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Original scientific paper

UDC: 37.036

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POSITIVE RELATION TO POSTMODERN VISUAL CULTURE IN ADOLESCENTS

Abstract: Pedagogical theories that concern post-modern art (Blohm, 1995; Efland, 1992; Boughton, 1999; Mason, 1999; Hardy, 2006 and others) have a strong impact on the practice of art education. Empirical research dealing with art pedagogy should follow the changes that occur in modern and post-modern art and contemporary pedagogical theories of art. Therefore, there is an increasing need for conceptual, methodological and thorough topical research.

The article introduces empirical research that was done with the purpose of finding out the influence contemporary art has on changing student's attitudes towards contemporary art culture, i.e. art creativity. The findings point out to possibilities of changing this attitude. A sample of 210 students, aged 14, was used for the research. A combination of qualitative (action research) and quantitative (one-factor experiment with the departments as comparison groups) methodologies was used. We examined the effectiveness of recent innovations from the viewpoint of the students' opinions on art creativity, artwork in school and on modern art. The obtained results were compared with the level of their artistic abilities. Extremely positive changes were discovered in students and their attitude towards art creativity. The model is suitable for 14- to 18-year-old students.

Key words: art education, postmodernism, adolescents.

Introduction

The Preamble of the InSEA (International Society for Education through Art) Constitution, which was ratified at the First General Assembly held by UNESCO in Paris in July 1954, states: "Education through art is a natural means of learning at all periods of the development of the individual, fostering values and disciplines essential for full intellectual, emotional and social development of human beings in a community" (Steers, 2001:220). These guidelines, which specially focused on emphasising the development of visual literacy and learning and mastering art language, grammar and syntax, prevailed in art education in Slovenia (and Yugoslavia) during the last decades of the twentieth century (Berce Golob, 1993).

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Art pedagogy at the beginning of the third millennium is different. Instead of the visual language grammar and the development of visual literacy, social and cultural content is stressed. Rachel Mason stated: “art teaching can be a pillar which supports understanding and tolerance between people from different regions and/or cultural backgrounds” (Mason, 1999:5). Multi and inter-cultural art education is now coming to the foreground. Multiculturalism, at a conceptual level changes the awareness of our multi and inter-cultural coexistence (Boughton, 1999). These changes occur in different environments. Human rights, tolerance and intercultural coexistence are the fundamental principles of education in Slovenia (Krek, Metljak, 2011). The situation is similar on the other side of the globe. In 1994, educational reforms in South Africa have attempted to “provide a system of education that builds democracy, human dignity, equality and social justice” (Department of Education, quoted by: Fraser, Killen, 2005:26). Jansen stresses that “The insertion of human rights education into the curriculum, the promotion of citizenship education and the momentous shifts towards inclusive education with respect to disabilities and religion education are, without question, among the most liberating policy shifts in any democracy” (Jansen, 2004:126). We can say that cultural coexistence and multiculturalism are some of the most important present-day topics of contemporary art education (Zupancic, 2010).

In light of all this, contemporary art, which strongly stresses the importance of the multicultural aspect, is an ideal tool to overcome boundaries between the accumulated social, cultural, political, racial and gender differences. These boundaries are different (and differently strong) in different local environments. In Slovenia, for example, social stratification and national and cultural differences among the nations of former Yugoslavia are increasing. After the violent disintegration and wars, people need to re-learn to live together. The situation in South Africa is different, yet similar. These are extremely complex gaps between the black and the white population. Jansen (2004) described them very picturesquely:

“ /.../ it has to do with who gets called "Mr" and who, irrespective of age, is simply called "Klaas;" it has to do with the content of what appears on the emblem of the institution; it has to do with the content of school songs, the metaphors for talking about others; and it has to do with the ways in which schools or universities talk about the future. (Jansen, 2004:122)

Previous research

Some authors stress the general importance of contact with contemporary art. Moore Tapia and Hazelroth Barratt (2003) present a project that is based on dealing with typical postmodern artists (Lewis Baltz and Eric Frisch). They studied qualitatively processed students' responses to artwork establishing that these have developed a positive attitude towards art. Joo, Keehn II, Ham-Roberts (2011) stress the importance of contemporary art in developing multicultural education. Burgess (2010) presents a project, Cardinal Minds, where contemporary art helps establish social contacts. Traquilly (1999) presents a project whose aim was to improve the attitudes of elementary students toward the artistic experience and the end products of artistic creativity. Positive changes were established. Benton (2000) tried to improve student (13 – 14 year-old) attitudes and achievements in art. She established that dealing with art and active implementation of

visual art education lead to a more positive relation of students to art and art education. Dear (2001) presented a collaboration between primary school classrooms and the Tate Modern Gallery. She establishes positive changes by working with contemporary material in the classroom. Fulkova, Straker and Jaros (2004) studied responses to contemporary visual culture (artists Bettina Rheims from France and Serge Bramly from Tunisia) in 15-year-olds. They unveil a positive attitude towards contemporary art. Illeris (2005) presented a Witness project. She worked with 12 – 13-year-olds of culturally diverse origin many of them with foreign backgrounds such as Turkish and Moroccan. She establishes that “after the visit they reported that participating in the experience of Witness had given them a much more positive attitude towards art” (Illeris, 2005:236).

Research Subject and Problem

A planned renovation of content and of didactic principles of educational work in art education is a necessity in modern world. Cole stresses that “art can seem both mystifying and irrelevant to many young people who see little or no relation between it and the things that are important to them (Cole, 1996:146). Empirically supported findings offer a foundation for systematic changes at the curricular and performing levels. The following are needed: (1) the context of art education has to become connected to the actual real-life problems of young people (Blohm, 1995; Zupančič, 2005) and (2) to enable youths to make a genuine contact with actual visual works of art (Dawtrety *et al.* 1996; Grünewald, 1996). Contemporary art often appears incomprehensible, challenging and different. The youth are unable to understand its messages, as no one taught them how to do so. The incomprehension and confusion lead to a lack of interest. The term contemporary visual art denotes art practices after 1980, in the era of the so-called postmodernism. These do not differ from the established means of art expression in schools only in terms of means of expression, but also in terms of the implemented ideas. Contemporary art practices are not oriented toward researching their own medium; they now concern themselves with exposing social, political, humanistic and psychological problems. At the same time contemporary art practices do not use classical forms of paintings, drawings or sculpture, but something beyond that, something that extends beyond classical directions. They are marked by such terms as: *Installation Art*, *Performance Art*, *Video Art*, *Net Art* and so on.

By using innovations conceptualised on the basis of empirically derived data, it has become necessary to renovate the context and work methods of art education in elementary, secondary and high school. Children in the period of adolescence have more interest for contemporary art than for classical artwork from past eras, which other researchers have also determined (Eucker, 1996). Youth in the period of adolescence find more subjects that feel like their own in contemporary art. Contemporary artists deal with problems that also interest youth, for example violence, equal rights, ecology and other similar topics (Jakobi, 1996). Therefore the starting point of our research relies on the opinion that the contents of art education should be thoroughly reconsidered, both culturally and pedagogically (Allen, 1996).

Previously mentioned issue of the relation to visual art, one of the aspects of art culture today, is a part of the subject, i.e. the field the present research takes place, deriving the

research problem focused on the following question: what is the influence of contemporary art to changing of the attitude students have towards art creativity within art education as a school subject, if it is grounded on contemporary art contents (use of everyday objects, using the principles *Ready-made* and *juxtaposition*, *Site specific sculpture*, *Installation art*, *Performance art*, *Conceptual art* and *Word art*?)

Research aim refers to the establishment of the contribution of innovative method based on the application of the above mentioned contents and working methods according to new contents and materials to the relation, i.e. the attitude students have towards art creativity.

General hypothesis (Hg) refers to the assumption that the work with students in the experimental group (EG) will cause positive changes in regard to their relation to art creativity.

Method

We prepared an innovative method for five subjects based on contemporary postmodern art. The subjects chosen all differed from the established work methods in the classroom.

The subjects were: (1) Use of everyday objects, using the principles *Ready-made* and *juxtaposition*. The artists included Marcel Duchamp, Marcel Broodthaers, Joan Brossa, Takato Saito, Nam June Paik and others. (2) *Site specific sculpture*, including artists like Richard Serra, Christo and Jeanne Claude, and others. (3) *Installation art* and the art of Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Chris Burden, Antony Gormley, Michelangelo Pistoletto. (4) *Performance art* and the art of Joseph Beuys. (5) *Conceptual art* and *Word art* with artists like Joseph Kosuth, Milan Knizak, Hans Haacke, Peter Friedl, Keith Haring and the group Fluxus.

For each theme, students were asked to observe art works, familiarise themselves with the main expressive principles and create a work of art by themselves in a chosen manner. 180 minutes were allotted for each activity (two times 90 minutes – the duration of art activity classes in Slovenian schools).

A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was used. We are convinced that the qualitative and quantitative research do not conflict with one another, as they apply to educational science. However, during the same research, we were able to combine them and supplement them interchangeably. Already by the 1990s, researchers were beginning to think in the same direction when they used a combination of both procedures to explain complex research results in the field of art education (Mollenhauer 1996, Stokrocki 1997).

The innovation we devised was carried out in the form of action research. We used the rotation method, where all five classes of the experimental group got to work on every subject. We implemented three action steps with revised plans. We examined the qualitative changes according to the subject's novelty with a suitable quantitative methodology.

In the quantitative analyses we used the experimental method of single factor experimentation with classes as comparison groups. The experimental factor had two modalities: art education assignments based on traditional content and art education assignments based on contemporary content. We statistically examined the effectiveness of the innovations by using the method of covariance with two variables. This was done to insure the inner validity of the experiment. We examined the quantitative effectiveness of the innovation from two aspects: (1) students' relation towards visual creativity and (2) students' artistic abilities. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology is shown in Picture 1.

Figure 1: A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology in current research.



Participants

We used a simple, random sample from a hypothetical population. The sample consisted of students in the last class of primary school, age 14. The experimental group consisted of 105 students and the control group consisted of 105 students. In the research we used 210 students all together (female = 52,4%; male = 47,6%).

Measures

We collected data in the initial and final phases of the research. The data on artistic abilities were obtained with a verified test for artistic abilities used in previous studies (Karlavaris, Barat, Kamenov, 1988; Duh 2004, Herzog, Duh, 2011). The studies were conducted under similar conditions (school system, students' age, similar art programmes, etc.). This test comprises six tasks that monitor different development

levels of visual creativity factors. The first task monitored the flexibility level, i.e. different approaches to solving the art problem. The second task monitored the level of artistic fluency, i.e. the wealth of ideas and solutions. The third task monitored the level of artistic originality. The fourth task monitored the level of artistic redefinition, where a known image had to be transferred into a new and unusual image. The fifth task required active drawing and was used to monitor sensitivity to art problems. The level of artistic elaboration was monitored with the final task, where students had to draw three different sketches using the same elements.

The information on the student's relation to art we obtained with a Likert's-type five-grade scale, made specifically for use in the research.

The students had 30 statements to judge. There were five possible levels of agreement: I agree, I partially agree, I do not have an opinion, I partially disagree, I disagree. The statements related to their relation to art and the relation to art as a school subject. Some of the statements provided: art education is interesting; art education is pointless; art education is an unnecessary school subject; I do not understand art; contemporary art deals with problems that I am interested in; It is worth trying to learn how to understand contemporary art; art deals with important issues.

A questionnaire poll was used with a sample of 60 students. By use of factorization we obtained 13 factors based on 40 questions. We excluded ten questions based on their discriminative value (r_{pb}). The final form of the instrument consisted of 30 questions with the possibility of five-grade answers with the following characteristics:

- Validity: Factorization procedure with 30 variables explained 46.6% of the total variance with the first factor (required more than 20%).
- Reliability: All the factors together explained 63.7% of the total variance, which, according to the law $r_{tt} = \sqrt{h^2}$, means that the instrument is reliable at the level $r_{tt} = 0,798$. We also determined the reliability by use of the Cronbach's coefficient, which amounted to $\alpha = 0,958$ ($\alpha \geq 0,80$).

Procedure

To quantitatively examine the effects of the experiment we used the following methods:

- Descriptive statistics method: frequencies distribution; middle values (Mean); variance's measures (Standard deviation).
- Inferential statistics methods: χ^2 - test for hypothesis independence; t-test for independent samples; single factor ANCOVA analysis; discriminate analysis.
- To confirm the measuring characteristics of the instrument we used factor analysis (% of the explained variance with the first factor as an indicator of the validity; % of explained common variance with common factors, indicators of validity) and Cronbach's coefficient reliability.

Results

Analysis of the effects using the comparison groups.

Using the method of covariance (ACNOVA), we mathematically equalised the groups according to the students' initial standpoint towards art creativity and their initial artistic abilities. We also examined the effects of the experiment as they relate to aspects of the following indicators: the students' relation towards the subject of art education, their relation to contemporary visual art, their relation to visual expression and their level of artistic abilities.

Table 1: Results of the general F – test, the Mean differences and the F – test for homogeneity variance of the results from measuring the final state of factors connected with the students of the EG and CG.

Factors	Group	Mean	Standard deviation	Homogeneity of variances		Mean	
		X	S	F	P	t	P
Relation to AE	CG	25.247	3.257	2.529	0.113	331.989	0.000
	EG	35.400	3.149				
Relation To VA	CG	73.191	15.950	1.208	0.273	18.005	0.000
	EG	90.067	12.479				
Relation together	CG	98.305	17.450	0.001	0.971	74.129	0.000
	EG	125.467	14.897				
Artistic abilities	CG	13.629	4.010	0.330	0.566	0.978	0.324
	EG	13.667	3.702				

Table 1 shows that the null hypothesis on homogeneity of variance ($H_0: \alpha_1^2 - \alpha_2^2 = 0$) is viable. The results of the general F – test show a statistically significant difference between the CG and EG from the students' relation to art education - AE ($F = 331,989$; $P = 0,000$), and their relation to visual art – VA ($F = 18,005$; $P = 0,000$). There is no statistically significant difference in artistic abilities ($F = 0,978$; $P = 0,324$). It can be seen from the Mean values that by the end of the experiment, the students in the experimental group (EG) had a more positive relation to the subject Art Education, toward visual art and also toward artistic creativity than the students in the control group (CG).

From the aspect of artistic abilities, the difference between the EG and CG is not statistically significant. The research did not affect the artistic abilities measured with the used test. This is good, because the purpose of the research was not the development of artistic abilities, but changing the students' relation to art. In the EG we devoted less time to classical art practice (drawing, painting), therefore we can affirm that we did not have a negative effect on the development of students' artistic abilities. The innovation had no negative consequences.

Regardless of the CG, there are positive individual changes present in the EG, which were proved with the results of a comparison of the EG students' relation to art before and after the experiment (table 2).

Table 2: The results of t-test for the Mean differences of the initial and final state of factors connected with the EG students.

Factors		Mean	Mean	differences
		\bar{X}	t	P
Relation to AE	initial	32.952	6.351	0.000
	final	35.400		
Relation To VA	initial	83.495	7.353	0.000
	final	90.067		
Relation together	initial	116.542	7.975	0.000
	final	125.467		
Artistic abilities	initial	9.600	13.111	0.000
	final	13.667		

It is evident that the EG students improved from the aspect of their relation to art and also from the aspect of their abilities. All the differences are statistically significant. The proof of the successfulness of the experiment, described above, is more significant than the other proofs connected with the comparison between the EG and the CG. This is because it is without error, which is dependent on the comparison of the groups (effect of unpredicted factors). We used discriminant analysis to determine the general difference between the EG and CG, a discriminant function (linear combination) that maximally separates our comparison groups, based on which the error of placing the units (students) into separate group will be smaller.

Table 3: General data of the results of discriminant analysis

Function	λ	% of the explained variance	Canonical correlation coefficient R_c	Wilks' Lambda λ	Bartlett's test		
					χ^2	g	P
1	2.643	100.0	0.852	0.274	266.993	3	0.000

As the values of the Wilks-Bartlett's test show (table 3), the difference between the comparison groups is statistically significant in all three indicators. This is present in one discriminant function ($\lambda = 0.274$, $P = 0,000$). Its structure is shown in table 4.

Table 4: The structure of the discriminant function, expressed with coefficients of the correlation of the indicator for the effectiveness of the experiment with the discriminant function.

Indicator	Function
Relation to AE	0.979
Relation to VA	0.364
Artistic abilities	0.003

The coefficients of the correlation (table) show that the students' relation towards art education is the indicator that makes the biggest difference between the comparison groups ($r = 0,979$). Following that is their relation to contemporary visual art ($r = 0,364$). Artistic abilities show the weakest documentary strength ($r = 0,003$). Based on this, we

defined the general differences or the discriminant function that maximally separates the EG from CG. This is the students' relation to visual creativity with an emphasis on educational work in school. The solution obtained is in accordance with the innovation; we had an influence on changing the students' relation to art, which was also our goal. Direction of determining the general difference can be seen in table 5.

Table 5: Centroids of the groups

Group	Function
CG	-1.618
EG	1.618

The signs of centroids of the groups show that the students of the EG, contrary to the CG, expressed a positive relation to visual creativity at the end of the experiment, especially in the frame of art education in school. With the results of the discriminant analysis we predicted a general hypothesis (Hg), which was: with the students of the experimental group (EG), we predicted positive changes in the field of their relation to visual creativity.

Discussion

One of the characteristics of our research was the simultaneous use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In the scientific research of art pedagogy, we encounter both quantitative and qualitative paradigms of research that have their own ontological, epistemological and methodological characteristics (Guba, Lincoln, 1994). The quantitative analysis of the research was based on a comparison between the experimental group and the control group (the most established approach to traditional empirically analytical research) and with the comparison of the experimental group before and after the experiment, which is the most relevant approach for action research. The content part, innovation of implementing contemporary art, was designed qualitatively. Problematics of the methodology selection is important for expressive, hard to measure fields, especially in art education. Many authors (Elliot, 1991; Eisner, 1992) suggest that a qualitative methodology is more suitable for the field of visual art. O'Farrell and Meban have also found out that: "in the case of studies of arts education, quantitative research aims to measure the impact of the arts on student learning while qualitative research is heuristic and operates within the world of arts education practice, a world in which random factors tend to impede the effectiveness of experimental design." (O'Farrell, Meban, 2005:115). We also decided for the qualitative approach in our research, and at the same time used concrete quantitative methods that led us to relevant, measurable and repeating results. We determined positive changes in the field of students' relation to artistic creativity, art education and visual art. We determined (table 4) that incorporating contemporary contents into art educational work in school increases the interest for the subject Art Education. Students are very interested in artwork in school, which is a positive change according to the general state and findings of weaknesses in the traditionally oriented work in art education. In accordance to this, the results of the research agree with previous findings (Cole, 1996; Hernandez, 1999). We confirmed that children in the period of adolescence have more interest for contemporary art than for classical artwork from past eras, which other researchers have also determined (Eucker, 1996). Youth in the period of adolescence find more subjects

that feel like their own in contemporary art. Contemporary artists deal with problems that also interest youth, for example violence, equal rights, ecology and other similar topics (Jakobi, 1996). Therefore our research confirms the opinion that the contents of art education should be thoroughly reconsidered, both culturally and pedagogically (Allen, 1996). Our research has again proved the same thing that all art pedagogy theoreticians have been emphasising: that contemporary and postmodern art have to be a necessary ingredient in contemporary art education (Efland, 1992; Dawe Lane 1995). We also suggest incorporating principals of contemporary art into art education: processes, works in progress and the coincidence of social activity with lightness, humorousness and playfulness (Blohm, 1995). The main finding of our research has been the importance of incorporating contemporary art into art education and the positive affect this has on an adolescent's relation to art, which increases their motivation for cooperating in art education as a school subject.

There are many other questions relating to the implementation of contemporary art into art curriculums, which were not specially addressed in our research. Among the most important ones are researches into new and different forms of visual art literacy. Visual language grammar and the development of visual literacy, which is based on lines, shapes, colours and the interactions between them, are not enough. New visual art literacy foresees a broader content-based and conceptual insight into a work of art and much more. The need for new literacy is usually linked to the media and the digital computer era and the Internet (Duh, 2001), but is not present only there. Prinsloo (2005) stresses: "I note, though, that others talk about the 'new literacies' as not being only technology-based." (Prinsloo, 2005:1). The same undoubtedly applies also to contemporary art.

Conclusion

We can conclude that with the incorporation of new contents such as: installation art, performance art, contemporary art, postmodern principals of visual expression (juxtapositioning, ready-made, site specific sculpture and others), we can lift motivation and interest for visual artwork in schools. Students are attracted by the work methods of contemporary artists and also by the possibilities of expressing their own, everyday problems through art. At first, contemporary art might confuse them by its strangeness, making it harder for them to understand. However, when they get enough information to relate to it, it can attract them more easily than classical forms. Contemporary art attracts today's adolescent more because contemporary art incorporates contemporary themes. It is a product of actual, contemporary social moments, which are also actual and contemporary moments for adolescents (Eucker, 1996; Blohm, 1995).

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