in elementary schools, focused on the assessment of preschool and elementary school teachers on the importance of different values for the life of an individual and society, and the teachers' opinions on the inclusion of arts and cultural fields and objectives in the educational process. The results show that both preschool and elementary school teachers do not contribute significant meaning to spiritual, cultural and aesthetic values. Preschool teachers believe that when planning the inclusion of arts and cultural fields, performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts should be given more attention, and the teachers in elementary school believe the focus should be on performing arts, cultural heritage, musical arts, and creating a reading culture. Although preschool and elementary teachers estimate that they often realise the majority of arts and cultural education's objectives, the results show that they put less focus on the objectives, which impacts the shaping of a relationship towards our own and foreign national cultural heritage.

Keywords:

preschool teachers,
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1 Introduction

Culture and art are essential components of modern education. Art holds great educational value since it arose from the historical development of aesthetic thought and pedagogical conceptions. Plato believed that art is an irreplaceable and integral component of the free man's education, Schiller pondered on the nature of beautiful and educational functions in art, Herbart believed that art impacts the inner harmony of the personality (Jerman, 1983), and Read (1945) notes that the basic flaw of all educational systems and their methods lies in their excessive focus on rationalism. Even today, education is facing a crisis of colossal dimensions. The paradigms of scientific thought and modern techniques control the lives of individuals and society. Kroflič (2007) notes that the "value of art in the spirit of the postmodern epistemology and value orientation should increase since it portrays a tool for the ability of emphatic identification of various value perspectives and facing existential questions" (Kroflič, 2007, p. 14).

The key competences for lifelong learning (Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, 2018) are defined as a combination of "knowledge, skills and relationships" (ibid, p. 7) and include: literacy, multilingualism, math, science and engineering, digital competence, personal, social and learning competences, civic competence, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness and expression. The instrument for developing the competence of cultural awareness and expression is arts and cultural education, which is becoming a central theme in education and culture in the 21st century (Požar Matijašič et. al., 2008). Many international documents, including Gifts of the Muse (2004), Bamford (2006), UNESCO: Seoul Agenda, Goals for the Development of Arts Education (2010), Art for Art's Sake (2013), Arts Education Partnership (2004), Road Map for Arts Education (2006), Work Plan for Culture (2015-18, 2019-22), and in Slovenia – the National guidelines for arts and cultural education (2009), and the National programs for culture (2008-201; 2014-17; 2018-2025), demonstrate the important role of arts and culture education for lifelong learning and integrated personality development. To highlight some of the key recommendations from the presented documents: arts education should be mandatory on all educational levels, the learning process should be made more exciting by meeting artists and visiting cultural institutions, and initial and continuing professional education and training should be guaranteed for everyone included in the educational process.

2 Arts and Cultural Values

Musek (2014) discusses two main pillars that are the bases of future society's stable operation: the first pillar is values and related ethical standards, the second pillar is knowledge, principally quality and premium knowledge. He believes that harmonising behaviour with values and ethical standards bears a great significance in solving the most pressing issues of the individual, society, and humanity, since it leads to a reduction of all most vital negative phenomena.

To achieve a stable society in the future, we must respect, upgrade and change the culture, if necessary. This is largely achieved through values. Musek (2008) wonders whether the man of the modern world is not aware of the value of arts and cultural values, the lack of which, along with any other material and technical progress, promises only spiritual decay, counteracting all progress in other fields. He believes we can only avoid this danger with suitable arts and cultural education. The greater the role of humanist and cultural values in society, the firmer the structure of modern human identity and perspective in the future. In Slovenia, we have a traditional appreciation of culture and art, however, we are not fully aware of their importance in the existence of a democratic society, which should be based on mankind's civilizational achievements, which we should preserve and nurture (Musek & Musek Lešnik, 2003).

How do young people accept and process the content and goods of the established culture, conveyed by various institutions of the adult world? One can state, as does Ule (2008), that "the young people perceive and spiritually integrate the components of the established culture only to the extent that is in accordance with their own youth culture, otherwise the 'cultural education' passes their radar, presenting even a source of irony and sometimes of their own cultural innovation" (Ule, 2008, p. 96). Efficient integration of values into upbringing, education, personal and character development alone has a long-term impact on the rise of harmony between values and behaviour and on the decrease of negative societal phenomena.

3 Arts and Cultural Education in Research

Despite the relatively small amount of empirical research in the field of art, the number of theoretical analyses and discussions on the meaning and role of the arts and cultural education is rising. Many good practice examples, involving arts and cultural education, can be found, especially in early teaching, where the programs often emphasise the aesthetic component and the integration of the cognitive and emotional area of the child's personality (Welch, 2006; Schirrmacher, 2002). Reggio Emilia schools (Cadwell, 2003), the program of early teaching, such as the Montessori method, devote particular attention to art and creative expression. For example, Fantuzzo (2007) introduced such a project, where literature, mathematics and social and emotional development were based on art. It was formed in cooperation with preschool and elementary school teachers and placed in a learning and social environment. By using experimental, quantitative, and qualitative methodology, the study explained the success of the research approach and cooperation with the wider environment (Fantuzzo & Gadsden, 2007). Other studies (Drovenik Adamec et al., 2020; Kovačič & Matejek, 2020) also set the framework for examining the development of musical talent at the elementary level of music education and at later educational levels. Other examples (Bresler, 2003; 2006; Burton et al., 1999) also show that the integration of art in general education programs has positive effects on students' academic learning and general attitudes. In this context, the authors (Jeler et al., 2021) emphasize the students' increased motivation for learning, a rise in innovation and creativity, and the development of new learning strategies. Specified studies, along with many examples of good practice, substantiate the need for a more adequate placement of arts and cultural education in educational programs.

4 The Objectives of Arts and Cultural Education in the Planned and Implemented Curriculum

Taggart, Whitby and Sharp (2004) found that most European countries have formed goals in their art curriculum. A comparative study, prepared by the Eurydice Network (2009), also provides a review of the planning and implementation of arts and cultural education in the curricula of 30 European countries. Art is positioned in two ways within the curriculum: as an integrated whole of different art subjects (art) or as a string of individual art subjects (fine art class, music class, dance class,

acting, etc.). Therefore, some countries have objectives and accomplishments set on a general level and some on a more specific level. The most represented general objectives of arts and cultural education, which may be found in the majority of European curricula, are as follows: realising the basic human right to education and cooperation in the cultural field, developing critical evaluation or aesthetic assessment, understanding cultural diversity and the meaning of cultural heritage, developing the ability of personal expression, and developing creativity. Along with these learning objectives, stated within the framework of arts and cultural education, the general learning objectives in curricula should also be mentioned. These may be connected to art and culture, such as encouraging cross-curricular connections between art and other subjects.

Increasingly, government institutions and various documents offer mainly theoretical ideas on the meaning and role of arts and cultural education in education, which are followed by curriculum planners but not actual didactic teaching approaches for arts and cultural education. The question is: to what extent do preschool teachers and teachers (classroom teachers, subject teachers of artistic classes, subject teachers of other classes, such as history, mathematics, etc.) have the ability to implement the arts and cultural education's objectives into the planned and implemented curriculum?

Teachers teaching artistic subjects have a key role in developing the students' creative ability. In a study on the impact of culture on creativity (KEA European Affairs, 2009), the training of preschool and elementary school teachers was emphasised as one of the main areas in need of improvement in order to establish a creative learning environment in kindergartens and schools. The students participating in the study also believed that universities in Slovenia, where future preschool and elementary school teachers are educated, offered good professional and general knowledge. However, there was not enough emphasis on the development of creative abilities and the meaning of social and emotional competence for future preschool and elementary school teachers (Denac et al., 2013).

Many authors discuss the issue of ensuring quality classes in the field of arts and cultural education (Burak, 2019; Kim, 2017; Šinkovec, 2017; Musek, 2014; Bamford, 2006; Holden & Button, 2006; Sharp & Le Métais, 2000; Taggart et al., 2004). This

issue is also verified by the findings of an international comparative study (Ijdens et al., 2018), which studied the quality of realising arts education in practice. Based on a representative sample of approximately 1600 experts from 78 countries the results showed the complex conditions and characteristics of arts education in different countries and highlighted the predominately insufficient qualification of teachers for teaching artistic subjects, especially in elementary schools. There are gaps in the implementation of arts in the learning process, namely between the “insight, opinions and ambitions of the arts education teacher on one hand and the politics and public in their country on the other” (Ijdens, Bolden & Wagner, 2018, p. 170). Even though education policy recognizes several educational, cultural, and social benefits of arts education, we find that education in and through arts still lacks quality implementation into curricula.

Therefore, preschool and elementary school teachers planning and implementing the educational process in the field of art should have sufficient pedagogical and didactic knowledge and skills to teach arts and cultural education, well-developed skills for creating and implementing artwork, capabilities for analysis, interpretation and valuation of artwork, well-developed personality potential and social and economic competences, which are demonstrated in the responsibility towards the aesthetic development of children, a positive attitude towards culture, art and expressing joy, and interest in a certain type of art. In the past, insufficient attention was paid to studies monitoring the quality of arts teaching. Since the quality of the planning and implementation of the educational process in artistic fields predominately depends on preschool and elementary teachers, the authors conducted empirical research, which offered them an opportunity to highlight arts and cultural education in the Slovenian education area.

5 Methodology

5.1 Objectives of the Empirical Study

The study includes:

- an assessment of the importance of different values for the life of an individual and for society;

- preschool and elementary school teachers' opinions on the inclusion of arts and cultural fields in the educational process;
- teachers' opinions on the attention the students give arts and cultural fields in elementary school and in their free time; and
- preschool and elementary school teachers' opinions on the realization of objectives of arts and cultural education in the educational process.

5.2 Research Sample

The sample consists of 475 preschool teachers who worked and performed tasks in the first (38%) and second (62%) age groups of children and 510 elementary school teachers who taught at the grade level (48%) and subject level (52%). The sample included preschool and elementary school teachers from different Slovenian regions (Podravska, Pomurska, Koroška, Gorenjska, Osrednjeslovenska, Notranjsko-kraška and Obalno-kraška).

5.3 Data Collection Method

The electronic survey was conducted with an online questionnaire. The authors sent a request to the principals of 70 randomly selected kindergartens and 70 elementary schools, asking them to provide us with the e-mail addresses of their employed preschool and elementary school teachers. The questionnaires were then sent to 600 preschool teachers, of whom 475 completed the questionnaire, and 789 elementary teachers, of whom 510 completed the questionnaire.

5.4 Measuring Instruments

The questionnaire for preschool and elementary school teachers comprised closed-type questions (dichotomous questions, questions with verbal and scaled answers) and was created in accordance with the following measurement characteristics:

- Validity was based on a rational assessment of the test questionnaire by experts for content- and format-related properties (art advisors from the National Education Institute) and its pre-test use.

- Reliability was ensured with detailed instructions, single-meaning, specific questions, and a comparison of the answers to questions with similar content.
- Objectivity in the data collection stage was based on the use of electronic questionnaire surveying, and in the validation phase it was based on the recognition of the answers with no subjective interventions.

The questionnaire for preschool teachers differed from the questionnaire for elementary school teachers in the names or listing the subject areas defined in the Curriculum for Kindergartens as areas of activity, and in a set of questions about the attention that students pay to the areas of cultural and artistic education in elementary school, which were not included in the questionnaire for preschool teachers.

The questions were formulated in several rounded sections, namely:

- value categories (Musek, 2000) assessed by preschool and elementary school teachers (grades ranging from 1 to 12), according to their importance for the life of the individual and for society;
- preschool and elementary school teachers' opinions on the inclusion of areas and goals within arts and cultural education in the educational process; and
- preschool and elementary school teachers' opinions regarding the attention that students give to arts and cultural fields in school and in their free time.

For the purpose of this paper only some survey questions results will be presented.

5.5 Data Processing Operation

The data was processed at a descriptive level. The authors used frequency distributions (f , $f\%$), assessment average (\bar{x}), and range average (\bar{R}).

6 Results and Interpretation

How do preschool and elementary school teachers assess the importance of values for the life of an individual and for society?

Table 1: Value categories arranged by average assessment (\bar{x}) of importance

Values preschool teachers	\bar{x}	Values elementary teachers	\bar{x}
Family (love for partner, for children)	10.84	Family (love for partner, for children)	10.31
Health (health, healthy diet, physical culture)	9.86	Social (selflessness, friendship, solidarity)	10.04
Social (selflessness, friendship, solidarity)	9.81	Health (health, healthy diet, physical culture)	9.81
Traditional (kindness, diligence, responsibility)	9.71	Traditional (kindness, diligence, responsibility)	9.40
Status (power, reputation, celebrity, money, long life)	8.57	Security (security, rest)	8.49
Sensual (joy and fun, comfort, physical pleasure)	8.45	Cognitive (knowledge, progress, truth, science)	8.03
Security (security, rest)	8.20	Spiritual and cultural (spiritual growth, wisdom, cultural life)	7.88
Cognitive (knowledge, progress, truth, science)	8.14	Sensual (joy and fun, comfort, physical pleasure)	7.47
Aesthetic (beauty, harmony, art, music)	7.77	Aesthetic (beauty, harmony, art, music)	7.09
Spiritual and cultural (spiritual growth, wisdom, cultural life)	7.76	Patriotic (patriotism, national pride)	5.69
Patriotic (patriotism, national pride)	5.90	Religious (faith, love, hope)	5.51
Religious (faith, love, hope)	5.78	Status (power, reputation, celebrity, money, long life)	5.14

Value categories, shown in *Table 1*, are based on Musek (2000). The results show that the preschool and elementary school teachers assigned the greatest significance to family values, followed by health, social and traditional values. In the middle of the scale, the preschool teachers place status values, followed by sensual, security and cognitive values, whereas the primary school teachers list security values, followed by cognitive, spiritual and cultural values, and aesthetic values. At the bottom of the value scale, the preschool teachers listed aesthetic, spiritual and cultural, patriotic, and religious values, whereas the primary school teachers listed aesthetic, patriotic, religious, and status values, which both preschool and elementary school teachers assigned the smallest significance. Looking at the assessment of the importance of spiritual, cultural and aesthetic values, one may determine that preschool teachers do not assign great significance to these values. Musek and Musek Lešnik (2003) also found that art and culture were listed in the last quarter of the value scale in the Slovenian population. In his research on the presence of values in educational plans, Šinkovec (2017) found that respect, knowledge, and responsibility

(moral) were the most frequently selected values in Slovenian elementary school educational plans, followed by status, patriotic (potency) and sensual (hedonistic) values. Cognitive, aesthetic, and cultural (fulfilment) values are selected the least. Furlan (2002), however, believes that we cannot talk about a uniform Slovenian cultural space in terms of values and that there are differences in interpreting the values of the youth, which are the result of the interaction of different factors, such as social, cultural and geographic environment, the economic situation of areas, etc.

Are the preschool and elementary school teachers themselves active in the field of arts and cultural education?

Table 2: The number (f) and structural percentages (f%) of opinions of preschool and elementary school teachers on the activities outside of work

Answer	Preschool teachers		Elementary teachers	
	f	f%	f	f%
Yes	214	45.1	289	56.7
No	261	54.9	221	43.3
Total	475	100.0	510	100.0

The results show that there was a greater number of elementary school teachers that were active in the fields of art and culture outside of work compared to preschool teachers (see *Table 2*). According to their own descriptions, both sets of teachers engaged in singing, dancing, creating art, theatre or playing an instrument outside of work.

By being active in the fields of art and culture outside of work, the preschool and elementary school teachers affirmed the conformity of their conduct with their values. By example, they promoted interest in such activities in the wider environment, as well as with children or students. Engaging in extracurricular activities in the artistic field contributes to the teachers' professional competence and their sensitivity to ensure the appropriate place and role of artistic subjects in a planned and implemented curriculum.

What is the opinion of preschool and elementary school teachers on the inclusion of the arts and cultural fields in the educational process?

Table 3: The number (f) and structural percentages (f%) of preschool and elementary school teachers' opinions on the arts and cultural fields, which should receive more attention

Fields	Preschool teachers				Fields	Elementary teachers			
	Yes		No			Yes		No	
	f	f%	f	f%		f	f%	f	f%
Performing arts	405	85.3	70	14.7	Reading culture	419	82.2	91	17.8
Cultural heritage	301	63.4	174	36.6	Performing arts	365	71.6	145	28.4
Musical arts	288	60.6	187	39.4	Cultural heritage	344	67.5	166	32.5
Fine arts	232	48.8	243	51.2	Musical arts	302	59.2	208	40.8
Reading culture	231	48.6	244	51.4	Fine arts	233	45.7	277	54.3
Intermedia art	99	20.8	376	79.2	Film and audio-visual culture	121	23.7	389	76.3
Film and audio-visual culture	66	13.9	409	86.1	Intermedia art	96	18.8	414	81.2

The majority of preschool teachers believed that kindergartens should give more attention to performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts, whereas other fields, such as fine arts, reading culture, intermedia art, and film and audio-visual culture did not need more attention.

The majority of elementary school teachers believed that more attention should be given to reading culture, performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts.

At a declarative level, the elementary school teachers were aware of the importance of reading culture, however, there remains an existing issue of their qualification for quality work with students. The professional knowledge and beliefs of elementary school teachers regarding reading culture also have a significant influence on the manner and quality of their work.

There are also some issues in the field of performing arts, since such content, despite being included in the preschool curricula and the curricula for Slovenian language, often remains neglected.

One can also be critical of the opinions of preschool and elementary teachers regarding cultural heritage, expressed in the study, since the kindergarten and Slovenian elementary school curricula analysis shows that its contents and objectives are adequately represented in the statutory (such as in environmental studies, social studies, Slovenian language, history) as well as in the elective curricula and extracurricular activities.

Musical art in kindergarten and school has various possibilities of operation, such as musical and cultural events, extracurricular activities, and clubs. A crucial factor in the quality realization of musical education in kindergarten and school is a competent preschool or elementary teacher, who knows the discipline, is reflective, and responds efficiently (also) to the extracurricular musical environment by establishing cooperation with cultural institutions and artists.

Compared to reading culture, performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts, which according to teachers require a higher share among the artistic fields, the fields of film, audio-visual and intermedia art were not assigned significant meaning. Despite students being highly interested in film, extracurricular activities relating to film are rarely implemented in schools.

What is the opinion of elementary school teachers regarding the attention that students give to arts and cultural fields in the elementary school and in their free time?

Table 4: Arts and cultural fields arranged by average range (\bar{R}) of students' attention to arts and cultural fields in elementary school

Fields	\bar{R}
Intermedia culture	4.75
Musical arts	4.45
Film and audio-visual culture	3.86
Fine arts	3.82
Reading culture	3.81
Performing arts	3.72
Cultural heritage	3.47

According to the elementary school teachers, the students in school gave the most attention to intermedia culture and musical arts. This was followed by film and audio-visual culture, fine arts, and reading culture. According to the teachers, performing arts and cultural heritage received the least attention from the students.

The level of attention students have for individual artistic fields in school depends on many factors: the planned and implemented curriculum, the syllabus or the type of elective subjects offered by individual schools, the launched projects, extracurricular activities and, of course, the teacher.

Table 5: The number (f) and structural percentages (f%) of opinions of elementary school teachers on the attention the students give to arts and cultural fields and popular culture activities in their free time

Field and activity	Yes		No	
	f	f%	f	f%
Popular and band music	247	80.1	68	19.9
Intermedia culture	207	60.5	135	39.5
Film and audio-visual culture	204	59.6	138	40.4
Musical arts	92	26.9	250	73.1
Trivial literature	71	20.8	271	79.2
Reading culture	34	9.9	308	90.1
Performing arts	32	9.4	310	90.6
Fine arts	16	4.7	326	95.3
Cultural heritage	3	0.9	339	99.1

The majority of teachers believed that students gave the most attention to popular and band music in their free time. This was followed by the attention given to intermedia culture, film and audio-visual culture, trivial literature, reading culture, performing arts, and fine arts. The teachers believed that students did not give attention to cultural heritage in their free time.

Today the youth, even more than the previous generation, follow the trend currently set by the media and entertainment industry. Therefore, during the general education process, students should form a critical relationship towards popular culture.

What are the opinions of preschool and elementary school teachers on the realization of arts and cultural education's objectives in the educational process?

Table 6: The number (n) and structural percentages (f%) of preschool and elementary teachers on the frequency of realization of arts and cultural education’s objectives in their work with children or students

Objectives		Preschool teachers		Elementary teachers	
		f	f%	f	f%
Developing imagination	Frequently	374	78.7	395	77.5
	Rarely	101	21.3	115	22.5
	Never	0	0	0	0
Shaping arts and cultural values	Frequently	345	72.6	252	49.4
	Rarely	130	27.4	258	50.6
	Never	0	0	0	0
Raising awareness in caring for the natural and cultural environment	Frequently	401	84.4	380	74.5
	Rarely	74	15.6	130	25.5
	Never	0	0	0	0
Developing aesthetic sensitivity	Frequently	353	74.3	396	77.6
	Rarely	122	25.7	114	22.4
	Never	0	0	0	0
Integrating the emotional, intellectual, physical, and creative capabilities of children and students	Frequently	398	83.8	389	76.3
	Rarely	70	14.7	121	23.7
	Never	7	1.5	0	0
Developing individual creative potential	Frequently	366	77.1	377	73.9
	Rarely	104	21.9	121	23.7
	Never	5	1.0	12	2.4
Developing free and critical thought	Frequently	332	69.9	468	91.8
	Rarely	143	30.1	41	8.0
	Never	0	0	1	0.2
Developing emotional intelligence	Frequently	360	75.8	366	71.8
	Rarely	115	24.2	144	28.2
	Never	0	0	0	0
Learning about their own culture	Frequently	230	48.4	242	47.5
	Rarely	243	51.2	257	50.4
	Never	2	0.4	11	2.1
Expressing their own culture	Frequently	110	23.2	203	39.8
	Rarely	355	74.7	222	43.5
	Never	10	2.1	85	16.7
Promoting tolerance towards different cultures	Frequently	154	32.4	240	47.1
	Rarely	311	65.5	259	50.8
	Never	10	2.1	11	2.1
Learning about other cultures	Frequently	173	36.4	187	36.7
	Rarely	281	59.2	301	59.0
	Never	21	4.4	22	4.3

The *Table 6* shows that most preschool and elementary school teachers believed they could frequently realise the following objectives in art and cultural education in their work: raising awareness in caring for the natural and cultural environment (84,4%), integrating the emotional, intellectual, physical and creative capabilities of children

(83.8%), developing creativity (78.7%), developing individual creative potential (77.1%), developing emotional intelligence (75.8%), developing aesthetic sensitivity (74.3%), developing arts and cultural values (72,6%), and developing free and critical thought (69.9%). The following objectives were rarely planned by more than half of preschool teachers: expressing their own culture (74.7%), promoting tolerance towards different cultures (65.5%), learning about other cultures (59.2%), and learning about their own culture (51.2%). However, it is worth mentioning that there were quite a few preschool teachers who never pursued these objectives: learning about other cultures (4.4%), expressing their own culture (2.1%), and promoting tolerance towards different cultures (2.1%).

The majority of teachers, however, frequently planned the following objectives: developing free and critical thought (91.8%), developing aesthetic sensitivity (77.6%), developing imagination (77.5%), integrating the emotional, intellectual, physical and creative capabilities of students (76.3%), raising awareness in caring for the natural and cultural environment (74.5%), developing individual creative potential (73.9%), and developing emotional intelligence (71.8%). More than half of the teachers only rarely pursued these objectives: learning about other cultures (59.0%), promoting tolerance towards different cultures (50.8%), shaping arts and cultural values (50.6%), and learning about their own culture (50.4%). Some teachers never pursued the following objectives: expressing their own culture (16.7%), learning about other cultures (4.3%), learning about their own culture (2.1%), and promoting tolerance towards different cultures (2.1%).

The results show that preschool and elementary school teachers frequently realise arts and cultural education objectives in the learning process. However, they are less successful in realising the objectives that impact the shaping of a relationship towards our own and others' cultural heritage. Culture and culturality as a value domain mean respect, conscious preservation, and development of acquired heritage. They involve respect for cultural, spiritual, material, artistic, and scientific achievements. That is why the systematic pursuit of the objectives of cultural education must start in preschool. How will the preschool and elementary school teachers who neglect the objectives of developing cultural identity respond to the needs of modern society with its ever-growing cultural diversity? The school environment must be open to different cultures and develop understanding and tolerance for other and different cultures through a multicultural and intercultural

approach. Only in a tolerant and diverse cultural environment will young people be able to develop their own national identity and acknowledge to others what they also expect for themselves.

In which areas of the kindergarten curriculum can preschool teachers pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education?

Table 7: The number (f) and structural percentages (f%) of preschool teachers' opinions on the possibilities of realising the objectives of arts and cultural education in different areas of activity

Areas of activity	Yes		No	
	f	f%	f	f%
Language	466	98.1	9	1.9
Art – Fine arts activities	456	96.0	19	4.0
Art – Music activities	452	95.2	23	4.8
Art – Dance activities	448	94.3	27	5.7
Art – Drama activities	445	93.7	30	6.3
Art – AV-media activities	411	86.5	64	13.5
Society	388	81.7	87	18.3
Movement	142	29.9	333	70.1
Nature	163	34.3	312	65.7
Mathematics	174	36.6	301	63.4

The majority of preschool teachers believed that they can pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education in the following fields of curriculum activity: language, art (fine arts, music and dance activities, drama and AV-media activities) and society. With movement, nature and mathematics, the majority of preschool teachers believed that the objectives of arts and cultural education could not be pursued.

In which subjects in the elementary school curriculum can teachers pursue the objective of arts and cultural education?

The majority of teachers believed they can pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education in the following subjects in the elementary school curriculum: music, art, Slovenian language, history, social studies, civic and ethics education, foreign languages, environmental studies, geography, home economics. In subjects, such as sports, engineering and technology, natural studies, biology, mathematics, chemistry, and physics, the majority of teachers believed they cannot pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education.

Table 8: The number (f) and structural percentages (f%) of teachers' opinions on the possibilities of realising the objectives of arts and cultural education in different subjects

Subjects	Yes		No	
	f	f%	f	f%
Musical arts	502	98.4	8	1.6
Fine arts	498	97.6	12	2.4
Slovenian language	488	95.7	22	4.3
History	433	84.9	77	15.1
Society	418	82.0	92	18.0
Civic culture and ethics	411	80.6	99	19.4
Foreign languages	401	78.6	109	21.4
Environmental studies	388	76.1	122	23.9
Geography	367	72.0	143	28.0
Home economics	257	50.4	253	49.6
Sports	222	43.5	288	56.5
Engineering and technology	146	28.6	364	71.4
Natural and technical studies	133	26.1	377	73.9
Natural studies	109	21.4	401	78.6
Biology	55	10.8	455	89.2
Mathematics	48	9.4	462	90.6
Chemistry	21	4.1	489	95.9
Physics	16	3.1	494	96.9

For the realization of the objectives of arts and cultural education both preschool and elementary school teachers especially highlighted the fields of art, social studies and language. If we understand the integration of art as “connections between two or more of the traditional disciplines or subjects” (Russel & Zembylas, 2007, p. 289) and as “a conceptual term to refer to activities that strive to infuse the arts across school disciplines” (ibid.), then we may assume the realization of objectives of arts, such as the realization of critical thought, developing imagination, caring for the natural and cultural environment, developing individual creative potential etc. in different (also non-artistic) subject areas. Respecting beauty, respecting education and other achievements of the human civilization may be included in nearly any field of activity and in every school subject. In this regard, it is important to understand integration not only through the transfer of objectives and contents of learning, but also as the “cultivation of habits of mind” (Bresler, 2006). Such an approach naturally demands especially suitable professional qualification from teachers, because “teachers feel uncomfortable when asked to teach in an integrated manner, unless they have had opportunities to develop deeper knowledge in the subjects they are trying to integrate” (Russel & Zembylas, 2007, p. 296).

7 Conclusion

Finally, let us highlight once more the basic empirical knowledge on the arts and cultural status of preschool and elementary teachers, their assessment of the inclusion of arts and cultural fields into the planned and implemented curriculum, and their realization of objectives of arts and cultural education in the educational process:

- The preschool and elementary school teachers did not assign significant meaning to spiritual and cultural (spiritual growth, wisdom, cultural life) and aesthetic values (beauty, harmony, art), even though half of the teachers are engaged in the arts and cultural education activities outside of work.
- The preschool teachers assessed that more attention should be given to performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts in kindergarten, whereas the primary school teachers believed more attention should be given to reading culture, performing arts, cultural heritage and musical arts.
- According to the teachers, students in school gave the most attention to intermedia culture and musical arts, followed by film and audio-visual culture, fine arts, and reading culture. Performing arts and cultural heritage received the least attention from students. In their free time, the students paid most attention to popular and band music, intermedia culture, film and audio-visual culture. Most teachers believed that their students did not give attention to musical arts, reading culture, performing arts, fine arts or cultural heritage in their free time.
- Both the preschool and elementary school teachers believed they frequently realised the majority of arts and cultural education's objectives in their work, and gave less attention to the objectives, such as learning and expressing their own culture and cultures of other nations, and promotion of tolerance towards different cultures.
- The arts and cultural education's objectives may be pursued in artistic and social science fields, and to a lesser extent in sports, mathematics and natural sciences.

Spiritual, cultural and aesthetic values are insufficiently included in the whole social system in the Slovenian space. Both preschool and elementary school teachers do also not assign significant meaning to these values. Therefore, more effort should be made in the short and long-term strategies of functional education, which will form a basis for these values to hold a more important position in society.

The objectives and content of different arts and cultural fields should be equally included in the planned and implemented curriculum, especially those underrepresented in the curriculum. Thus, we could increase interest in cultural heritage, performing arts, musical arts, and form a relationship with artistic content in children and students.

The field of intermedia culture is most attractive to students. Society directs the attention of all artistic practices using information technology, the internet, cybernetics, virtual reality and multimedia. The teachers also believe that students give the most attention to popular and band music. Why? Because postmodern culture promotes the mass culture of consumer society, where trivial culture plays a great role.

The results remind us that Slovenian preschool and elementary school teachers give too little attention to understanding cultural diversity and the meaning of cultural heritage when planning and implementing the learning process. Since preschool and elementary school teachers do not include the aforementioned objectives in the educational process, children also do not get the opportunity to develop a relationship with their own and other cultures. Even though preschool and elementary school teachers believe they can pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education in most fields, they do highlight movement, natural science and mathematics as the fields, where such objectives are impossible to follow. Primary school teachers also have the same belief. The question also arises of how the artistic subjects, as individual or in connection with other subject areas, can be used to pursue the objectives of arts and cultural education. The essence of modern arts and cultural education is its interdisciplinarity – it should be integrated into different fields of activity and learning subjects. The integration of art into the education system demands the systematic analysis of cross-curricular integration on the level of objectives and content (Kalin & Kind, 2006; Larson & Walker, 2006; Sicerl Kafol, 2007). To be successful in practice, not only in theory, in shaping specific didactic approaches to implementing arts and cultural education's objectives and contents into other subject areas plenty of work will still have to be done.

The research on cultural education in Slovenia (Arts and cultural education and the non-governmental sector in culture, 2017) emphasises that kindergartens and schools often only passively receive cultural content, that there is a unilateral

relationship between educational and cultural institutions, which is not based on partnership, and that more attention should be given to quality cooperation among institutions and the further education of educational cultural staff, because the results show that the integration of cultural content in kindergartens and schools depends on the initiative and resourcefulness of preschool and elementary school teachers. Both preschool and elementary school teachers are aware that they should take more action to raise the quality of arts and cultural education in kindergartens and schools. It is necessary for art to achieve an equal and independent status in education compared to other subject areas. Those who strive for this perspective see arts education as a way to encourage children, students and youths to become co-creators of the educational process and not merely remain passive recipients of knowledge passed on by others.

In Slovenia, many educational and cultural institutions pursue the strategy of more efficient art and cultural education through various programs and projects. It is worth noting the operation of the Jože Trontelj Institute for Ethics and Values, which, since 2012, has actively contributed to the culture of knowledge, values and ethics from preschool to university in the field of education. The objective of this operation is to offer preschool and elementary school teachers, and also parents, support for existing efforts to strengthen their educational role in imparting universal values to children and youth (Working material for the culture module, 2014). In this context, the Developing communication competences through cultural-art education (SKUM) (2017-2022) project should also be emphasized, which is co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia and the European Social Fund, which supported the concept of education with art from 2018 to 2022. In cooperation with educational and cultural institutions and artists (the letter of cooperation was signed by more than 100 artists, self-employed professionals in culture, and cultural institutions), efforts are being directed to the development of unique creative approaches to realising the objectives of curricula and to open the way to authentic artistic experience to all participants. The central objective is to raise the communicative competence of children and youth. Therefore, didactic approaches and new forms of integrating educational work with artistic activities within various artistic fields are updated and developed. It is also worth noting the successful national inter-ministerial project, titled Cultural Bazaar (2021), which offered good practice examples and contributed to an innovative learning environment and the comprehensive development of

children and youth through cooperation and the integration of different fields and quality arts and cultural education in formal and informal education.

All listed quality cultural programs in education and educational programs in culture contribute to the implementation of objectives and content of arts and cultural education in the educational system. In the future, we should ensure that all stakeholders involved in the planning, implementation and valuation of the learning process recognize arts and cultural education as one of the key values of our society.

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