

Progress in Fine Arts Creativity of 13 Year Olds through Contemporary Fine Art

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Abstract *Through the appropriate interpretation of contemporary works of art, pupils can develop their own critical thinking, adopt an attitude towards socially critical content and develop their artistic creativity.*

The basic aim of the dissertation, which we describe in the abstract and throughout the article, is the progress in pupils' creativity in relation to the implementation of contemporary fine art in the art classroom.

Primarily, we were interested in art teachers' attitudes towards contemporary art practises and how they are monitored. We also created a 15-week work programme and conducted a pedagogical experiment. Before and after the experiment, we administered an art test LV2 to check the progress in artistic creativity of eighth graders and compared the results in the control and experimental groups.

The results show that pupils make progress in artistic creativity when they use contemporary artworks in the classroom, and at the same time develop the creative thinking and reflect on artistic solutions.

Keywords. Primary school, art teaching, art didactics, creativity, contemporary fine arts

1 Introduction

By learning about and encountering contemporary fine art, pupils develop and shape both concrete and abstract thinking [18]. We agree [8] that contemporary art encourages certain ways of experiencing, exploring and narrating the world. Consequently, artworks based on examples of contemporary fine art enable pupils to understand the environment and the times in which we live in [1], [3], [4]. The inclusion of contemporary fine art in art lessons as a stimulus for individuals to adopt a critical attitude towards the content discussed and as a stimulus for artistic and ideological creativity [5] should not forget the development of pupils' psychomotor skills and creativity [6]. In fact, artistic and creative skills have a direct impact on the development of an individual's overall creative potential [6], [7], [8], which can be influenced by teachers with an appropriate approach and properly designed artistic tasks [9], [10]. Artistic creativity is an area that develops with the support of a long-term pedagogical process, a stimulating environment and a creative teacher who teaches through active artistic activity [6], [11]. It is the creative product that helps us monitor the development of pupils' artistic abilities [12], [6], [7]. To measure artistic ability, researchers use a variety of proven tests that have high reliability, objectivity, sensitivity, validity, standardisation, ease of use and cost-effectiveness [6]. Various artistic tests can be used to assess artistic-creative development, artistic-appropriate skill development, fine form development and visual-thematic development [6]. Considering these facts, the contents of contemporary fine arts can be an encouraging learning environment for lifelong learning as well as for the development of artistic skills, which are usually measured through artistic practise. Thus, by interweaving the contents of the respective curriculum [13] and incorporating contemporary fine arts into the arts curriculum, we can promote progress in the overall artistic-creative development of individuals [6], strengthen lifelong learning [14] and develop some key skills for the future of young people [15].

2 Objectives and Course of the Research

2.1 Objectives

The basic objective of the study is to *experimentally measure the artistic-creative and visual-creative development of eighth graders at the time of the implementation of the programme to incorporate contemporary artistic practises in the classroom*. In the research, we also pursued the objectives that we gradually achieved according to the planned course of the research:

- a) Determine art teachers' attitudes towards modern art practises and the extent to which they incorporate modern art into their teaching. The aim of this part of the research is to raise awareness of the importance and pedagogical value of contemporary art practises for inclusion in the primary fine arts curriculum.
- b) Design a suitable method to implement contemporary art practises in third educational period art lessons, based on a set of appropriate didactic choices (*Program implementacije sodobnih umetniških praks v osnovni šoli* - hereafter referred to as the PISUPOŠ Programme).
- c) Carry out a pedagogical experiment and evaluate it qualitatively.
- d) Analyse the progress of artistic abilities of eighth graders using the LV2 test.

With these goals, we pursue the results that are crucial for achieving the basic objective.

2.2 Course of the Research

The research was conducted in phases, which were divided into three parts according to the linear relationship. The following table shows the progress of the research.

Table 1. Exploration progress display

	Part 1	Part 2				Part 3	
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6	Phase 7	Phase 8
Overview of the state of the literature	Arts teachers' opinions analysis	Pedagogical experiment				Analysis of pupils' progress	
		Creating an effective pedagogical programme	Questionnaire for pupils	PISUPOŠ implementation	Questionnaire for pupils	LV2 test analysis	Conclusion on the success of the pedagogical experiment
			Test LV2 - Initial		Test LV2 - final		
Interview with teachers							

2.2.1 Arts teachers' opinions analysis

First, we analysed the opinions and attitudes of teachers teaching fine arts in Slovenian primary schools with regard to knowledge of contemporary art practises, the introduction of contemporary fine arts content into the classroom, and pupils' perceived attitudes towards the content in question. The results of the analysis were the starting point for planning the continuation of the research. Good planning of the further phases of the research was important for an efficient course and for achieving the underlying goal. At the same time, the results of the first research series provide important information about the state of art teaching practise and the engagement of art teachers from the perspective of contemporary art practise.

2.2.2 Pedagogical experiment

Based on a literature review of previous findings, an analysis of teachers' opinions and tendencies on contemporary art didactics and a set of didactic decisions, we have designed a work programme for the implementation of contemporary art practises in art teaching in the third phase of education (PISUPOŠ). The set of didactic decisions includes didactic-organisational features, content features, features of didactic communication and activities, and the position and relationships between pupils and teachers. The PISUPOŠ programme contains suggestions for selecting a contemporary work of art, for linking a work of art or an artist with methods and forms of work, and for developing appropriate methods and didactic steps.

The programme was created in accordance with the art curriculum [13] and implemented in a 15-week pedagogical experiment with 13-year-old pupils to promote and verify its effectiveness in developing pupils' artistic skills (artistic-creative and artistic-formal development). The content of contemporary fine arts was linked to the interpretation of artistic concepts from the curriculum as well as to the explanation of the content reasons for their creation. As an effective tool for a

comprehensive understanding of the respective topic, we linked some artistic tasks across subjects. At the same time, we recorded the results according to the principles of formative monitoring and thus monitored the pupils' progress. Cross-curricular integration and formative monitoring are the guidelines of modern general didactics. The purpose of the pedagogical experiment in which we tested the effectiveness of the designed programme is to confirm the meaningfulness of including contemporary fine arts through specially designed artistic tasks. The purpose of the pedagogical experiment itself, which is the second area of research, is to encourage pupils to think critically and to progress artistically and creatively.

2.2.3 Analysis of the progress of pupils' artistic abilities

The analysis of the progress of *13-year-old pupils' artistic skills in the third research set* aims to determine whether the inclusion of contemporary fine arts content has a positive impact on pupils' artistic and creative development. The development and progress of pupils' artistic skills was measured using the revised LV2 test, also known as the four-character test [6]. The artistic tasks of the LV2 test are designed to provide information about the child's general artistic development while allowing partial monitoring of various factors of artistic development (redefinition, originality, elaboration, sensitivity to artistic problems, flexibility, fluency, visual-thematic development, design development, artistic taste, design experience and art technique, individuality, general artistic level). The test was administered before and after the educational experiment in both the experimental group and the control group. By comparing the groups and contrasting the results in the initial and final phases, the aim was to investigate the progress of the pupil's artistic skills, with the experimental group making greater progress.

3 Discussion and Conclusion

The evaluation of the questionnaire for the teachers showed that the teachers, regardless of age and professional experience, are equally committed to current developments in the field of fine arts and contemporary fine arts. The teachers believe that visiting exhibitions is necessary for individual's professional development. At the same time, visiting exhibitions stimulates and motivates their work in the classroom and their own creative practise, on the basis of which they often design content for implementation in the pedagogical process. Most teachers show a positive attitude towards contemporary fine arts. By accepting the content of contemporary artworks, even those with negative messages, they give contemporary art the opportunity to engage with them and adopt a more objective attitude towards it. The teacher's critical attitude towards certain content is crucial in deciding what content to present to the pupils. The analysis of the results from the point of view of the inclusion of contemporary fine arts in art lessons has shown that teachers recognise the value of contemporary fine arts in terms of both content and approach; however they want specific guidelines and content support in relation to contemporary fine arts within the curriculum. Besides the time component and the spatial possibilities, this is exactly the reason why teachers do not bring the content of contemporary art practises into the classroom to a greater extent. A qualitative analysis of the pedagogical experiment, which was the most extensive part of the research over time, showed that the pupils accepted the artwork well and gradually developed a positive attitude towards contemporary fine art, which they did not know

at the beginning of the experiment. They internalised the notion of an idea/concept and felt that they were creating what they wanted. At the beginning of the experiment, pupils who were not very talented in fine arts stood out with their ideas because they did not struggle with the visual image, they worked in a more relaxed way and followed the idea of the artwork. Some pupils who were considered talented had more problems because they were confronted with something new and were not very confident, which was a big obstacle for them at the beginning. Some pupils with special needs also responded well to the tasks and found good artistic solutions with a lot of imagination. Contemporary art can thus be a challenge and a new way for pupils to have find freedom in representing artistic motifs in order to stimulate creative thinking and ingenuity more intensively and quickly. The pupils realised that there were no limits to their ideas. They began to understand that something that is supposed to be "beautiful" does not necessarily have artistic quality. The analysis of the LV2 test conducted before and after the educational experiment showed the progress of the pupils in the experimental group, both in the total score of the artistic-creative level factors and in the score of the visual-creative development factors. Thus, the pupils in the experimental group who worked according to the 15-week PISUPOŠ programme achieved better results than the control group who worked according to the established teacher programme. We conclude that the implementation of contemporary artistic practises in the classroom can successfully influence pupils' overall artistic creativity as well as the development of imagination and the promotion of critical thinking, which is reflected in the expression of attitudes towards certain content. The research findings point to positive guidelines for the inclusion of contemporary fine arts in the primary school curriculum.

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