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CONTENT

Introduction 5

Lode Vermeersch, Evelien Storme. Arts and Cultural Education during Early Childhood: a Critical Analysis of Effects and Impacts 7

Charlotte Svendler Nielsen, Liesl Hartman, Fabian Hartzenberg, Gerard M. Samuel. Resilience in an Embodied Perspective: The Impact of Integrated Arts Education on Experiences of South African Primary School Children post COVID-19 Lockdown 20

Aron Weigl, Veronika Ehm. On the Impact of Evaluation. Applied Research on Arts Education Programmes as a Tool for Development 46

Egge Kulbok-Lattik, Anneli Saro. The Terms, Position and Problems of Hobby Education in Estonia 57

Guna Spurava, Sirkku Kotilainen, Baiba Holma. The Role and Readiness of Librarians in Promoting Digital Literacy: A Case Study from Latvia.................................... 71

INTRODUCTION

The world is facing manifold challenges, such as those arising from demographic change, globalisation, climate changes, emergent security threats and swift technological change, not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic. All of these are putting the well-being of citizens and communities under strain, providing fertile ground for rising tensions between people and societies.

The choice of the thematic focus for this special volume of *Culture Crossroads* is prompted by the turmoil experienced by people and societies, and the contributions that high quality arts and cultural education can make to address these current concerns.

In the last two decades, considerable evidence has been accumulated on the multiple benefits of arts and cultural education for children, young people and adults – contributing to their innovation capacity, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking skills, improving mental health of individuals, cohesion of communities and more. Arts and cultural education is increasingly discussed not only in terms of intrinsically valuable personal development of individuals, but as a broader societal issue, e. g. of social justice: as a right to equal access to opportunities vital for life and work in the 21st century.

However, access to high quality arts and cultural education differs across countries. It is precisely that part of the education system, which tends to suffer cuts whenever political decisions have to be made on resource allocation. Therefore it is critical that scholars, makers of educational and cultural policy and practitioners constantly revisit the role of arts and cultural education, seeking the strongest arguments based on knowledge about the impact of the field for its further development. It is necessary to highlight tools that enable equal access to its opportunities, and content that furthers the attainment of goals that are vital to individuals and societies, as well as effective ways of communicating the outcomes of arts and cultural education to the relevant stakeholders.

This volume, with geographically and thematically diverse papers is contributing to cast light on some of these issues.

Each of the authors in this volume has addressed a unique and noteworthy dimension of arts/cultural education.

The first paper, by **Lode Vermeersch and Evelien Storme**, entitled "Arts and Cultural Education during Early Childhood: a Critical Analysis of Effects and Impacts" invites the reader to consider different types of effects that arts arts/cultural education can lead to. The authors categorize those effects and discuss the function of these effects within a broader discourse that advocates for arts/cultural education for the very young (0–6 years).

The paper "Resilience in an Embodied Perspective: The Impact of Integrated Arts Education on Experiences of South African Primary School Children Post COVID-19 Lockdown" by **Charlotte Svendler Nielsen, Liesl Hartman, Fabian Hartzenberg and Gerard M. Samuel** presents the analysis of the manifold impacts of integrating dance and visual arts in education to support resilience among primary school children in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The authors discuss what it means to include an embodied perspective in a theoretical understanding of the notion of resilience, and the importance it might have to implement this perspective to guide educational practice.

The contribution by **Aron Weigl** "On the Impact of Evaluation. Applied Research on Arts Education Programmes as a Tool for Development" brings the reader into the domain of the impact of evaluation and the creation of an added-value for the practice of arts education. The paper analyses two examples of programmes evaluated by an independent research institute, and the role of implementing a co-creative research design, defining advantages and challenges of this approach.

Egge Kulbok-Lattik and Anneli Saro present the paper entitled "The Terms, Position and Problems of Hobby Education in Estonia" in which the authors address the issue of hobby education (which includes arts and cultural education), its status and organization during different political eras in Estonia. The article discusses the discrepancy between the current positioning of hobby education as a part of youth work and the much broader impact of hobby education on the population (e. g. developing national and local identities). The analysis also addresses the unequal institutional conditions for the development of hobby education.

Finally, yet importantly **Guna Spurava, Sirkku Kotilainen, Baiba Holma** in their paper "The Role and Readiness of Librarians in Promoting Digital Literacy: A Case Study from Latvia" focus on the vital crosscutting theme of digital literacy as a precondition of learning in nowadays education. The paper discusses the interpretations and practices of librarians of public libraries as mediators of digital literacy for young people.

Taken as a whole, these papers present an insight into the many aspects of impact produced by arts and cultural education, the processes contributing to this impact, and the institutions involved. Each paper highlights a significant facet of the important scene of arts and cultural education as an endeavour as topical now as ever.

The international team of co-editors extends sincere gratitude to all the authors who contributed during this challenging time in order to make this collection possible. May each of the papers find their committed and enthusiastic readers, and serve as encouragement for further research on the issues presented in the volume.

Charlotte Svendler Nielsen
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ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION DURING EARLY CHILDHOOD: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EFFECTS AND IMPACTS

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Abstract

Many voices in policy and practice have emphasized, on many different occasions, the importance of arts and cultural education for the very young. A mélange of arguments are given in this regard, primarily stressing the positive effects and impacts of this type of education. If arts and cultural education is considered important because it leads to specific valuable outcomes, it is important to have a clear overview of what these outcomes are. Often this type of overview is missing. In this paper we analyze different types of effects that arts and cultural education can lead to and we categorize those effects. Subsequently, we focus on the function of these effects within a broader discourse that advocates arts and cultural education for the very young (0–6 years). Our analysis shows that research does not pay equal attention to all types of effects, but also that the over-emphasis on one type of effects (e. g. personal effects, extrinsic effects) can divert attention from other important effects (e. g. social effects, intrinsic effects). We also show that despite the claims that effect research makes, the implementation of that research in an impact narrative can still go in different and even opposite directions.

Keywords: *arts education, cultural education, effects, early childhood.*

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Introduction

You may hear them in schools, read them in manifestos, find them in policy documents: the many different arguments emphasizing the importance of arts and cultural education. When positive words are spoken about arts and cultural education, these words often refer to the specific effects that this type of education has, as well as to the social significance or impact of those effects. In the public discourse on the benefits of arts and cultural education, however, different types of effects and forms of impact are often mixed together. In this article we try to clarify the different types that exist, with the intention of structuring the future debate more clearly and thus providing a framework for examining which effects and impacts do or do not provide a basis to legitimate arts and cultural education.

Aim, methods and structure

In order to outline a typology of effects and impacts, we explore what types of effects are described in the research literature. We look for the main trends in that body of research and illustrate these trends with references to specific studies. We focus on the empirical research about children of age six or younger because, recently, the importance of arts and cultural education for this age group has come to the attention of researchers. Policy makers often refer to their research to emphasize the importance of an early introduction to arts and culture. For this paper we use existing empirical research without introducing new research data. We do, however, critically examine the existing strand of effect and impact research.

This article consists of two parts. In the first part, we review the existing research with a view to drawing up a typology of effects and impacts. In the second part we zoom out and examine how these effects can be approached. By means of three word pairs (dichotomies) we show how traced effects and impacts can be embedded in a particular narrative about arts and cultural education.

Towards a typology of effects and impacts of arts and cultural education

Personal effects and impacts

The notions of "impact" and "effect" are closely related and are often used together or in an interchangeable way, for instance in the "Effect and Impact Tracking Matrix for Arts Education" [Bamford & Glinkowski 2010]. However, they are not exact synonyms. The impact of an action or phenomenon is the influence that action or phenomenon has (in the short or long term) on society. We use the term "effect" to refer to an outcome that can be attributed to a specific intervention. Thus, the term "impact" has a broader scope than "effect". The word "effect" is mainly used to refer to a correlation between an educational intervention and a specific measurable

outcome. Let us have a look at different types of effects in research on arts and cultural education.

The first type of effects of arts and cultural education that is often highlighted in research and policy documents on education are so-called *personal* effects. Considerable scientific research suggests that arts and cultural education has or can have effects on the learning individual. These personal effects include cognitive and metacognitive skills, sensory capabilities, creativity and imagination, motor skills, aesthetic judgement, but also enhanced personal well-being and the experience of pleasure, the reduction of stress and the enhancement of positive emotions, physical and health effects, personal engagement and a stronger connection with the direct environment, feelings of tolerance and respect for dissenting opinions and visions, and so on. The list is long. These are all positive aspects – research into the possible negative effects or impacts of arts and cultural education is practically non-existent – that can be acquired by an individual through an educational process related to arts and culture.

If we take a closer look at the list, we see that some of the effects are specific to arts and cultural education. They are typical for this type of learning process in the sense that the outcomes are directly and inextricably linked to it. In other words, they cannot be realized in any other way, for example, through other forms of education (e. g. language teaching). Scholars generally refer to this as the *intrinsic* effects of arts and cultural education [e. g. Winner et al. 2013]. In many cases (but not always) the intrinsic effect itself also belongs to the same artistic or cultural domain as the educational intervention. For example, the development of specific artistic skills, such as singing skills like tonality, vocal range or musical improvisation skills as an outcome of vocal instruction among young children [Guilbault 2004, Hornbach et al. 2005, Klinger et al. 1998, Rutkowski 1996]. In these examples the outcomes are situated within the artistic sphere of one specific art form, in this case music, the educational intervention is therefore labeled *education in the arts* [Bamford 2006]. But intrinsic personal effects may just as well be about broader artistic or cultural outcomes that are not confined to the domain of a single art form. For example, there are indications that teaching drama and sociodramatic playing techniques have a positive influence on children's creative skills, not only theatrical creativity but also verbal and graphic creativity [Garaigordobil & Berrueco 2011, Komarik & Brutenicova 2003, Yeh & Li 2008].

Other personal effects are not intrinsic, which means they can just as well be realized in another way. One example is the use of artistic imagery to enhance verbal, and more specifically, conversational skills in toddlers and preschoolers [Chang & Cress 2013, Eckhoff 2013, Iorio 2006, Korn-Bursztyn 2002, Otto 2008].

Conversations about art between children and adults, and especially one-on-one conversations, appear to be very effective. These artistic images are an interesting tool but not a *condition sine qua non* for the effect itself. After all, conversational skills can also be trained without these images. In general, scholarly publications refer to this as *extrinsic* effects. When artistic images are, like in this example, primarily used to train conversational skills, an outcome outside the artistic sphere, this can be labeled *education through the arts* [Bamford 2006].

Social effects

In addition to the impact on the individual (all people individually) arts and cultural education or participation can also have effects at the social or societal level (the interaction between individuals and between groups). For example, research claims that arts and cultural education benefits the parent-child relationship, but also social cohesion, community identity, a culture of inclusion, and even economic growth.

The list is once again long and once again concerns both effects that may be typical of arts and cultural education (*intrinsic* effects) and effects that can also be realized through other educational interventions that are not about arts and culture (*extrinsic* effects). One example is the proven correlation between music education and musical participation on the one hand, and social playing behavior and collaboration in carrying out assignments on the other [Gerry et al. 2012; Kirschner & Tomasello 2009, 2010; Nicholson et al. 2008; Walworth 2009]. This correlation shows that music education and participation can indeed have *extrinsic social effects*.

Again, some social effects fall within the artistic and cultural domain, others lie outside that domain. As social effects or outcomes are often broad and spread out

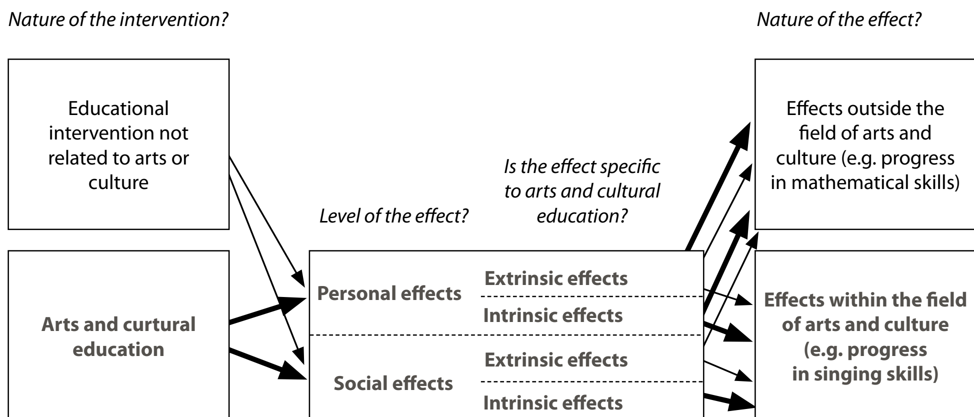

Figure 1. Typology of effects of arts and cultural education.

over various domains, it often makes more sense to refer to them as the social or societal "impact" of arts and cultural education. After all, all the social effects together answer the question of how arts and cultural education really influence society.

Three reflections on effect and impact research in arts and cultural education

Within each one of the above-mentioned categories (*personal/social, extrinsic/intrinsic, outcomes within/outside the field of arts and culture*) effect claims are formulated [Vermeersch et al. 2018]. The question remains as to whether they can all be proven scientifically. Research shows that a vast number of these effects can indeed be substantiated theoretically or empirically [for an overview see: Bamford 2006, Gielen et al. 2014, Harland & Hetland 2008, Vermeersch et al. 2018, Winner et al. 2013]. However, there are also assumptions that have not yet been sufficiently studied. Furthermore, some claims are based on no more than personal experience and anecdotes, speculation, wishful thinking, or even the self-interest of the person or body formulating the claim.

When we look at the scholarly literature on arts and cultural education, again especially studies related to the very young, we can make three general observations.

First of all, we notice that the existing empirical research pays more attention to the *personal* effects of arts and cultural education than to the *social* effects. One might assume that personal effects are easier to investigate in an empirical way as this type of research is mostly a matter of correlating specific interventions to specific consequences. But a sharp focus on the establishment of a list of individual outcomes may, however, take away the attention from the broader social impact of this type of education. In addition, we must approach the very search for direct personal effects of arts and cultural education critically. Real arts and cultural education never takes place in the isolated context of a (semi-)experimental study. This implies that when examining the benefits of arts and cultural education among young people, it must be taken into account that these young people are receiving a lot of artistic and cultural stimuli all through the day. As a consequence, it is often impossible to measure the net effect of an educational intervention and thus isolate the specific cause (of an effect) from other mediating variables.

Secondly, we observe an *instrumental bias* in the current body of research. Artistic and cultural educational processes are often approached in terms of what they can mean for developmental fields *beyond* the purely artistic and cultural. Especially Anglo-Saxon scholars seem to consider the study of the impact of arts and cultural education on cognitive-academic performance a priority [e. g. Winner

& Hetland 2000, Winner et al. 2013]. That is remarkable because many hypotheses regarding effects of arts and cultural education that lie outside the domain of arts and culture are rather improbable. A classic example of this is the so-called "Mozart effect", a putative effect based on an experiment conducted in 1991. It claimed that listening to a specific Mozart piano sonata has an IQ-increasing effect. The study itself, however, did not mention any increase in intelligence in general but a small element of it (spatial reasoning) [Rauscher et al. 1993]. Follow-up and replica studies showed that the effect was of very short duration (10 to 15 minutes) and that it could also be observed with other pieces of music by other composers, and even with music by the pop group "Blur" [Schellenberg & Hallam 2005]. An important reason why the "Mozart effect", like many other supposed extrinsic effects, did not really pass the empirical test, is that the nature of the activity (listening to classical music) and the nature of the supposed effect (increased intelligence) lie miles apart. If there is any relationship between the two, it is a so-called *far transfer* effect and this type of effect is rarely substantiated in effect research in education [Keinanen et al. 2000, Moga et al. 2000, Harland & Hetland 2008, Winner & Hetland 2000]. After all, you don't build arm muscles by doing leg exercises. But even in the rare cases where this would work, the question remains whether far transfer effects are useful for education. After all, no effect research is needed to ascertain that many cognitive-academic accomplishments can also be achieved, probably better and faster, through other educational paths [Eisner 2002]. Take, for example, the discussion on the effect of music education and musical participation on mathematical reasoning. Some researchers argue that music practice and participation can promote the development of mathematical skills in young children because music has some inherently mathematical qualities, such as proportions and rhythmic patterns [Geist et al. 2012, Hallam 2010, Vaughn, 2000]. However, other researchers question this effect [e. g. Mehr et al. 2013, Winner & Hetland 2000]. Regardless of who is right, the hypothesis itself remains of little relevance, let alone useful for the field of music education, because it simply makes more sense to train mathematical skills through math lessons. So even when this type of effects outside the artistic or cultural domain can be identified, it does not offer a real basis to legitimate or advocate arts and cultural education[1]. And the reverse is also true: if these effects cannot be verified, this does not mean that the effects within the domain of arts and culture automatically gain more credibility [Catteral 2000].

Thirdly, the general research interest in how arts and cultural education lead to benefits outside the area of arts and culture automatically leads to a heightened interest

[1] That doesn't mean that we exclude the possibility that it might be nice to use music in a math class, but this is best done for reasons that are less directly related to academic performance (such as increasing motivation or for the pleasure one gets from it).

in the extrinsic effects of arts and cultural education. Because of this interest, effect research seems to look down on possible intrinsic effects. After all, it demonstrates little respect for arts and culture to use it merely as a means to pursue certain effects that can also be achieved by other forms of education. Elliot Eisner warned about this over twenty years ago: *"When such contributions [to other academic fields] become priorities, the arts become handmaidens to ends that are not distinctively artistic and, in the process, undermine the value of the arts' unique contributions to the education of the young"* [Eisner 1998: 49].

Not only arts and culture itself could suffer from overemphasizing extrinsic effects. Stressing the "instrumental character" of arts and cultural education could have social consequences as well, especially when talking about the very young. Correlating early arts and cultural education to (later) academic performance can result in an impact discourse in which this type of education can actually no longer be questioned. This may be good for the justification of arts and cultural education, but at the same time it can make artistic and cultural (learning) activities part of the implicit norm of what is "good parenting". Some parents will meet this norm without any problem, while others will feel, or will be talked into feeling, that they are failing. This leads to the external attribution of an extra task they have to fulfill and possibly also to the culpabilization of parents who are not able to fulfill this task. Vandenbroeck and Peeters call this the "tyranny of the consensus" [2014: 153]. They state: *"The problem is that the choices (of what is desirable) remain implicit, uncontested and presented as evident, rather than as a choice amidst other possibilities"* [2014:155].

Young children learning in and through arts and culture: different approaches

So far, we have analyzed and categorized the effects of arts and cultural education, we also criticized the current trends in effect and impact research in the field of arts and cultural education. In this last section of this paper, we now focus on the implications of the (research on) effects and impacts of arts and cultural education on how to approach this type of education. For this purpose, we will distance ourselves from the research itself and examine how different narratives develop in relation to arts and cultural education. We will do this through three dichotomies.

Right vs. must

Guided by the knowledge about or simply the trust in the (added) value and positive effects and impacts, organizations or policy bodies may support arts and cultural education. Exactly how they will do this, however, may vary. By "how" we

do not mean the working methods that are applied, these can of course also be very different, but rather the way they approach the young child.

A common approach is the so-called *rights approach*. This perspective is based on the premise that every human being, and therefore also every child, has the right to arts and culture. This is a fundamental social right, a right that everyone can invoke and that is inalienable. This perspective is not only propagated today by theorists such as Martha Nussbaum [2007] but is also ingrained in many international policy guidelines and legislation, both hard and soft law. Perhaps the best known examples are the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (1959) followed by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (entered into force in 1990). The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* states that: "(..) *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits*" (art. 27). The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* stipulates that the states must "(..) *respect and promote the right to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity*" (art. 31). These are powerful stipulations that are also interesting to indicate that a rights approach covers different perspectives. The word "freely" in the first quote emphasizes that every human being should be able to take up the right to arts and culture, but the use of that right is not compulsory. The second quote emphasizes that a right is not just a given, but something that has to be persistently and actively put into practice, by the individual at the micro-level but also by organizations at a meso-level and policy bodies at a macro-level creating the right opportunities for all individuals. Thus, within the rights approach different nuances are possible.

In addition to, or even in opposition to, the rights discourse, a more imperative discourse is sometimes used. Applying this approach implies arts and cultural education is not a right but rather "a must". A central government that sets specific objectives related to arts and cultural education in a compulsory curriculum (e. g. curriculum goals in pre-primary education), is an example of such an approach. Adding arts and cultural education to the compulsory curriculum reflects the belief that an individual cannot and should not go without it. Things can of course be made compulsory in various ways, not only through a curriculum. It can be done explicitly (for example, by including it in regulations) or it can be done more implicitly (via, for example, social norms, social pressure or symbolic authority).

Merit vs. instrument

Whether you see arts and cultural education as a right or a must is strongly related to the exact *use* of arts and culture. The rights approach implicitly assumes

that arts and culture are things that everyone should be able to access, without having to do anything in return. According to international declarations, everyone has this right, simply because they are human beings. Consequently, arts and culture are not something that someone has to "earn", for example, by showing exemplary behavior or by certain accomplishments, or by making certain investments. Nevertheless, such a merit-based approach exists. It often shows itself in financial terms: arts and cultural participation or education are the "return" that individuals receive when they buy an entry ticket or pay a registration fee. Those who do not pay are not offered access. We could also call this a *quid quo pro* line of reasoning. Incidentally, this does not always have to involve financial resources. This approach is observable in a classroom when, for instance, a teacher organizes a field trip or sets up an art project as a "reward" for the good behavior of the pupils. Clearly, this approach deviates from the basic idea that everyone, no matter what, has a right to culture.

Some also consider arts or culture "instruments" or specific means to accomplish something. As we mentioned earlier, the basic idea of an instrumental approach is that arts and cultural education is especially important, and therefore worth stimulating, because "it is good for something". This can relate to the effects or impacts of the educational process, but just as well to the educational interaction with the children. For example, a cultural trip can be a way to take the children outside the (pre)school walls to make them calmer or to enhance their enthusiasm.

Domain-specific vs. holistic

A third dimension that we want to add to the "how"-question concerns the view on the child growing up. It is possible to look at all the domains of the child's development separately. Artistic and cultural development then becomes one domain alongside many others, including physical development, ethical development, literacy and numeracy development, etc. The child is the sum of all these domains. Such an *aggregative* approach to the child's development has the advantage that the domains of learning and life can be stimulated and studied separately. This usually results in attention to the typical or domain-specific characteristics of these separate domains. In many cases, effect and impact studies build on this logic because they assume that the effects and impacts of arts and cultural education can be isolated from other non-arts or non-cultural educational interventions. This, however, ignores the fact that the different domains of human development are strongly intertwined and can therefore hardly be functionally separated, let alone the idea that this separation would be desirable in a pedagogical sense. We should be aware that there is some overlap and spill-over between the personal and social effects, between the intrinsic and extrinsic and the effects within and outside the domain of art and culture. That is why arts and cultural education with the very young

often deliberately transcends subjects and domains. The content of the education is integrated in various ways (themes, methods, etc.) and developmental domains are consciously linked together; but even then, the concept of domains that can be defined separately remains intact.

In contrast to the domain-specific or aggregative perspective of the child is the holistic or purely integrative approach. This approach does not "divide" the child into separate or intertwined domains, characteristics, interests, clusters of behaviors, etc., but looks at the child as a whole. This also assumes that the different domains of learning constantly interact with each other. The whole is not the sum of its parts, but more than that. This vision also places the development of the child in broader contexts, such as those of the family, the peers, the (class) group, etc., which play an important role in both the care process and the educational process of the young child. From this perspective, education and care are inextricably linked.

Conclusion

In this article we have tried to bring clarity to the debate about the effects and impacts of arts and cultural education. We have not compiled a list of the (many) proven effects and impacts but defined and classified them according to a number of dimensions (personal/social, intrinsic/extrinsic, outcomes within/outside the domain of arts and culture). We have illustrated this with references to the growing body of research literature on the benefits of arts and cultural education for the very young (0y–6y). The typology in this article allowed us to look critically at the existing effect and impact research. Among other things, we raised questions about the instrumental bias in the existing body of research and the over-emphasis on the personal effects of arts and cultural education. For that reason, we zoomed out at the end of this article to look at how effect-based advocacy for arts and cultural education can be fitted into a broader impact narrative. From our analysis we learn that even those who emphasize the positive effects and impacts of arts and cultural education still have several options for building a narrative pro arts and cultural education.

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RESILIENCE IN AN EMBODIED PERSPECTIVE: THE IMPACT OF INTEGRATED ARTS EDUCATION ON EXPERIENCES OF SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN POST COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

This article seeks to deepen knowledge about how education that integrates dance and visual arts has had an impact on supporting resilience among children in a primary school in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. The authors have for four years run a project in which the value of integrating dance and visual arts in different ways has been explored. The last workshop week took place in 2020 once schools had reopened after a long period of lockdown. The week included a focus on illuminating the children's experiences of schooling during and after the lockdown. Through a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of data collected using methods involving multi modal means of expression, it comes forth that the impact that this work has had, is that the children have learned to

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not just accept what is, but to question and be critical based on what they feel. They learned techniques to assist them to let go of tension and to feel and be aware of embodied sensations. They also had experiences of relating to their peers in new ways and used their imagination to create and express ideas. Based on this study it is concluded that when an embodied perspective is included in a theoretical understanding of the notion of resilience, and this perspective is implemented to guide educational practice, schools may be able to better promote environments that support resilience.

Keywords: *integrated arts education, resilience, primary school, South Africa, COVID-19 lockdown.*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020 forced governments around the world to implement lockdown of societies in shorter or longer periods of time, and with different levels of restriction. This included closure of schools and change to approaches to education either in ways blending on-line tools with tools for distance learning, or solely distance learning, depending on the resources of the schools/teachers and families. A study from the European Commission Joint Research Centre highlights the need for more support and training on "how to maintain good mental health and boost resilience" of both pupils and teachers as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns [Carretero et al. 2021]. Recommendations from international organisations like UNESCO[1] and knowledge from projects carried out in areas hit by sudden tragedies and trauma all underline the potential of the arts to support resilience among children and communities [O'Connor 2020; Pruitt and Jeffrey 2020]. Resilience which can be defined as "an interactive concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experiences" [Rutter 2006: 2] must be in focus in education in such challenging times as it serves as a condition for being ready to learning the subject matter in school. This article seeks to deepen knowledge about how education that integrates dance and visual arts, and with the purpose of focusing on embodied processes, could have an impact on supporting resilience among children in primary schools[2] in post-lockdown schooling of South Africa. This is a country in which the COVID-19 pandemic added to adversities normally experienced by the majority of the population as lockdown measures foster growth

[1] https://en.unesco.org/creativity/covid-19

[2] In South African literature school-going children are referred to as "learners". We feel this term is in opposition to the view of children that inspires the work of this project and therefore have chosen to use the term "children" throughout this article except in direct quotes.

of evils related to poverty such as hunger, crime and violence [Save the Children, INEE and UNICEF 2020].

From 2017 to 2020 the authors of this article worked together in an intercultural and integrated arts educational project called Red Apples – Green Apples[1] with a class in a primary school in Cape Town, South Africa. This project had a three-fold research focus: 1) to develop new strategies for teaching through embodied, intercultural and integrated arts educational practice, 2) to explore children's opportunities for embodied learning asking: how can they get to know and understand different concepts in a more embodied way? How can they express themselves through different modalities?, and 3) to pursue new research approaches to understand children's sense-making processes within educational practice that integrates embodied learning, interculturality, different subject matter and art forms. Overall, the project sought to cross borders between academia and artistic-educational practice, for example, by including reflective exercises using different means of expression in workshops to foster embodied learning [Anttila and Svendler Nielsen 2019] (examples of such exercises follow below). The project thus blurred the traditional lines between teaching and research, since it questioned what knowledge is, how it can be produced and who can and should be involved in knowledge production in an educational practice.[2] The workshop followed a creative educational approach with open-ended tasks and learning about concepts through different kinds of experiences and expressive formats. In the workshop which is the focus of this article the concepts of "connection" and "obstacle" were explored.

When we started the project in 2017 the class in Cape Town was in grade 4, and in 2020 they were in grade 7 soon to finish their primary schooling and ready to move on to different high schools in the city. After seven visits we had planned for a concluding year with week-long workshops in May and September 2020. But the COVID-19 pandemic started to spread around the world with countries going into lockdown and borders closing, also putting our project on hold. The school, which is the site for this research project, is situated in a working-class area and many pupils

[1] We called the project Red Apples – Green Apples to, in an artistic way, underline the intercultural dimension of being a mix of people from the South and the North in the project which is reflected in different colours of the apples (and of ourselves as human beings) as we planned to be working with the relationship between nature and culture as underlying themes.

[2] Our collaboration was initiated through an International Network Program, "Knowledge production, archives and artistic research" funded by the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education and led by Karen A. Vedel, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen 2016–2017. Meetings of this network culminated in two week-long workshops with school classes in Cape Town and Copenhagen in 2017 also involving the Western Cape Education Department's Peter Clarke Arts Centre and the Danish Cultural Institute as partners and supported by the Danish Agency for Culture and the Municipality of Copenhagen.

come from surrounding townships in which resources are scarce, both in financial terms and also with regards to infrastructure giving access to water, electricity and internet. This meant that these school children could not maintain a teaching program on-line neither with their teachers, and certainly not with a project run by external institutions. But as lockdown levels eased from a total lockdown level 5 in April–May 2020 till a level 1 which included that South Africa's borders opened in October 2020, we were successful to get permission from the school to plan a week of concluding activities for the children. This was a very special opportunity as at that time it was still not the norm that external stakeholders were allowed into schools in South Africa. This school decided that it was important for them to provide a conclusion to this long-term project and give the children the experiences we as arts-educators had been showing them that we could provide during the four years of the project. Therefore, even though the children were only in school on certain days (three days every second week and two days in the other weeks) they called all of our grade 7 in for the full week that we were planning to be working at the school. However, our initial research questions did not seem equally relevant to the new COVID reality and we therefore changed the focus of our inquiry to explore different ways of integrating dance and visual arts to help illuminate how the children had experienced the total lockdown period which they had faced during April–May 2020, and how they had experienced returning to school. Themes relating to resilience soon emerged to become important in many of the children's responses to reflection exercises. This made us decide to focus the inquiry for this paper on *what impact can a teaching space working with integrated arts educational approaches have on creating an environment that supports resilience?*

Resilience at the outset of our inquiry is referred to in a social-ecological framework [Theron, Levine and Ungar 2020; Ungar 2012] which means that resilience is not considered in terms of an individual's personal traits a capacity and own responsibility, but rather are processes that can be supported through the environment. We will discuss the potential of adding an embodied perspective to this outset in order to better understand possible processes of resilience based on our educational practice and a phenomenological concept of knowledge [Merleau-Ponty 1962] which, like the social-ecological framework, considers individual experiences as being intertwined with experiences of others and the world around us.

Ethical considerations when doing research in education with vulnerable children

The specific school in Cape Town was invited to become part of this project as it is a school that is working with the Peter Clarke Arts Centre, one of the partners in the project. This means that the decision to participate in this study was made by

the school leadership and specific teachers. Later they informed the children about their involvement and the purpose of the project. This means that the children did not have the choice to not participate, but every time we were planning interview sessions, we gave the children themselves a choice to take part or not as we felt that, for ethical reasons, they should have the possibility of deciding themselves in what way they wanted to engage in the project. As photography and videography were central method of the project [see Svendler Nielsen et al. 2020], we made it clear to the children that they could tell us if they did not want to be photographed or filmed. A number of times in the project period informed consent was obtained from parents/guardians through a letter informing them about the purpose of the project, how it would be carried out, how data would be safely stored, their right to get insight to material involving their own child, and their right to withdraw their consent at any moment until publication of articles about the project. It was necessary to obtain such content more than once, since due to funding issues we were unclear of the duration of the project when we started it. For this article, the data includes material about vulnerable issues related to poverty and difficulties doing school work. Therefore, we have given the children pseudonyms reflecting their gender and ethnicity, and have made sure the photos we include are not linked to any interview quote so that no one can know who has said what. We also checked that the names we chose were not names of children in the other grade 7 class of the school.

A research methodology and conceptual framework to capture and understand "first-person" experiences

The methodology of this project is inspired by a (post)qualitative research approach [LeGrange 2018] sparking a decolonial conversation that can be framed as "phenomenological and arts-based educational action research". The project is grounded in a phenomenological theory of knowledge focusing on first-person experiences and on connections of "body-mind-world" [Merleau-Ponty 1962; van Manen 1990] both as the base of the educational approach of workshops we taught, and of the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material which we gathered. The phenomenological base leans on hermeneutic phenomenology [van Manen 1990] and is combined with arts-based educational research [Barone and Eisner 2006], educational action research [Altrichter et al. 2008], multi-modal theory [Danesi 2007; Wright 2010] and different practical creative expression formats. The phenomenological philosophy guiding both the research and educational dimensions we find to align well with our project's overall focus on igniting experiences and expressions that will foster intercultural learning [Wilson et al. 2021] and promoting de-colonial perspectives [Bhabha 2004], because in its roots

it is inspired by non-Western philosophies that also consider body, mind and surroundings as interconnected [Merleau-Ponty 1962].

The project included one class of approximately 40 learners throughout the four-year project period including a couple of newcomers to the class as well as losing some that did not pass from grade to grade, or moved school. For the study for this article two teachers were involved in reflections through interviews and more informal conversations that were either recorded or documented in writing. All four of us were involved in creating empirical material. Charlotte led interview sessions and all of us were involved in informal conversations which we shared in our group and then made notes about. We all also took the role of observer, sometimes photographing or video recording during the teaching processes and all also led various reflective exercises. When we were not the one leading or documenting an activity, we took the role of participant alongside the children. The essence of our methods of research and of the pedagogy of the project is that we combined doing/expressing/dancing with talking, drawing, painting and writing. These activities served as multi-modal entries to learning and engagement. The integrated arts educational approach as well as the different roles we as adults took also fostered ways of addressing inherent power issues that can be experienced in all research projects as researchers and participants are involved for different reasons, but seemed even more prevalent in a context in which there was a great diversity in the group as a whole both in terms of race/ethnicity and social status. Furthermore, some of the children could be categorised as part of less privileged groups in society, which is important to understand when interpreting their responses. It seems that part of an educational reality almost 30 years after apartheid has officially ended, is that there is still an experience of apartheid. There may be no laws indicating the difference between privileges of different racial groups, but it is clear that certain cultural groups still experience a diminished sense of self-worth, a remnant of Apartheid [Erasmus 2001, 2018]. This underlying complex power issue made interviewing the children a challenge. We therefore worked with open-ended questions facilitating the children's creative responses and experimented with different ways of "interviewing" and reflecting, both in interview and workshop sessions.

Reflective exercises

During the days of the workshop week in November 2020 we did a number of different reflective exercises involving different modalities. Some of the exercises served as a way to start group dialogue sessions (see next paragraph for details), others were part of the workshop activities. One such activity which formed part of the workshop was to draw our footprints and to write and/or draw about what had

made an *imprint* on us in the full project. Imprints of footprints and other body parts is a method we have used throughout the project both involving paper and material in our surroundings like the sand in a sandpit. Along the way we have reflected with the children about the fact that an *imprint* is something that shows how we as people can make an *impact* on other people (through significant experiences) and on the world (like a *carbon footprint*). But at the same time the surroundings can also leave an imprint which impacts us (like the sand which will stay in the wrinkles of our hand and thus change how the hand looks and feels when we have made a handprint in a sandpit).

Figure 1. A boy's footprint in which he wrote: "We talked about connection on the grass. We talked about the borders of South Africa because of the corona virus."
Figure 2. A girl's drawing of her hand which has sand in its wrinkles after making an imprint in a sandpit.

Group dialogues

During the project interviews based on *utopia* as an idea [Blanes et al. 2016] inspired by relational aesthetic theory [Bourriaud 2002] were carried out as group dialogues. In November 2020 the dialogues focused on illuminating the children's experiences of the impact of integrating dance and visual arts in their schooling experiences based on a reflective cards exercise asking the children to write and/or draw their responses to four questions (see the questions of the four cards below).

The sessions started by doing individual reflective exercises to make the children think and express themselves creatively, and to find out what was significant to each of them. We did this using more indirect ways of asking that would at the same time also reduce possible experiences of power in our relationships. Once they had responded to each of the questions on the cards, we started the dialogue in the group by hearing their responses and discussing the different viewpoints as well as responding to the questions they had written as part of the exercise. This approach worked as a way to try to have longer and deeper responses than what we have experienced that we have been able to create with them in interview sessions that have mainly been based on a traditional semi-structured qualitative interview style. At the same time this

Figures 3 and 4. Some of the children wrote and drew on reflective question cards while sitting together around a table, others had the exercise as a task to do in class before an interview session (photos: Authors' own collection).

approach also worked to create more insight to what actually made sense to the children, what occupied them, as well as to give everyone an opportunity to reflect and formulate their own responses not being influenced by what others might have said, or feeling pressured by their peers to give certain responses.

Card no. 1: Please write about how you consider what we have done in our arts project in the past years in relation to other school work – what are similarities and differences?

Card no. 2: If you could dream about what schools would be in the future – what would you keep from school as it is? What would you change?

Card no. 3: If you were to interview someone about their experiences in our arts project, which questions would you ask? Please write three questions...

Card no. 4: Which questions would you like to ask us?

Usually we were two adults with a group of three-four children carrying out such dialogues, but this week it was only possible to carry out more lengthy interviews at the same time as we taught other parts of the class. We therefore decided that Charlotte took care of the interview sessions alone as she has always been leading and taking part as one of the adults in our group dialogues. The children were therefore used to her taking this role. There can be both advantages and disadvantages for a white person/cultural outsider leading such dialogues in this context, because it can cause some of them to say less (she is an outsider from Europe which to them means that she must be rich). On the other hand, some might say it is exactly because Charlotte is more of a stranger, that they were willing to say more in order to 'educate' her about their perspectives. Perhaps also the fact that she is female and that the

children knew that she has a daughter the same age as them might even have created a relationship which for some spurred confidence to speak. When considering the role of the interviewer and who can interview who and about what, we also need to take into account that this group of children over four years had known Charlotte as a teacher who would roll around on the grass, play and interact with them, as well as embrace and give them attention in workshops based on a child-centered pedagogy.

Analysing experience-based material

How can we analyse empirical material that is not only in the form of words? In this project we have interview quotes from interviews with the children and teachers and material of a more arts-based nature in the form of photographs, drawings, reflective notes and video recordings. Analysing these varied experiences expressed through a variety of formats we maintain can contribute to deepened understanding about what impact arts education can have. In this case when trying to understand what it has been like to try to learn during and after lockdown for these children. This was done using an artistic-analytical approach [Degerbøl and Svendler Nielsen 2014] which underlines that form and content is interwoven and thus connecting with a phenomenological theory of knowledge focusing on people's lived experiences and placing emphasis on an understanding that the body-mind-surroundings are closely linked. The first step of our analysis was to choose specific quotes from interviews and pictures taken during the workshops in which something significant in relation to understanding the children's experiences of schooling in the aftermath of the first COVID-19 lockdown was expressed. The pictures and extracts were then looked at/read again in order to determine which central theme was predominant. This was when we realised that the environment that was created in the arts-integrated project seemed to support some sort of resilience in the group and the material was organised according to 'resilience' as a central theme. When reading and looking through the material after it had been organised we asked, "What happens here?", "How can we understand what they are saying/doing?", "What might be deeper meanings that we can illuminate in combination with our conceptual framework?"

A glimpse into lives of primary age children in the Cape Flats

Before we can go into analyses of the impact on resilience of the educational environment that we had created, it is important to know who the children were, what their typical daily lives in school were like and what "school life" was like during lockdown. Below we will unfold these questions based on the experiences of the grade 7 children formulated with their own words.

The class consisted of a diverse group of children coming from different social as well as cultural and religious backgrounds (including Islam and Christianity) and

they spoke different languages at home (some isiXhosa and some Afrikaans) while English was the language of teaching at the school. Their home environments were noteworthy too as the area called the Cape Flats where they all lived are borne out of apartheid legacies of segregated neighbourhoods, amenities and places of trade and worship. Many of these spaces such as Khayelitsha, and Gugulethu have some of the highest crime statistics in the city and the unenviable title of "murder capital" of the country. Hardship and trauma become part of the social fabric of these children who live, learn and grow up in these highly charged zones of inequality. The financial insecurity in families of the children after lockdown was even greater than before. We heard from some of the children that they either had relocated, or were about to go to live with relatives in different areas. The reasons for such moves could stem from a variety of social ills including loss of jobs, gender-based violence, grave illness and unexpected death.

In interview sessions Charlotte sat with small groups of the children in turn and talked to them about their responses to the question cards presented above. Question no. 3 was: "If you could dream of schools in the future, what should schools be like? What would you change and what would you keep?" A few responses written on their cards follow hereafter:

> *"Every child should feel safe and sound and the school should give the uniform and stationary to children that don't afford it."* (Nizibone)[1]
>
> *"Children must attend school. Not just leave school if they don't want to come. The parents must make sure of that."* (Lelethu)
>
> *"We must make bigger classrooms. We must have many desks, many chairs, many textbooks, brand new textbooks. New menu on the feeding scheme. And many people helping the ladies who feed us. Bringing more food for other children. And making charities."* (Ovayo)
>
> *"Make more space and make more classrooms because some classrooms are overcrowded, so we need new classrooms."* (Lihle)

Fahiem as a response to Lihle said,

> *"I would keep the classrooms. It's big enough for 40 children to be into. But it's not big enough for 40 children to be in that class when we have a pandemic. So we need more classrooms."*
>
> *"If I had to change something from the schools it wouldn't be only like from the schools. The first thing I would change is that some schools don't take children that*

[1] We have chosen to keep the children's own English wording in the quotes as this reflects their original responses.

are poor and there are many children sitting out on the streets. And the teachers make like they don't understand the situation of why the children are sitting on the street. But if the child comes to school and makes one mistake, the teachers be like 'you don't even pay school fees!' and things like that. And that really embarrasses children. And the other thing I would change at school is that on the foundation phase sides, it's not bricks, the fence is not made of bricks it's made with cardboard. So it is not safe. So I would change the buildings and the thing I would keep is the garden." (Ayema)

The themes coming forth in the children's responses all have to do with resources of the school and their families showing how poverty and safety are important issues of their daily lives. Safety both relates to them living in a society of high levels of crime and to health of children at school during this pandemic. Even before the pandemic the children experienced that some of their classmates stopped coming to school and they saw them hang around in the streets. So the issue of resources both relate to those of parents (or guardians/caretakers in some cases) needing to make sure that firstly children attend school, and furthermore to politicians to make sure that there is enough capacity in the schooling system for all children to be able to go to school both during and after a pandemic. This is complex in South Africa, where the lack of resources in formerly named Coloured and Black schools requires the government's attention, especially since the South African Constitution promotes the right to equal access to education for all citizens.[1]

The reality of 40+ children in a classroom did not work at the time of a pandemic when there had to be space for social distancing, but it does not work in any normal school day either. The fact that public schools in South Africa are overcrowded means that at the end of 2020, almost six months after schools started to open gradually after lockdown, there was still not space for all of the children to come to school every day of the week as social distance measures still needed to be taken care of.

Children's experiences of schooling during lockdown

The following group dialogues reflect what it was like for these children to try to learn during and after lockdown. Charlotte started the dialogues by asking, *"When you think about the time that you had the lockdown and you had to be at home and do schoolwork at home. How was that?"* Lelethu says, *"Some things we didn't understand."* Charlotte tries to clarify, *"And then you didn't know what to do?"* Lelethu, *"Yes, miss."* Charlotte then asks, *"Could you get help from the teacher?"* Lelethu, *"Yes but only..., not after two o'clock."* Charlotte asks, *"Would you call the teacher? Or how did you make*

[1] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa no. 108 of 1996: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/images/a108-96.pdf

contact?" Lelethu says, *"No, WhatsApp."* Charlotte asks, *"So you had to write your question?"* Lelethu confirms, *"Yes."*

Charlotte asks, *"How much time do you think you spent during the days to do schoolwork during the lockdown?"* Chantal says, *"Five hours."* Lelethu says, *"No, I don't think I did my work for five hours, I think I did more than five hours!"* Chantal exclaims in surprise, *"Joh!"* Lelethu says, *"Because if you don't understand what you must do, then it takes you more time."* Charlotte confirms, *"Then you spend more time, yes. But was there something nice about doing your schoolwork at home? Or would you rather sit in class and do it?"* Lelethu responds, *"Sit in class and do it."* But Chantal says, *"It was better at home because it's more quiet."* Lelethu however experienced that, *"(..) it's also better at school because you'll ask the teacher whatever you want."* And then Chantal says, *"I can ask my parents."* Charlotte asks if they can also ask their friends, but Lelethu says, *"I don't have friends where I live."* Charlotte responds, *"But in school you have friends?"* And Lelethu says, *"Yes, miss. And I can't ask my parents because I don't live with my father. I live with my mother and she goes to work."* Charlotte says, *"Okay, so you had to be home alone?"* Lelethu says, *"With my two siblings."* Charlotte asks, *"Also during the lockdown, did your mother go to work?"* Lelethu confirms, *"Yes, miss."*

Through the interviews we became aware that very few of the children had support for distance learning from home and that this had a huge influence on their opportunities to learn that which was outlined in the curriculum as objectives for the year. Within the class there was a spectrum of diversity, from children who were more privileged who liked to do school work at home, because it was quieter than in school and they could get help from their parents. Others were less privileged and lived with only one parent and younger siblings that they had to take care of and help with their school work during the day when they were all home alone.

Unlocking lockdown experiences through creative expression formats

The framework in which the interviews took place was a weeklong arts-integrated workshop which we did with this class in the beginning of November 2020. The theme of the workshop was *Creating connections and overcoming obstacles* and it was planned as explorations of the concepts of "obstacle" and "connection" through dance and visual arts practice using different arts-integrated approaches. We had decided with the class teacher that we would work with 10 children at the time in alternate groups and the rest of the class would stay with her to do their school work.

We started the first session with the first group by sitting on the grass outside the school building. We talked about the concepts of "obstacle" and "connection" that we would be working on during the week showing a picture of a map of the world and the internet cables that connect us even in times of an obstacle like lockdown.

We talked about what a connection and an obstacle is, which connections and obstacles we know and how we connect with others, and might overcome some of these obstacles.

> *The children to begin with did not smile at all like we are used to seeing them do. They also seemed very passive and inwardly focused, especially the girls immediately sat down and just stared at the grass. The boys moved around, but it was not the 'fooling around' in a playful way that we have often seen, it seemed as if they had no focus. We felt there had been a big change in the mood and engagement since we were last with the group in January 2020. It was almost like they were not 'there' even though physically they were sitting, or moving around us. But we decided to stand in a circle and start to do some breathing exercises and some soft warm up exercises to awaken and ground our bodies by moving each body part in turn, and then to do opening and closing movements connecting and disconnecting the different body parts, slowly moving closer to connect our body parts to each other (however maintaining social distance). These were all exercises that we have done with the group in other workshops thus acknowledging we might need to start doing something that would feel recognisable and safe by way of regressing to where we have been together before. Gerard then brought in a bundle of string and started pulling differently sized pieces of it and asking half the children to hold one end of the string each. We started to connect to each other by way of holding someone else's strings and then to create obstacles that others would explore moving over, under and around. Suddenly, there were smiles and giggles in the group and the atmosphere seemed to have loosened by the playful engagement in the exercise. We were now all breathing more deeply and in tune again.*
>
> (Reflection by Charlotte on workshop day 1, Nov. 2020)

Figure 5. The concepts of "obstacle" and "connection" explored through movement maintaining social distance (photos: Authors' own collection).

In the next session Liesl and Fabian initiated a mixed media lockdown group artwork on a long piece of paper. As a first process they asked the children to write or draw what people and which activities they missed being connected to during lockdown. The children wrote words like: “Best friend, cousins, basketball, swimming, brother, netball, my father, mom and dad, mall.”

Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9. Working on mixed media lockdown art work (photo: Authors’ own collection).

The next step was to write or draw a response to “What obstacles did you experience during lockdown?” and “How did this obstacle make you feel?” Looking at the piece of paper there were words and sentences like: “Not seeing friends”, “Missing cousins”, “People making road blocks to protest so I couldn’t get through”, “It makes me very sad and frustrated because I can’t see my friends and family”, “Frustrated and hurt”, “Angry”, “Sad”, “I need a father especially in my life.” Liesl and Fabian carried on a discussion about how they could overcome the obstacles they had experienced during lockdown, some examples written on the paper were: “By wearing a mask and asking permission to seeing the person”, “Walking around the road block of people.”

Liesl and Charlotte later took the words of the children into a combined movement/visual arts session in which the children created short choreographic phrases in pairs based on three chosen words from the art work which not necessarily

had to be their own words. They then took turns one person at a time to dance their phrase moving from point A to point B while the other person would move along and draw the energy of the movement pattern on a new long piece of the paper roll stretching from point A to point B. Each pair did this using the same piece of paper, so we ended up with a new collaboratively made piece of art based on the movement expressions.

Figures 10, 11 and 12. Composition work based on three words from mixed media lockdown artwork (photo: Authors' own collection).

Liesl as project partner from the Zeitz MOCAA Centre for Art Education had suggested we could use the museum as a place for a closing of the week and the entire four-year project. On the last day we thus worked with the children and one of their teachers in the museum situated in the heart of Cape Town's touristic Waterfront area. This was for some of the children an area that they had never been to. Cape Town at this time was still in a level of lockdown, the museum had only recently reopened and only a few tourists had started to come back to South Africa after the country's border closures. This meant we almost had the museum to ourselves and could provide the children with an intense and safe experience not exposing them to big crowds of people.

We decided to organise the day at the museum the same way as the other workshop days in which there would be sessions involving visual arts expression, movement expression, or an integration of both. Liesl and Fabian first worked with the group in the education centre which is a closed space to which no museum guests

had access. Then we moved to the museum's atrium which extended all the way to the top floor where guests could look down from the different floors. Gerard and Charlotte facilitated a movement session working on connecting body parts and people moving with different speed in a spectrum changing between fast and slow-motion, at different levels in space changing between the upper, middle and low levels and with different sizes of the movements from huge to tiny, these were all accompanied by drumming by Fabian and musician Zama Qambi whom we invited to join us for the last day.

Figure 13. Forming movement shapes accompanied by drumming (photo: Authors' own collection).

The idea of "overcoming obstacles" was introduced in the form of the long pieces of the string that we knew from the first day of the week, but now held at each of their ends by adults of our group. The strings were moved constantly to create challenging obstacles for the children to overcome by rolling under, jumping over etc. which created interesting visual images. This also happened in dialogue with the drummers and their music inspiring a fast and intense energy, different to the calm and giggly energy of the same exercise in the beginning of the week.

After the performance moment we took the class on a tour to one of the museum's exhibitions called "Home is where the art is" which included art works and objects sent by people of the city responding to a call of the museum to the public to contribute with a piece to illustrate life during lockdown. The last room of the exhibition focused on work that expressed the experience of time and abstract interpretations of the concept of time during the pandemic. The theme of the exhibition in this way linked directly to the theme of our workshop week and gave rise to more informal possibilities of talking to the children about coping during their lockdown experiences based on which of the art works they thought were interesting and why.

As the day closed, we went back to the education centre to produce new long art works drawn in collaboration of groups of 10 children, inspired by our movement energy pieces done in the beginning of the week. The focus of this final task was also inspired by the works of the last room of the exhibition asking each of the children to start drawing lines in various colours and styles and in the end the children's different lines were connected on the paper. As a final event we connected all the paper pieces on the floor of the atrium and used them to initiate a final reflection about the theme of connections and obstacles, of our experiences of the day, the week and the project all together.

Figures 14 and 15. Connecting visualisation of movement and final reflection of project (photo: Authors' own collection).

What is it about arts education which can have an impact on supporting a resilient environment for children? – Children's perspectives

In the interview sessions the children were asked if they would like to read aloud what they had written in response to the question no.1 on their cards which was "What is similar and what is different about the arts project and about school?" Some examples were:

> *"In the art project we learn about borders and then geography. In school we also learn about borders. And the difference is this is fun, the art project is fun and in school you mostly do work and writing. It's not so fun."* (Achmat)
>
> *"Art is like… what we did today with the connections with the strings* (..)*. It broke almost every time and we just laughed."* (Fahiem)
>
> *"At school we don't do art very much but in the arts project we do. And I like it because we are free to do whatever we can do."* (Lelethu)

The children characterised the arts project as being “fun” and a time when they could laugh. The change of mood of the children was also evident in Charlotte’s reflections (described above) of the first session of day 1 in which we introduced the strings as a tool to keep social distance at the same time as focusing on creating connections and playing with overcoming them as obstacles. To us they seemed very quiet and passive when we first started that morning, as if they were “away” psychologically and that it was the first time for long that they had laughed. In times of trauma, it is important to release tension and from the children’s perspective it seems that this is some of the potential that arts education has.

In response to question no. 3 which was to formulate questions to ask someone who has participated in an arts project the children were asked to choose questions to ask the others around the table.

> Ayema reads her first question, *“What made you do art and what made you think that art would be a good thing for you?”*
>
> Bianca wants to reply and says, *“What made me do art is you can express your emotions while you drawing. And what made me think art would be good for me is that I would draw and express my emotions.”*
>
> Zahra reads, *“What did you like the most?”*
>
> Achmat says, *“I liked the movements the most. Moving around, exercising. Because it loosens your body.”*
>
> In the group of Lihle, Michaela, Ovayo and Fahiem, Michaela reads her first question aloud: *“How have the activities helped you with your day-to-day life?”*
>
> Ovayo says, *“To feel more comfortable… in your own body.”*
>
> Michaela says that she thinks, *“Art calms you. It calms you down. And you get to be able to explore your creative side and see what you can actually do.”*

The discussion among the children based on the questions they formulated themselves was an indirect way of creating knowledge about what was important to them. When they asked others “what is good about arts”, we interpreted it as stemming from their own experiences of the arts project, which was something good to them. Those who responded to the question mentioned that it gave opportunities for expressing emotions, to loosen one’s body, to be more comfortable “in” your own body, and it calms you down and you can explore ideas.

Listening to the children’s explanations it seemed apparent that the pedagogical approach that focused on fostering creative processes in combination with its focus on embodied learning, made these experiences possible. Through the project the children became more aware of their own embodied sensations (art “loosens one’s body”, “makes you more comfortable in your body”, “calms you down”). This is not

something we have told them, but apparently something they have experienced and become aware of through four years of reflective and multi-modal exercises focusing on the embodied and sensuous dimension of doing arts.

The art project's impact on supporting a resilient environment after lockdown – a teacher's perspective

During an interview Charlotte had with one of the teachers ("teacher M") while at the museum on the last day of the project week she asked how the period of lockdown had been for the children and if a lot of them had experienced sick people in the family:

> *"Yes, some have experienced loss, whether it be an aunt, uncle or grandparent, yet they showed up to school and carried out their day as best as they could. Some learners may not have lost a loved-one, but nearly everyone knew of someone who contracted the virus, or is suffering with it still. So there was a lot of that. There was a lot. But... I don't know if it is their home, but they somehow just come to school and whatever happens at home, they leave it there. Kids are very strong. They came to school like it was fine, and everything just moved on. It is families who live together three generations. And I can only imagine how traumatic that must be for a kid and for the family. There has been a worldwide pandemic and yet somehow they manage to deal with it all so effortlessly. But the ever-present fear of Covid-19 is definitely something that is now felt in the classroom environment. As a result, returning to school has been an adjustment for all, especially where emotional support is concerned. As a teacher I've needed to check in on learners more frequently, deal with emotional outbursts more often and speak about the reality of Covid-19 more regularly. Conversely, there are also many learners who have not been too phased about the pandemic, and so the emphasis on awareness of the virus and prevention towards it has been immensely engrained in my contact time with them."* (Teacher M)

The teacher continues, *"I thought of it earlier, it's been four years, but it feels like it was the other day when they started this project actually. It's crazy."* Charlotte says, *"When I interview them, I can hear that they remember so much from, even from the very first workshop we had."* The teacher exclaims, *"No I remember so much!"* Charlotte continues, *"They can say exactly which exercises we did. And the Math teacher once said, well "they don't remember what we did in Maths yesterday, but they remember what they did with you last year.""* The teacher says, *"See, when it makes an impact!"* Charlotte then asks, *"How do you think it makes them feel to be here at the museum? The contrast between what they are seeing in their daily lives and what they're seeing here?"* The teacher responds, *"I think that's why they're so intrigued by everything and*

they're so shocked by everything. Because they're not used to it..." Charlotte asks, *"It's overwhelming in a way?"* The teacher says, *"Yes. I mean, they're not going to come on a weekend to visit the Zeitz, you know? Unfortunately, their circumstances just don't allow for that. It is like... some kids that, actually a part of this group, were involved in my environmental club and they took part in a beach clean-up project. They were so excited to participate in the project and only once we arrived at the beach, I realised just how many were simply excited to just be at the beach. In the classroom environment you don't always realise how many of them are not exposed to experiences which some might see as 'normal,' or take for granted. So, experiences like these make an impact. The different spaces have an impact on you in a different way."*

A last question was if the teacher thinks having had an artist who could have come and worked focusing on their experiences just after lockdown would have been a good thing, or if it would have been difficult because of all the trauma:

> *"I think it would have been a good thing. Because I think even with the trauma, the only way they can deal with it, is if they express it. And for some of them talking is not how they express themselves. They don't particularly like that. And I think that would've been brilliant if we could have had somebody provide our learners with an alternative avenue of self-expression. Whether they experienced COVID personally or not, the mere presence of this pandemic has altered every learner's lifestyle and that calls for reflection and introspection, especially at an age where they may not be able to deal with all of these changes. And I think if they were given that chance just to express themselves through any other medium, other than talking, that would've helped many more learners. Once school resumed after our first lockdown period, I provided each of my learners with a COVID diary. They were given free rein to write any and everything regarding their emotions and experiences during this time. I told them I would not read it either, so that they felt a sense of safety and confidence to write about exactly what they were experiencing. And I tried to get them to write every day. Like what happened? How did you feel? You know, just to release some of their built-up emotions. But I do think more emphasis on providing that support would have been ideal. It would've helped them a lot. Just to work through everything. And maybe also to acknowledge their own feelings through a different medium. Because I think when you put it so far behind you don't really get rid of it... I think if anything this pandemic has shown all within the education system that we need to do things differently. And that what we're doing is not the best plan. We need to change."* (Teacher M)

The teacher also told that in South Africa teaching on-line could only work for the most privileged which meant that some children in the country were homeschooled.

Once schools re-opened in June 2020 by gradually allowing classes back, it was still the parents' decision whether they would send their children to school. If they did not feel that this would be safe, they could sign a form saying they would take on the full responsibility of teaching their children at home. When parents chose to homeschool, there was no daily interaction with teachers. These children only came to school when there were tests and exams. Many parents in South Africa opted for homeschooling, with the result that the children of, for example, this class returned to school at different stages between June and November. Some did little school work at home, if anything at all. For children who do not have support for learning at home it is of paramount importance to be able to go to school even in the restricted ways that they have experienced after lockdown. According to the teacher M it is also like they go into another space when they are in school. In school they can escape from a hard reality of their home for a while, so schools also function as a kind of shelter for the day for those children who live in difficult circumstances.

This teacher experienced that it was hard for many children to express themselves about how they feel in words. During lockdown she gave them the task of keeping a diary to try and help them to release some tension of what they were experiencing through writing their thoughts down. Her viewpoint is that through other means of expression they release some of the tension that she could see that they were carrying. The diary was a personal task that they did not have to share with anyone, not even the teacher. The activities of the arts project on the other hand were focused on sharing thoughts and ideas providing the children opportunities to listen to responses from their peers that may resonate with something in their own life.

Integrated arts education supporting resilience – the potential of an embodied perspective

Based on the interview extracts and our observations we can now discuss what has become important issues to include when considering how arts education can have impact on supporting resilience among primary school children in post-lockdown schooling. The COVID-19 pandemic added to adversities experienced by many South African children. If resilience is "the phenomenon of 'bouncing back' from adversity" [Theron and Theron 2010: 1], then it would be possible for these children to bounce back from the COVID pandemic measures of social distance once they were released. However, this would not solve the adversities of their daily lives which became worse during the pandemic. The negative and long-term impact of this pandemic is not something they will get over. It will influence their lives in many ways both in socio-economic terms and in terms of what we understood from talking to the teachers that they have lost of learning from their curriculum. This might again influence their qualifications to move on in life.

A literature review of studies of South African youth resilience by Linda C. Theron and Adam M. C. Theron [2010] indicates a gap in research in relation to culture and contextual roots of resilience. Likewise, we have not found any studies of resilience in this context that include an embodied perspective. We suggest that when an embodied perspective is also included in a theoretical understanding of the notion of resilience, and this perspective is implemented to guide educational practice, it may result in schools to be able to better promote environments that support resilience. But it is also important to consider if these children are already resilient due to their life circumstances. How important a trauma was the COVID-19 pandemic in their lives? Our experience is that in the areas where the children live, there was not much of a lockdown and not many people would keep to social distancing rules or wear masks, only when older family members started to get sick and some passed away, did they start to experience COVID-19 as another danger in their lives. South African resilience researcher Adrian D. Van Breda [2019] examines the relationship between resilience, culture and context. He compares what resilience means in the Global North and the Global South and concludes that it has different meanings which in an intercultural project like this, is important to be aware of. Even South African researchers might be influenced by literature and definitions coming from Western thoughts as such literature is dominant in the field. But he notes that resilience in the North refers to "how one overcomes or recovers from a discrete, traumatic event" whereas this definition does not work in the South where life for many is a "life-long trauma in the form of colonialization, war, poverty, death, illness, starvation, gender-based violence and exploitation" [Van Breda 2019: 10] and further notes that "when one's entire life is traumatising, one cannot ask if acceptance helps one to return to a former level of functioning or to achieve positive outcomes" [Van Breda 2019:10] as this will never have an end after which a positive outcome can be distinguished. Van Breda [2019] highlights that "acceptance" seems to be a common sign of resilience among groups that were involved in his studies. He also notes that this makes sense in contexts when you do not have control of the adversities you are experiencing in your daily life. "Acceptance" manifests as keeping silent as a coping mechanism and he gives examples from interviews in which people have said that they do not like to talk to others about how they feel [Van Breda 2019]. Van Breda [2019: 11] however, questions if acceptance works as "sooner or later the bad thoughts and feelings return (..) the slightest reminder triggers a resurgence of distress (..)" and that acceptance relates to *lack* of agency rather than *sense* of agency which in a phenomenological perspective [Sheets-Johnstone 1999] can be developed by becoming aware of what we are able to experience and do as moving bodies.

In the interview with the teacher that we refer to above she also stated that her experience was that the children did not like to talk, they were quiet and did not

seem to be so influenced by what had happened at home. But she also acknowledged that they were carrying these experiences and that when they worked on expressing them in other ways than talking, for example, in our arts project, they seemed to release some of the tension they were carrying. Through the four years we worked with the class we managed to facilitate talking about personal/challenging issues that according to teacher M were not normally something they would talk about. This may have been possible through our long-term work with them in which we created a certain confidence and an educational space in which it was the norm to share thoughts and experiences. We see signs of this in the way they responded in the group dialogue sessions and interpret this to be part of the impact that this work has had on the children. Our interpretations of the children's notes on reflection cards as well as what they said during group dialogues is that they learned to not just "accept" what is, but to question and be critical based on what they feel. But most importantly, perhaps, is that they learned techniques to let go of tension and to feel and be aware of embodied sensations, have had experiences of relating to their peers in new ways and to use their imagination to create and express ideas.

Even though we as the adults in the project came from different cultural backgrounds, as educators we shared an urge to empower children and for them to not just accept what is, but aspire to contribute to changing their lives and society in positive ways. We acknowledge, however, that this is an ethical issue in a place where only few might actually ever have such possibilities as suggested by Theron [2012] while she questions if only a few in reality will be in a capacity to change their lives, is it then better not to make them aware of such opportunities? Our group's shared interest in the embodied perspective may very well stem from "Western notions of self-awareness and being in touch with one's emotions" [Van Breda 2019: 11] and it might clash with the Global South understanding of resilience. In a context where there is so much pain it may not be useful for children to connect too much with their emotions and sense of self. It might be more useful to do fun activities that make them laugh and look ahead. We as artist-educator-researchers had to constantly consider and discuss these issues and we found that we needed to introduce alternative possibilities in a balanced, thoughtful and abstract way, as we were sensitive to feeling into the responses of the children and to be alert to what seemed to be meaningful and engaging to them. We did this by taking point of departure in exercises based on basic body movements (e. g. opening, closing, rolling, stretching), in different developmental patterns, or focusing on moving in different levels of the space, speed or size of the movements, or copying, contrasting and complementing each other's movements or colours of our painting work. These are ways to connect to our own embodied experiences and to engage intersubjectively. While working with the children we reflected with them about different experiences and themes of life, but

they were free to choose which thoughts to share and which thoughts to keep to themselves. They could still benefit from what others were sharing when their stories resonated with their own lives.

Theron et al. [2020: 9] question if it might be useful to "challenge unquestioning acceptance of the resilience-enabling value of the self in contexts that lack the social and ecological resources needed to complement personal capabilities." We could add here that perhaps the personal capabilities to live a resilient life can be strengthened through embodied learning processes and that this can happen at the same time as educational activities being "culturally sensitive" [Theron 2012: 340]. This we have also highlighted in an analysis of the pedagogical approach of our project which we have termed an "embodied and culturally sensitive arts-integrated pedagogy" [Svendler Nielsen et al. 2020].

In school curricula in the late 1990s in South Africa the arts played a more important role than the areas do in the curriculum which schools follow today. Including more focus on arts education, based on our study, we claim, would possibly contribute to creating better conditions to promote resilience and impacting children's conditions for learning in school. Teacher M in the interview said that she thought this pandemic had "shown all within the education system that we need to do things differently. And that what we're doing is not the best plan. We need to change." In saying this she referred to both the way teaching is structured and what areas are in focus in South African schools. If we are to change anything we need a different approach and such an approach might very well include a renewed focus on arts education and an embodied perspective of resilience, considering how this may have impact to strengthen conditions for learning in schools.

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ON THE IMPACT OF EVALUATION. APPLIED RESEARCH ON ARTS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

In the last decade, quality standards for the practice of arts education have rightly risen. At the same time, it becomes more important for arts education projects to prove their success to funding bodies. This development has created an increasing need to assess the impact of arts education projects, often making it a self-referential action. This article takes one step back and raises the question more generally: what impact can an evaluation have on a project and how can it be done in order to create an added-value for the practice of arts education?

By analysing the examples of the German-wide programme *Arts and Games* of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Foundation Brandenburger Tor as well as the project *Foyer Public* of the Theatre Basel, both evaluated by the independent research institute EDUCULT in Vienna, possible impacts of evaluation on the projects themselves are presented. Results of this analysis shed light on lessons learned through these projects on a practical level. From research experience, to how assumptions are made about prerequisites, to how evaluations can be relevant to the practice and how it is possible to generate an impact. One option for achieving these goals is the implementation of a co-creative research design which is examined more in detail on a theoretical level, defining advantages and challenges of this approach.

Keywords: *arts education, applied research, impact, assessment, transfer*.

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Applied research in the field of arts and arts education has become increasingly important for the development of activities in the field. The practitioners recognize the potential that lies in a scientific perspective on their work. Nevertheless, not every research approach is suitable to support the field of practice. The big question which arises these days is how to be relevant for the practice, how to meet the needs of the practitioners, while at the same time keeping a critical distance to the object of investigation. This is strongly connected to the research design. Relevance can be assured by defining the research questions and methods according to the situation in the field and in close exchange with it. In this context, the possibilities of co-creative approaches and transfer of research results move into focus. This leads to the main question: what are the prerequisites of accompanying research and evaluations to have an impact on the object of research, i. e. the project and its practitioners?

Two things should be clarified in advance: Firstly, when this article talks about arts education processes dealing with aesthetic phenomena in general are included. This research is less about arts education in the context of school curriculum subjects such as music or visual arts, but rather about programmes and participation projects, which take place either outside school or in cooperation with people from outside the school, and which can affect all generations.

Secondly, the objectives of assessments of arts education programmes and projects are diverse and often have a focus. Here, however, a holistic approach should be taken, which includes research on all project dimensions. These are:

1. the framework conditions, i. e. the project context including the legal framework, but also the objectives that are associated with the project by different stakeholders,
2. the structural quality, i. e. the conceptual design, distribution of tasks, but also the financial and human resources,
3. the quality of the process, i. e. the forms of cooperation and communication between different actors, and the implementation of activities,
4. the quality of results, which includes direct outputs, but also wider effects and the impact.

In addition, there may be specific questions about relevance, coherence and transfer of project results.

The answer to the question how evaluation can have an impact on the object of research is provided by two exemplary evaluations: first, the evaluation of the programme *Arts and Games* in Germany for supporting cooperation between kindergartens/primary schools and cultural institutions such as museums, theatres, opera houses, etc. that allowed young children to encounter arts in the institutions. Second, the reflection of the first processes in the co-creative evaluation of the *Foyer*

Public of Theatre Basel also helps to generate knowledge about possible impact of evaluations of the education work of arts institutions.

Reasons for evaluating arts education projects

The research question that has become increasingly important in recent years is that of the impact of arts education projects and programmes as Schonmann [2014] describes it as "evaluation" and together with "assessing individual achievements" [ibid.: 25] one of the two main goals in arts education research. Above all, programme evaluation is often intended to legitimize public funding and integration into education curricula. Politicians and administrators as well as project implementers demand proof that arts education has a positive impact. This does not only refer to a narrow artistic impact, but is mainly connected to cultural, social, and aesthetic goals, as well as to personal, literacy, numeracy, and economic aims as Bamford [2006] has outlined. By analysing existing concepts, strategies, political demands, project applications, etc., Elbertzhagen [2010] compiled a whole range of claims on the effectiveness of arts education projects in Germany. On an individual level these are:

– artistic competences, positive image of arts and culture, skills to understand cultural phenomena, cultural participation;
– holistic learning, supporting creativity, individual competences and personal development in general, enjoyment and relaxation, digital competences, intercultural competences;
– learning capability, meaningful leisure activities, communication skills, cognitive skills, civic education, critical thinking, ability to judge, societal thinking, educational opportunities, quality of life, meeting the challenges of the future.

On a societal level these are:

– generation of new audiences and new artists;
– generation of an artistic space and an arts friendly environment;
– preservation and support of cultural heritage, culture as economical factor, culture as social factor (e. g., intercultural dialogue, integration), culture as ecological factor;
– raising the educational level (and lowering costs of low educational level in society), development of educational approaches, school development.

Besides the need for pure legitimization, the daily work of EDUCULT as a research institution that evaluates i. a. arts education projects and programmes shows that there are other objectives connected to the assessment of impacts as Renz [2019] outlines for applied sciences in the field of cultural policy. Practitioners do

not only need to prove their successes to funding bodies, but also want to develop their own project during the implementation process as well as to learn how to implement future or other on-going projects better. Sometimes impact assessment is necessary for establishing concepts and strategies for the implementation of arts education projects in a wider scheme. Stakeholders define which goals are in focus. Research must reveal these goals and take them into account in the research process.

Preconditions of impact assessment

The main objective of applied research, however, might not be to help legitimize, but instead to support a project and its implementors in their development, and by doing so to ameliorate the work of the arts education sector (here especially the work of cultural and educational institutions) in general by transferring knowledge to other projects and stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary not only to find out if a project could contribute the previously mentioned impact, but also to analyse chains of effects and causalities. Why did a certain effect occur, and which factors contributed to its occurrence? Which structural qualities and process qualities have contributed to which outcomes? To what extent did they also limit certain effects? It quickly becomes clear that an impact evaluation must take a holistic approach to be able to make statements. The model of a Theory of Change [i. e. Taplin, Clark 2012] which is commonly used in the evaluation of programmes and projects in the field of development cooperation is a helpful tool to understand an intervention logic. It explains which input and activities have led to which outputs, and to which outcomes and impacts these in turn have contributed.

However, the list of possible impacts shows that it might not always be easy or even possible to prove a certain chain of effect. Research on arts education projects runs the risk of presenting apparently causal connections and thus tends to confirm the legitimacy of activities rather than provide scientific evidence [Chrusciel 2017: 44]. Aesthetic processes are largely subjectively understood and therefore elude objectively measurable criteria. Consequently, it is important to interpret validity as transitory and to achieve it again and again in a situation-specific way [Wimmer et al. 2013: 13]. When setting up the research design for a project evaluation, this feature has to be taken into account.

Therefore, applied research to have an impact on the intervention and its implementors cannot only be the sheer assessment per se. Rather a well-designed exchange between research and practice as well as the transfer from research to practice are obligatory. In this case, development processes [Fricke 2006] and empowerment processes [Unger 2014] can be supported. A closer cooperation of these two stakeholder groups leads to certain challenges. There might be disagreements when it comes to the definition of the research questions. Naturally, research and practice

do not always pose the same questions to the object of interest. The experience of evaluation shows that regular reflections and discussions are key at this point. Furthermore, there is the danger that research easily adopts the goals of practice, not revealing the methods and sources.

Certain research approaches can help to prevent these risks from occurring. First, design thinking, i. e. including different scientific disciplines and the consideration of people's needs and motivations, should be the principle for applied research which implies an honesty towards the problems of an intervention. Second, a mixed methods approach, that means the integration of quantitative data collection methods, ensures that researchers do not rely solely on the qualitative answers of project participants and thus do not take individual statements as the single basis for interpretation. However, qualitative survey methods in particular can do justice to the special characteristics of arts education projects. Especially the focus group interview is a relevant data collection tool which gives the participants enough space to influence the course of the discussion, to address what is important to them, to bring in additional, different perspectives and to explicate their own experiences and assumptions. Since specific experiences, problems and solution strategies are brought into the discussion and are illuminated from different perspectives, there is a chance to capture a wide variety of perspectives and identify research gaps. In addition, a focus group discussion has the advantage of offering the possibility of a direct confrontation of different positions and potential divergences or conflicts can be discussed [Bloor et al. 2001]. This leads to a reflection process which can have a direct influence on the project implementation, as outlined in the following paragraphs. Third, an option is a co-creative research approach [e. g. as described in Ehm, Weigl 2020]. The main idea behind such an approach is to make use of the expertise of the included practitioners. A characteristic feature is the common discussion of research goals and procedures which requires an open atmosphere to reflect on the different roles and presumptions of all persons included in the research process [Weigl 2019: 49].

Findings from research practice

The accompanying evaluation of an arts education programme can serve as an example for analysing possible impacts of an assessment: the programme *Arts and Games* was implemented in the years 2013 to 2019 by the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Foundation Brandenburger Tor in Germany; the applied research institute EDUCULT evaluated the programme from 2015 until its completion. *Art and Games* was designed as a support programme that brought cultural institutions together with kindergartens and primary schools to create projects that allowed young children to experience art in a creative way. Within the first period (2013 to

2015), ten cultural institutions such as the German National Theatre Weimar and the Museum Ostwall Dortmund were funded. The second funding period included six additional institutions like the Pinakotheken Munich, the German Film Institute and Film Museum in Frankfurt and the German Opera Düsseldorf. During the third funding period (2017 to 2019) further institutions entered the programme, e. g. the bremer shakespeare company and the State Museum Hanover. These were supported by a tandem partner which was one of the already participating institutions. Within the second period, the evaluation focused on the cooperation processes and the programme structure while within the third period, the tandem network was the centre of attention. Next to that, an impact analysis of one funded cooperation project was undertaken, especially aiming to explore the impact on the participating children [Ehm et al. 2019; Ehm et al. 2020].

The evaluation of the project structure and processes was based on document analysis, expert interviews, focus group discussions with art managers, directors and kindergarten teachers, as well as online surveys. The research design of the impact analysis included interviews with kindergarten teachers, art managers, directors and parents. Next to that, participant observations were carried out alongside participatory research laboratories with the children. During the whole process the exchange with the programme manager and the communication of intermediate results were elementary. Constructive criticism aimed to support the further development in terms of structure and process of the on-going programme.

Due to the long-term commitment of the accompanying research, it is now possible to identify impacts of the evaluation and the included recommendations. Specifically, this means for example that based on the scientific evidence that is the data analysis results, there was a need for an exchange format for educational stakeholders; it was indeed implemented in the last period of the programme. The recommended obligation for kick-off meetings of project teams was realized. Mutual visits of cultural and educational institutions were seen as helpful, which became part of a new format in the third phase. The existing project teams were also kept for the third phase as recommended. For supporting the transfer of the programme results, a documentation of experiences, done in various forms and media, was prepared. It was seen as very important to include the leading personnel of cultural and educational institutions more in the cooperation projects to promote change. Efforts were observed to reach this aim, e. g. by offering a special meeting of all leaders. The discourse on early childhood arts education was supported, i. e. by a literature review on the state of research which was commissioned in the last year of the programme [Kirsch, Stenger 2020].

Considering these exemplary points, the evaluation was an important tool for decision-making in the programme development during the years of implementation.

Less easily identified impacts are the consequences that focus groups and round tables (which have a less standardized approach and aim to reflect and improve directly the project processes) had on the project participants involved. In evaluation rounds after such data collection methods, the participants expressed that the discussions contributed to a deeper reflection, which in turn positively influenced the work in the project. Also, the feedback of the programme manager supported the evidence of impact the evaluation process had on the on-going project.

Co-creation as a way to boost the impact of evaluation for the stakeholders

The methods for evaluating *Art and Games* were chosen to generate sufficient data, to have the best possible effect on the programme and at the same time to be efficient. The research design included dialogue-oriented methods, i. e. individual interviews, focus groups and research workshops which make use of interactive and creative methods with different stakeholders (such as arts educators, children, institution leaders). However, the nature of the programme did not allow for a deeper inclusion of the practitioners of the single cooperation projects into all research steps. However, such a so-called co-creative research approach [Ehm, Weigl 2020] which is strongly connected to the Practical Participatory Evaluation defined by Cousins/ Whitmore [1998] is currently used by EDUCULT to evaluate the impact of the new *Foyer Public* of the Theatre Basel [EDUCULT 2020]. First experiences suggest that this approach allows the stakeholders to address the challenges of applied research in arts education by establishing a working alliance between researchers and practitioners. This setting, which we call "co-creative", shall ensure that practically relevant research questions are asked, a common language when raising questions and transferring results is found, and relevant options for further action are developed. The main added value is that the research process itself influences the project work and its implementors. Practitioners get to know more about social scientific research processes and gain a reflective view on project structures and the implantation of activities. They are empowered to better understand why and how they work. All that happens in a broader learning process through their own participation in generating knowledge which has a supportive effect. In a best-case scenario, it even enables practitioners to integrate the research activities into everyday practice and to continue them in the sense of further developing their own practice [Ehm, Weigl 2020: 143–145].

In the first few months of the realization of *Foyer Public*, the co-creative evaluation strategy encouraged the cultural managers to observe and note their own activities and to get in touch with visitors and employees of Theatre Basel. This was supported by evaluation materials such as digital observation sheets or interview

guides, which were developed together with EDUCULT. Technically these research instruments were implemented as online questionnaires in which the practitioners could regularly upload their input. Through these activities, the cultural managers were animated to adopt a reflexive attitude. In addition to that, the evaluation questions and activities encouraged them to continuously keep an eye on their goals.

At the end of the season, a joint meeting was held between the researchers, the cultural managers, and other members of the management team of Theatre Basel. The evaluation data prepared by EDUCULT was subjected to a joint analysis and thus the evaluation model of the Theory of Change was further developed. In the end, an impact story was created that illustrates the connection between the activities set and the goals achieved. In this meeting, new goals of *Foyer Public* became clear as well as those that could not be achieved with the previous activities. Based on this, further priorities were set for the work in the next season. This shows that the evaluation helps Theatre Basel to plan its activities based on evidence and to keep the concrete goals in mind along the way.

The main idea is not to turn practitioners into researchers, but to make use of their expertise, not only in terms of contents of arts education, but also concerning methods which might be used in the research process. Here, the co-creative approach is linked to art-based research designs which make use of artistic methods as tools for research [Greenwood 2019; Chilton, Leavy 2014]. Referring to the example of the evaluation of *Foyer Public*, data collection of the marketing department of Theatre Basel as well as data from entrance sensors can flow into the bigger data pool. Workshop skills used in theatre pedagogical settings help to develop new forms of focus groups who are directly involved in the theatrical educational activities. Taking notes and documenting own observations as well as taking photos of activities are methods which can be easily implemented by involved practitioners within their daily business. An internal analysis of the evaluation process itself shows that an important corrective is that the stimulus for independent documentation only works if the methods are actually helpful and can be implemented without major additional effort as part of the daily work. The experience of the evaluation of *Foyer Public* has also shown that developing the methods and analysing the material need the close interaction of researchers and practitioners. Otherwise, a bigger adaptation of the research instruments would have been necessary during the process.

In different phases of the research process, different levels of this interaction can be realized, depending on the objectives and capabilities of researchers and practitioners. According to this dynamic model described by Ehm/Weigl [2020: 149], six research phases are defined, such as the initiation phase, the design phase, the data collection phase, the analysis phase, the interpretation phase, and the transfer phase.

Based on the experiences in evaluating projects such as *Foyer Public*, the hypothesis is that the level of interaction in each of these phases corresponds to the impact an assessment has on the field of practice. This idea is also supported by other participatory approaches in the field of arts education as exemplified by Nagel et al. [2015: 99–100] while at the same time pointing out difficulties of participatory research. The design phase is very much connected to the reflection of the project objectives and the benefits the development of a Theory of Change can have as described above, the activities of the practitioners in the data collection phase lead to an implicit learning and make adaptations of the process more probable. A co-creative interpretation phase allows for the inclusion of more perspectives and therefore leads to more relevant research results. The success in transferring the research results to the relevant target groups depends on the inclusion of these stakeholders. As the most important target group, the project implementors, is already participating in former research phases, the transfer into practice is much more likely than in other research settings. The dissemination of results that are also relevant for other stakeholders has also more potential if practitioners and researchers are involved in this phase.

A co-creative approach demands a lot from the actors involved. The great advantage is that actors in the field of arts education are usually familiar with co-creative working methods in general. However, it is necessary to critically question the relationships and roles, especially as the roles of researchers and the research object is dissolving. Thus, the self-reflexivity of all participants is needed, e. g. to reveal hidden agendas, and the principle of incompleteness of reflexive processes has to be acknowledged. In all phases of the research process, a focus must be set on language as the basis for a differentiated debate among the stakeholders, as also Unger et al. [2014: 3] emphasise. Furthermore, as the example of the evaluation of *Art and Games* shows, a long-term research approach supports the generation of an impact through the research as an evaluation includes further activities that bring actors into dialogue and question the relevance of the project. It unfolds a space for reflection and therefore often leads to re-adaptations of the project in the process of implementation. The more time is dedicated to this, the more intensive is the examination of the project. Hence, evaluation creates a basis for in-depth discussions – if it happens in a co-creative setting or not.

These reflections on the evaluation examples suggest that the effort given to an evaluation and the impact of it to the practitioners are strongly connected. But a co-creative and/or long-term approach does not make sense for all projects. The decision to use such an approach should depend on the objectives and the research questions. In this manner, the best way for creating an impact on the practice of arts education can be chosen, always keeping in mind that one goal of applied research is to be relevant for the practice.

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THE TERMS, POSITION AND PROBLEMS OF HOBBY EDUCATION IN ESTONIA

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Abstract

Terms and organisation of hobby education have changed during different eras in Estonia. Also, hobby education has received varying degrees of public attention in different political systems. The main aim of this research is to discuss the terms, position and organisation of hobby education in the 21st century Estonia. The article is divided into three parts: First, an analysis of the terminology in policy documents related to hobby education; then an overview of the field of Estonian hobby education; and lastly a presentation of the results of a survey among the representatives of Estonian hobby institutions.

Keywords: *hobby education, terminology, organisation and impact*.

Introduction

Hobby education (*huviharidus*) can be defined in its own right alongside general and vocational education. [Republic of Estonia Education Act] In the article, the notion of *hobby education* is part of non-formal education which covers different interest-driven educational activities, where participants, irrespective of their age, acquire new skills and knowledge or improve acquired ones [Republic of Estonia Education Act].

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Hobby education has been a fluid notion that has been covered by different terms in historical and present perspectives. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the terms and the organisation of hobby education in Estonia in the 21st century, analyse the current situation and to contribute to the development of cultural and education policies. The article is divided into three parts: (1) overview of the terminology in policy documents related to hobby education; (2) analysis of the field of Estonian hobby education; (3) presentation of the results of the survey among the representatives of Estonian hobby institutions[1].

The method of the article is primarily sociological analysis that focuses on unlocking the links between discursive practices of cultural and educational policies and organisations in the field. As empirical material, we mainly use surveys on hobby education conducted in Estonia in the 21st century, including the sociological quantitative survey carried out by the authors themselves among representatives of Estonian hobby education institutions in spring 2019.

Terminology as a form of discursive power

In this article we use the term discourse in the Foucauldian sense [Foucault 1971]. According to Foucault, the main discourse is shaped by official statements of state institutions and by formal rhetoric of official policy-documents through which the attitudes and values move into the practical world of the cultural and educational field. State interference in culture and education with its dynamics of institutional meaning-making (officially used terms in documents are related to the financial instruments) creates discourses, shapes the selective tradition of culture and education and has an extended impact on the social order or the structure of feelings in the society. As linked to power and state, the control of discourses is understood as a hold on reality itself (e. g., if a state controls the official rhetoric, and the media, they control the *rituals of truth*). Thus, Foucault's ideas indicate national cultural and educational policies as one of the central instruments of power of the ruling ideology, identity and memory-work in society.

There are terminological problems related to the terms of hobby and non-formal education in Estonia [Karu et al. 2019], as well as in Europe. There is no universally defined and direct term for marking leisure educational activities apart from school or work, which include arts, culture, sports, natural sciences, technology and so on [Stofer 2015].

Arts and hobby education has a long tradition and a large institutional network; it has played an important role in the European modernization process, including in the Baltic and Nordic countries. *Bildung*-based popular education triggered the

[1] Some material from the part one and two has also been published as part of Kulbok-Lattik, Raud, Saro 2021.

society movements, which had a great impact on the formation of the Estonian public sphere and cultural as well as political emancipation since the second half of the 19th century. Also, access to hobby education can be seen as a basic precondition for the development of professional arts.

In the 19th and 20th century in Estonia (and elsewhere in Europe), the term hobby education (or free-education or culture education) was understood as the extracurricular comprehensive interest-based education, including arts – singing, theatrical performance, and later systematic educational activities in libraries, lectures, courses, folk high schools, study circles [Laane 1994, 10]. In the interwar Republic of Estonia (1918–1940), free-education (*vabaharidus*) or culture education (*kultuuriharidus*) was based on a mixed model of state support and private (self-initiated) social activities [Laane 1994; Kurvits, 1938]. During the Soviet era, the term cultural education (*kultuurharidus*) was in use and it was a fully state-funded, ideologically targeted, and carefully regulated policy [Kulbok-Lattik 2014].iSince 1991, the Soviet system of cultural education disappeared, it was not possible either economically or ideologically to carry it on in the newly independent Estonia.

Historical sociological research reveals the discursive nature of cultural and education policies: with the official statements the discourse is shaped and with the rhetoric of official policy-documents the attitudes and values affect the practical world of the cultural and educational field. Also, it highlights the attention paid by the state and the position of the field, discursive path-dependency and interruptions.

The terminology of hobby education in Estonian policy documents

Next, we will analyse how hobby education has been defined in Estonian policy documents in the 21st century.

According to the definition of the Estonian Education Act, hobby education is "a system of knowledge, skills, experience, values and behavioural norms which is acquired through systematic guided voluntary practice during time free from formal education acquired within the adult education system, vocational training and work and which provides opportunities for comprehensive development of personality" [Republic of Estonia Education Act].

Thus, according to the act, hobby education belongs to the domain of education. But in the framework of the Ministry of Education and Research hobby education is regarded as a sub-area of youth work and policies. Hobby education under the auspices of youth work is targeted only to the age group **7–26** [Youth Work Act]. The Act interprets hobby education primarily in the context of creativity and talent discovery, socialisation and active lifestyle of young people.

Two paragraphs of the Youth Work Act also cover hobby education and recreational activities. A corresponding definition can be found in clause 1: "*An*

*additional support shall be granted from the state budget, if possible, in conformity with the State Budget Act to rural municipalities and cities to improve the accessibility and diversity of systematic and supervised hobby education and recreational activities for **7 to 19*** [emphasis made by the authors of the article] *year old young persons with the aim of increasing their opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes relating to the chosen hobby* (*hereinafter hobby education and recreational activities support*)" [Youth Work Act 2020]. It seems, there is no clear understanding exactly which age-group is covered by the term "youth", since people from the age 20–26 are not eligible for subsidized hobby activities from local municipalities.

The website of the Ministry of Culture also shows that Estonian policy documents do not make a strict distinction between hobby education and recreational activities (*huvitegevus*). The Ministry of Culture defines the recreational activities: *There is no precise definition of the recreational activity in Estonia. Essentially, recreational activities are the creation of opportunities for the diverse development of a young person through systematic, supervised non-formal learning* [Ministry of Culture]. This is essentially the same as the definitions of youth work and hobby education. The concept of the support system for the recreational activity of young people confirms this in a slightly different formulation: "*The recreational activity is part of youth work and is broader than hobby education*" [Youth Work Act 2020].[1]

The standard for hobby education does not directly define the content of hobby education, but consistently indicates that hobby education is targeted towards diverse development of young people [Standard for Hobby Education 2007]. The Hobby Schools Act also just underlines that youth work in a hobby school can be organised for the purposes of the Youth Work Act [Hobby Schools Act 2017].

Hence, while the Ministry of Culture regards hobby education and recreational activities for the whole population as one field, in the documents of the Ministry of Education and Research hobby education is clearly subordinated to youth work and the Youth Work Act, thus excluding the participation of adults in hobby education. This has been the case since Estonia's inclusion in the European Union in 2004, when a number of policies were harmonised, and the European youth policy also found its place in Estonian education policy.

The key role of youth work (incl. hobby education) in the field of education is undoubtedly important: if young people do not have access to the different vocational and recreational areas (arts, sports, technology, etc.), it may be more difficult to discover their talent and find the right career. Studies have also shown

[1] Differences in the definition of youth in different provisions are also somewhat confusing: generally, young people are aged 7 to 26, but the state budget support is provided only for hobby education and recreational activities of those aged 7 to 19.

that those who have been taught to create arts or engage in a hobby in childhood will return to this practice later [Kulbok-Lattik, Raud, Saro 2021; KEA 2009].

However, hobby education has a much wider impact on the population than youth work that targets an age group from 7 to 26, as was indicated in the Youth Work Act. It represents life-long interest-driven self-development with many functions, having an impact on individuals' health and well-being and creating cohesion in communities. Hobby education contributes also to the creation of local and national identities. For example, the tradition of Song and Dance festivals is based on the (singing and dancing) hobby education in the communities. Also, it acts as a mechanism for society's talent development and cultural transfer, and ensures the sustainability of high culture. Thus, equalizing the term *hobby education* with *youth work* undermines the meaning and impact of the former. Hobby education concerns all age groups and there are many different terms (free education, non-formal education, amateur arts and folk culture) and forms of work in the field.

We assume that problems in terms are related to lacking research in hobby education. Participation in youth work, satisfaction and statistical surveys have recently been sufficiently carried out in Estonia [Selliov 2017, Murakas et al. 2018], while studies conceptualising hobby education are few, and even these are somewhat outdated [Laes 2012, Väli 2013]. Therefore, when reading the studies of recent years, one can clearly notice an odd terminological twist that shapes the discourse. The study conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Tartu "Satisfaction of young people with youth work" [Murakas et al. 2018] discusses hobby education and recreational activities in a separate chapter (pages 14–31). The chapter provides a valuable insight into young people's and their parents' satisfaction with opportunities to participate in hobby education. But the summary of the report (pages 96–97) and the policy recommendations (pages 95–96) tackle only youth work and not hobby education specifically, which creates confusion in the reader. Thus, such a generalisation in the summary of the research report does not facilitate the awareness and solving of problems in hobby education, it is scientifically unjustified and refers to the need to respond to the official discourse.

The confusion with terminology related to hobby education has been pointed out also by other researchers. For example, in the article "Constructing the meaning of non-formal learning in policy documents" [Karu et al. 2019] the authors state that non-formal learning is defined too narrowly in documents as opposed to formal learning, that the terminology is ambiguous and variable, and that it is used in an instrumental or institutional function. The general term *non-formal education* is used as a broad umbrella definition that contrasts to formal education and refers to extracurricular learning and recreational activities. According to the ongoing

discussions in Estonia, hobby education and recreational activities are conceptualized as parts of non-formal education.

Concluding the first part, we have found that the term *hobby education* in Estonian official documents has been mentioned in different ways, but mainly as a part of youth work. As previously mentioned and referred to Foucault's ideas of power and state, it is very important to be aware that the terms used in the policy-making are not neutral, that they are discursively charged and influence people who are active in the field of culture and education, as well as the collective consciousness of society. Terms are instruments of power because they are used to express the values of society, truth patterns and the canon of culture. Thus, the discourse is shaped by official statements but also by formal rhetoric of official policy-documents through which the attitudes and values move into the practical world of the cultural and educational field. There are always reasons why a phenomenon is called so and not in another way. Those reasons will be discussed in the third part.

In addition to the confusing terms the organisation of hobby education is quite unclearly divided between different sectors and domains of ministries and local governments.

Analysis of the organization of the field of Estonian hobby education

In the newly independent Estonia, the tasks related to culture, sports, youth work[1] and hobby schools have been assigned to local authorities [Local Government Organisation Act]. After the administrative reform of municipalities in 2017, there are 79 municipalities in Estonia (15 towns and 64 rural municipalities). This has created a puzzle with various fragments, where the organisation of arts and culture education and hobby education depends on the municipal budget, political priorities and administrative capacity.

The broad range of hobby education is mapped by the Estonian Education Information System (EHIS), which classifies hobbies into the following areas: (1) sports, (2) technology, (3) nature, (4) music and arts, (5) general culture, including ethnic schools [Public education standard 2007].

In parallel to municipal institutions and general education schools, private institutions are also providing arts and culture education as well as a wide scale of hobby education as a service, often competing with the former for subsidies, students and teachers. In the academic year 2019/20, there were 731 hobby schools in Estonia (of which only 141 were municipal schools, the rest were private), of which 287 are sport schools, 144 music and art schools, 26 technology, nature, creative-hobby

[1] Earlier versions of the Local Government Organisation Act mentions youth work alone (§ 6.1), while the 2018 version refers separately to cultural, sports and youth work.

houses or centres, and 274 other institutions (see Figure 1). The number of hobby schools has doubled in ten years, mainly owing to private schools. Two thirds of the municipal hobby schools (97 out of 141) are music and art schools [HaridusSilm, platform for Estonian educational statistics].

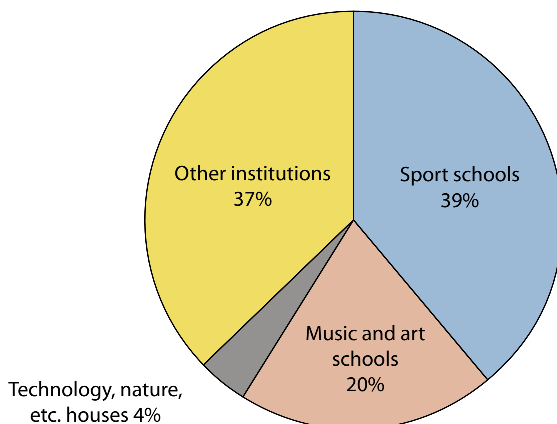

Figure 1. The division of hobby schools in Estonia.

The state's activities in the field of hobby education have been dispersed between several ministries: the national model of additional funding for hobby education was worked out by the Ministry of Culture, but developments are directed by the Department of Youth and Talent Policy of the Ministry of Education and Research and implemented by the Education and Youth Board.

In addition to the mentioned organizational setting, sub-institutions of the Ministry of Culture concern themselves with hobby education: for example, the Folk Culture Centre and the Song and Dance Festival Foundation, where the focus is on providing access to hobby education for all age groups in the field of heritage and folk culture. Additionally, the artistic associations and their sub-organisations are also involved in hobby arts and education, providing a range of training and consultation opportunities for the hobbyists.

Hobby education as part of non-formal education is taking place in the cultural field, in the frame of activities of museums and nature, research and discovery centres (the Estonian Research Council supervises their development activities). In addition to the cultural field, non-formal education and its networks form their own separate institutional field of folk high schools, adult training centres, day-care centres for the elderly that offer opportunities for artistic activities and all kinds of practical self-development such as language and computer learning, social skills, etc.

Thus, there are many different forms of work in the field of non-formal and hobby education – public pre-schools and vocational training institutions, a network of music and art schools run by local authorities, private schools, studios, courses, training providers, etc. – targeted at children, young people, adults and the elderly. The responsibilities for hobby education are dispersed between the domains of different ministries (Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Affairs).

In the following, we introduce a survey where representatives of the field of hobby education in Estonia describe their situation from their own perspective. One of the aims of the survey was to examine how terminological and organisational confusion has impact on practice.

Survey in the field of Estonian hobby education

In order to map the problems related to the institutional organisation of hobby education, we conducted a survey in spring 2019 in the LimeSurvey environment of web-based questionnaires of the University of Tartu. This was the first mapping survey of the Estonian ENO (The European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education) and is not statistically representative for the whole field. The questionnaires were distributed through networks and representative organisations of hobby education (hobby schools) and recreational activities. 128 people visited the online survey, 72 of them replied to all questions, the others replied partially or simply visited. For the sake of statistical clarity, we analyse only those answers where all the questions have been answered. In order to ensure anonymity, the respondents did not have to specify the name of the institution for which they provided information. Multiple answer options were available for a number of questions.

72 respondents defined their organisation's area of activity as follows: hobby education (with a curriculum approved in the Estonian Education Information System) (30 respondents), recreational activity (45), pre-vocational training (1), mediation of courses (3), other (14). As we defined hobby education through a curriculum registered in the Estonian Education Information System, the majority of respondents (63%) were in the category of recreational activity. There were four schools, four culture centres or organisers and three youth centres or youth work organisers in the category "Other", but other activities such as "music education in kindergarten", "organising of courses/camps", "promotion and preservation of a minority culture, language courses", etc. were also mentioned. Accordingly, respondents represented a wide variety of different types of institutions.

Most of the respondents represented the field of folk culture (41), followed by fine arts (33) and sports (13). The category "Other" included dance (4), music (4),

theatre (1), STEM/nature, exact sciences and technology, including IT (2), youth work (2), culture club, language learning (1), local government (1), basic school (1), either as a clarification or as a separate area. Folk culture, a term sometimes used for all amateur activities, indicates here mostly folk dance and choir singing that have been very popular due to the Song and Dance Festivals.

It could be noticed that most of the surveyed organisations had a long history and traditions. Nine organisations had operated less than five years, nine for 5–10 years, 17 for 10–20 years and 37 for more than 20 years. Young people (aged 7–26 years, 57 answers), adults (35), children (25) and, delightfully, also the retired (18) were seen as their main target groups. This confirmed our opinion that the main target group for hobby education and recreational activities is not only young people, but people of all ages.

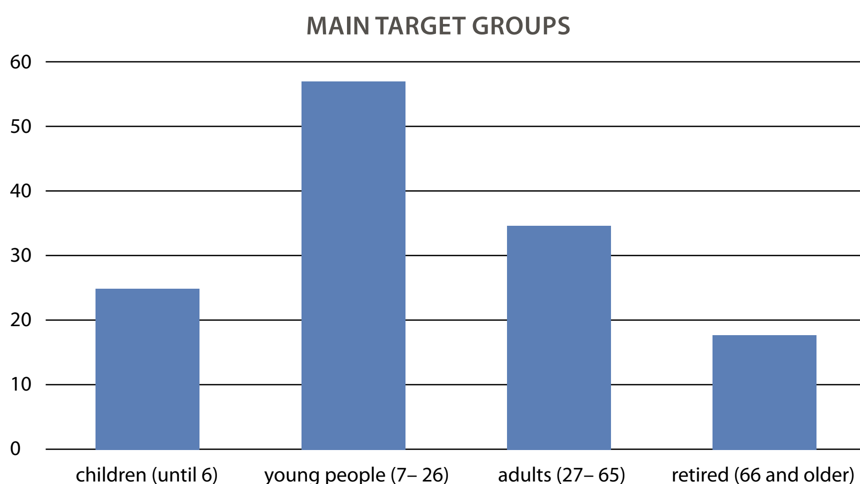

Figure 2. Responses to the question “What is the main target group for your organisation?”

78% of the respondents admitted that the biggest problem in their field of activity is economic (missing or unstable funding, etc.). 46% of the institutions also have organisational problems (lack of suitable premises, rehearsing time, tutors, insufficient information, etc.) and 13% have creative problems (lack of development, low/high level of recreational activity, etc.). In the category “Other”, the remuneration of teachers/instructors (3), lack of (high-quality) instructors (2), limited space, low interest of the population in what is provided in this location, relative poverty of learners/families, lack of public support was also identified as problems.

The main fund providers for hobby education and recreational activities are local authorities (51), students and members (48) and the state (30). Hence, less than half of the organisations receive public support and, in most cases, hobby education is to

be paid for by municipalities and students. A vast majority (55%) of organisations in hobby education receive permanent funding as well as apply for project grants, while 34% operate with permanent funding only and 12% with project grants only. 90% of the respondents stated that the number of students and members had increased or remained the same over the last three years.

In the "Comments" section, three topics can be detected: (1) financing, (2) personnel policy and (3) valuation.

(1) The biggest problem is the uncertainty, lack of transparency and local variability in the funding of hobby education. Public funding provided through the local government is deemed as not transparent and there are no procedures to control its purposeful use. Local funding is politicised in some cases, i. e. depending on the party affiliation of the municipality and school leaders. Municipal and private hobby education is believed to be unequally treated. It is also difficult to navigate the funding systems of different municipalities. *The procedures for the financing of hobby education on a uniform basis in all municipalities* (*is needed*). *Today, everyone is different and as we have children from around 30 different municipalities, it is extremely complicated.*

(2) Personnel problems include finding and keeping teachers and instructors, as many work with an authorisation agreement, thus lacking social guarantees and low remuneration. The salaries and image of full-time or part-time teachers is not much better either. There is no quality system for hobby education and therefore, the quality of teaching and the level of teachers have no impact on the funding of organisations.

Teachers of fine arts or sports who work as extracurricular hobby group instructors are, as defined by law, teachers [HKKN 2014], but in most cases, are not remunerated based on the salary scales for teachers working in general education schools and therefore they feel that their work is not sufficiently valued. The unorganised system of professions and fees in hobby education is definitely not sustainable, as demonstrated by the analysis of the financial situation and the social security of instructors of the folk-dance groups, ethnic music groups, choirs and orchestras [Ester et al. 2019].

Another problem is that many instructors in hobby education have the position of a youth worker with a much lower salary than a teacher. Youth work cannot be equated with hobby education, where teachers have to be first specialists in their professional domain (art, dance, music, sports, etc.), secondly in the pedagogy of the subject. Therefore, their preparation is interdisciplinary and takes much longer than a 3-year bachelor's degree in youth work. For example, in order to become a music teacher, one has to become a musician first, which takes at least 7–11 years. In order to acquire the pedagogical skills, one has to study one or two more years.

(3) The third issue in our study was the topic of valuation: *We wish-expect appreciation, acknowledgement and stable financial support from the state*.

Professional identity requires clear terminology and organisational basis, and national support and acknowledgement is expected. The position of the field and the professional identity of the people working there also depend on the interest and attention paid by the state.

As pursuant to the law, attempts have been made for some years already to introduce the term *youth worker* as a general term in arts and hobby education, which has caused uncertainty and blurring of professional identity among teachers and instructors in hobby education.

The problem of valuation is largely related to the teachers' symbolic capital and income that instructors or youth workers do not have. The position of teacher has historically had a high symbolic value in Estonian society. Also, the minimum salary of teachers has been in correlation with GDP and often used in political pledges.

As vocational and professional identity is a key factor that shapes a person's self-image and self-esteem, by constantly blurring the professional identity people receive signals that their profession is of little value, which does not encourage any person with the dedicated mission or vocation to cultural mediation, causing so-called cognitive dissonance. Yet we know that the communities with people who provide hobby education to local children, young people, adults or the elderly are more cohesive and viable [KEA 2009]. As the contribution of these people to the creation and maintenance of communities has great social impact, these people and professions should be valued.

Here, the centralised cultural and educational policies are favoured not only for more stable funding, but also for a common quality system. *The nationwide system, both in terms of funding and in terms of substantive quality-enhancing regulations,* is expected. Greater valuation of hobby education is also expected from the media, which could cover more amateur concerts, stage productions or exhibitions.

This short overview, while mapping broader problems of hobby education, does not address the development needs of specific municipalities and organisations. Financial and human resources vary greatly by municipality and therefore also the bottlenecks.

Conclusion

Two major problems have been identified: (1) the financing and administration of the field is dispersed between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture as well as state, local municipalities and private entities; (2) hobby education is treated as a sub-area of youth work and not as an independent area of lifelong learning.

It is evident that Estonian cultural and educational policies lack a holistic view of the hobby and non-formal education. Therefore, hobby education as the type of education has lost its historically important position and is trapped both terminologically and administratively between different domains.

In fact, hobby education is an interdisciplinary field that embraces education, culture, health and social wellbeing and it needs a cross-sectoral view and cooperation for the development. As the article demonstrated, the terminological confusion and the institutional plurality affects also professional identity and satisfaction of agents in the field.

Hobby education needs more attention from policy-makers and increasingly academic research in terms of cultural and educational policies' conceptualization and sociological analysis. Only then could it gain a better position and a presence in the priorities of politicians and officials.

Finally, hobby education deserves more attention, conceptualization, and targeting in the context of overall population development (human resources), as well as regulation as a comprehensive system. The current system needs to be taken inventory of at all levels: study programs for hobby group instructors and organizers of culture, as well as the remuneration of art and cultural education-related professions, should be meaningfully linked.

It is important to recognize and value hobby education as part of the educational system and raise its position nationally. Increased knowledge and understanding of the wide impact of hobby education allows us to consider it as a human right and prerequisite for cultural participation and well-being in society.

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THE ROLE AND READINESS OF LIBRARIANS IN PROMOTING DIGITAL LITERACY: A CASE STUDY FROM LATVIA

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Abstract

Rapid development of digital technologies significantly transforms the world, and it demands new approaches to the education. Formal education systems are not ready to provide digital skills needed for citizens to follow those changes. Informal, nonformal and lifelong education become more significant source of knowledge in this area and public libraries as well as librarians are expected to play a significant role in promoting of digital literacy. The main goal of this study is to understand the readiness of librarians from public libraries to be promoters of digital literacy and their awareness about their role in this context. Discussion in this article is based on findings of a case study in Latvia. Data were collected using qualitative research methods including focus group discussions with library experts and in-depth interviews with librarians from public libraries. Research results indicated that librarians do not have a clear understanding of their role, rights and responsibilities in supervising of young people`s digital activities in public libraries. Non-awareness of their role as mediators of digital literacy together with lack of time and insufficient technological preparedness seem to create a risk for librarians to a giving-up attitude, but if not giving-up then applying restrictive

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mediation practices. Results indicated that active, collaborative mediation practices are still in the evolving stage. Research results suggested that it is very important to support librarians via providing them opportunities to participate in professional development programs raising awareness about their role as mediators of digital literacy and increasing their readiness for that role.

Keywords: *public library, librarian, mediation, digital literacy, youth.*

Introduction

Rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed the world and human lives. Public libraries like other institutions have met different challenges as a result of technological transformations, but at the same time they can play a significant role in promoting digital literacy necessary for citizens living in digital society. Authorities as local governments and European Parliament focussing to the needs of individuals in emerging digital society are doing efforts to define a new role of public libraries. Libraries are expected to act as useful resources for digital literacy and the role of librarians should be changed from sharing and archiving information to promoting skills needed in current societies [Lison & Reip 2016; Zignani et al. 2020]. International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) announced that libraries should position digital literacy as a core service, with adequate planning, budget and staff, pointing out that librarians may need training themselves to be able to teach digital literacy [IFLA 2017].

In the time when formal education systems mostly don't provide digital skills needed for youth today [Oļesika et al. 2021; Turner et al. 2017] informal learning activities outside of school and also in libraries have become a significant source of promoting digital literacy. Libraries today are trying to attract young people by developing programs aiming to facilitate informal learning, creation and socialization [Koh & Abbas 2016]. Such initiatives are necessary today when teens and tweens make more and longer use of different digital platforms than ever, meantime being highly self-confident and independent from their parents and educators in their attitudes towards their life in digital landscape [Brikse et al. 2014] as it has been pointed out also in the recent EU Kids Online survey 2019 as well [Smahel et al. 2020].

Earlier research data from the EU Kids Online study indicated that Latvia was at the top of Internet usage by children in public libraries: 46% of young respondents indicated that they connect to the Internet from libraries and other public places, while the EU average it was at only 12%. To the question of whether they had ever received advice on Internet usage from librarians, 21% answered that they had –

nevertheless a high indicator compared to the European average (6%) [Brikše & Spurava 2014]. The difference can be related to the significant investments on free-of-charge Internet access points in public libraries in Latvia. In late 2006 with the support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation the supply of computers and software to public libraries, providing Wi-Fi Internet access, training of librarians started [Sawaya et al. 2011].

According to Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) Latvia ranks in the 18th position among European Union (EU) countries and there are problems with digital skills of citizens of Latvia – only 43% of people have basic digital skills (EU average: 58%), and – 24% have advanced digital skills (EU average: 33%) [European Commission 2020]. Meantime digital skills are recognized as important and necessary to develop in several political and conceptual documents of Latvia (Plan for National Development of Latvia, 2020–2027 [Cross Sectoral Coordination Center 2020]; Cultural Policy Guidelines: 2021–2027 (Project) [Latvijas Republikas Kultūras ministrija 2021] etc.). Based on these documents it is possible to conclude that the main directions of the library work in the context of digitalization of society are the following: development of digital resources; development of new digital services; and training in digital literacy.

This article suggests discussion about readiness of librarians of public libraries in Latvia to promote digital literacy in society. Latvia is one of the richest countries with libraries in Europe, according to statistical data there is one library per 2254 inhabitants [Public Libraries 2030, 2019]; there were 770 public libraries with 4.2 million direct and 2.7 million virtual visits and with 1635 librarians working there in 2020 [Latvijas Nacionālā bibliotēka n.d.]. Discussion in this article is based on findings of case study in Latvia. Empirical data were collected using qualitative research methods, library experts and librarians from public libraries were interviewed for this study. The main focus is on librarians as mediators of digital literacy of young people. Young people are considered here based on their biological age as under-aged, under 18 years old, school-aged from 9 years up as in the EUKIDS Online study [Smahel et al. 2020].

Librarian as mediator of digital literacy

Two main approaches of librarian's role have been discussed: *pragmatic approach* rationally defining librarians' responsibilities and accordingly required digital skills in information society and *critical-transformative approach* based on idea about librarians' mission as agents of change promoting cooperation and participation in knowledge society. Looking *pragmatically* to librarians' roles Janes has formulated some new jobs for librarians: for example, embedded librarian, content packaging librarian, robotic maintenance engineer, lifestyle design librarian [Janes 2013].

Vassilakaki et al. have similarly listed, for example, librarian as technology specialist, information consultant and knowledge manager [Vassilakaki et al. 2014]. Whilst looking from *critical-transformative* perspective librarians are rather responsible for creating conditions for people to learn, for example, via cooperation, mutual communication or by providing access to conversations and materials to enrich conversations together with enhancing knowledge creation and building upon the motivation of members or communities.

In this case study, librarians are considered as *mediators* of digital literacy. Their approach to mediation may show out either *pragmatic* or *critical-transformative* approach in understanding media uses and information as well. Moreover, there might show out *transmission-based* approach as a top-down information transfer of digital literacy [e. g. Grossberg et al. 1998; Livingstone 1990; Sefton-Green et al. 2009].

According to Jose Martin-Barbero [Martin-Barbero 1993; 2006] mediation is a user-centred critical approach to media focusing to the subjects and movements as actors in the interaction process. Carlos Scolari translates mediation as a space for understanding the interactions between digitalized production and receivers [Scolari 2015]. For example, mediation happens when the user is reading news online through his/her critical interpretations. As a concept, mediation has been used in several fields and contexts and, it is criticized that the meaning has been taken in most cases as given instead of contextual reflection [e. g. Scolari 2015]. In this study mediation is considered as librarians interaction practices as mediators in between youth as users and digitalized media like social media and games as production.

Close to this study have been reflections on parental mediation and teachers' mediation. The concept of *parental mediation* in the context of youth media usage has been used regarding television studies, where it mainly is reflected as parents' supervision modes. Previous studies have identified different parental mediation practices as *active, restrictive, technical, instructive mediation, co-use* among others [Livingstone & Helsper 2008]. Later explanation of restrictive, co-use and active mediation have been constituted by *gatekeeping, diversionary, discursive and investigative activities* [Jiow et al. 2017].

Parents have been perceived as the most significant adult mediators in children's digital media experiences [Livingstone & Haddon 2009] as well in Latvia [Brikse et al. 2014] in which results indicated that the ability of parents to serve their children as mediators of Internet use is questionable because of their lack knowledge and interest in youth digital culture. Hence the potential role of other possible adult mediators, such as teachers and librarians, takes on added significance. There are few studies on *teachers' mediation* also in Baltic countries Estonia and Latvia [Kalmus

et al. 2012] in which teacher's capacity is rated high indicating teachers as *"the most powerful mediators of digital technology"* at school [Karaseva et al. 2015].

Even parental and teachers' media practices have been studied, there remains room for conceptualization of librarians as mediators of digital literacy for young people. Regarding youth guidance and supervision, recent librarian-oriented studies focus on defining new roles of librarians as educators, supporters, co-creators and coordinators of youngsters in libraries' technology-enabled environments connected informal learning – as mediators-like [Koh and Abbas 2016*;* Clegg et al. 2018], suggesting that these informal venues of learning can be important spaces where digital literacy is employed and cultivated [Meyers et al. 2013]. However, question remains how well-prepared librarians are to provide digital support to citizens [Ojaranta and Litmanen-Peitsala 2019] and more specifically to young people.

Frameworks of digital literacy

Academic discussion on digital literacy dates back to the 1980s [Pangrazio 2014] and, some authors place the start to the 1990s as Gilster who approaches it as *transmission of information*: the ability to understand and use the information retrieved from various digital sources and resources [Gilster 1997]. Transmission model has been criticized, for example, as being a top-down model focusing on information processing and effects of the contents online to the user. Julian Sefton-Green, Ola Erstad and Helen Nixon have criticized the transmission model focusing the teaching of computer-related technical skills and having the unintended marginalizing mechanism in the concept of digital literacy echoing the illiterate person as well: these skills are not available for all. In this respect, public libraries belong to those institutions which can overcome this kind of digital inequalities [Sefton-Green et al. 2009]. Moreover, Colin Lankshear and Michelle Knobel [2015] have criticized the traditional frameworks of digital literacy too much focusing on the transmission model as truth-centric stance concerning of truth as users being "manipulated *or duped*" and focusing to alphabetic, print literacy as an autonomous entity [Lankshear & Knobel 2015]. Especially the latter one belongs to the core basis of libraries.

Approaches to the digital literacy range from focussing on skilful use of digital tools and services and the ability to use information and digital technologies to more *pragmatic frameworks,* where digital literacy means more than mastering the technical aspects of digital tools available. For example, Buckingham [Buckingham 2019] sees the concept of digital literacy as quite narrow, mostly with the focus on the use of technologies and he suggests concept of media literacy as much broader, but Meyers et al. suggest digital literacy comprising three elements: technology skills, critical thinking capacities and contextually situated practices, where digitally

literate person is creative agent who operates within socio-technical network that affords opportunities for extension, sharing and learning [Meyers et al. 2013]. Additionally, digital literacy for some authors means the involvement of managing the social situations and structuring users' social identities in digital cultures [e. g. Jones & Hafner 2012].

Renee Hobbs sees digital literacy in the historical line of the elite's literacy movements associated with modernity and technological progress [Hobbs 2016]. Together with Colin Lankshear & Michelle Knobel [Lanshear & Knobel 2015] she is calling for contextual and situational examination of digital literacy through *sociocultural framework of literacy* following the ideas of Vygotsky [Vygotsky 1978]. Lankshear & Knobel [Lanshear & Knobel 2015] suggest for understanding digital literacies as multiple literacies following the concept of multiliteracies by Cazden et al. [Cazden et al. 1996] as the *transformative, critical framework.* Suggesting as an overcoming of critical and pragmatic frameworks Luci Pangrazio [Pangrazio 2014] is formulating *critical digital design literacy.* That counts, for example, transcendental critique through distancing oneself from digital networks and, then realising positive changes and data visualization to de-contextualise digital texts, tools and practices through self-creation as critical design, which mostly is in the core of multiliteracy as well [Cazden et al. 1996].

Apparently digital literacy can mean different things to different people in different contexts as it is suggested also by Hobbs & Coiro [Hobbs & Coiro 2018]. That is a reason why it is important to understand what digital literacy means in a particular context like library. Terminology matters because it is related with professional identities of educators and necessary for representatives of academic environment, learning developers and learning technologists for development of shared understanding of their aims [Secker 2018]. Thus, how is the readiness of librarians in public libraries to act as mediators of digital literacy for young people? Which frameworks of digital literacy they apply as the base for their understanding?

Methods

Data collection (2015–2017) for this case study was based on qualitative research methods including three focus group discussions with *library experts* (all total 24) and twelve in-depth interviews with *librarians*. Experts were represented by managers of different departments of National Library of Latvia and managers of regional public libraries representing different regions of Latvia. Focus group discussions took place in Riga in the premises of the Latvian National Library. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with librarians from public libraries in Latvia were conducted. The selection of respondents locally was based on convenience sampling and voluntary cooperation.

Interviews with librarians were conducted as face-to-face communication at the libraries where interviewed librarians were working at the time of the interview. Interviews were done and focus group discussions were moderated in the Latvian language by the corresponding author of this paper being a native Latvian. All interviews and discussions were recorded, and they were transcribed before analysing the text. In reporting the findings, librarian respondents are referred as *Interviewees* and, senior library experts as *Experts.* Translation from Latvian into English has been done by the corresponding author.

To analyse the data, framework of thematic analysis suggested by Braun & Clarke [Braun & Clarke 2006] was applied. According to them thematic analysis is the method for identifying, analysing, interpreting, and reporting themes or patterns arising within qualitative research data. Researchers started to be familiar with these study data already in the process of conducting interviews and moderating focus group discussions. As suggested [Braun & Clarke 2006; Castleberry & Nolen 2018] transcriptions were done by researchers to be even more familiar with the data, after reading and rereading was done through all the data set in full [Castleberry & Nolen 2018]. The next phase was coding, looking for similarities and differences in data identifying themes, concepts or ideas that have some relations with each other [Austin & Sutton 2014]. After all data were coded, sorting of different codes into potential themes was done [Braun & Clarke 2006]. The following major themes in data sets were identified: (a) librarians' mediation practices of young people's Internet use in libraries; (b) librarians' awareness of their role in promoting digital literacy; (c) librarians' technological preparedness.

Findings

Responses given by librarians regarding their mediation practices of young people's Internet use in libraries varied from *given-up or non-aware* attitudes to either *transmission-based and/or pragmatic* approaches of librarians. Mostly these differences were related to (a) understanding or non-understanding of a librarian's own role as mediator, (b) librarians having or lacking digital capability and skills of using the technologies, and (c) the time resources of all librarians.

1. Lacking time with given-up attitude

Library experts describe librarians' given-up attitudes in several ways linked with lacking time as in this example: "*When it comes to playing computer games situation is a very painful topic. There are many librarians who do not see it as a problem. And they are very busy. They have learnt to put up with the situation – so what! Yes, they are playing computer games – what can we do about it?*" (Expert 7). Similarly, some of the librarians admit that they do not pay much attention to what children do on

the Internet in libraries and often their activities are not monitored at all, because of lacking time even if they had interest to monitor: *"I do not sit down with them and do not watch what they do here. Sometimes I have seen some young people come here and have fun together... then I monitor something, but not always, I don't have time always"* (Interviewee 8).

In focus group discussions with library experts, it was indicated that safe Internet use is mostly left in the hands of young people alone because of missing technological filters and other tech aid for monitoring: *"Safety is something visitors need to deal with alone. There are no technological possibilities and filters used to monitor and restrict anything. Recently there was a big scandal in the library because some children had watched porn, but the librarian's response was – well, there are rules, and according to the rules it is not allowed. It is all up to children"* (Expert 13).

In these examples above the respondents apply *transmission framework* as the base of their understanding since there is seen a wish to restrict or technically monitor [e. g. Sefton-Green et al. 2009; Livingstone & Helsper 2008]. Moreover, restriction is hidden to the referring of the rules in the library for the Internet use, as in this example: *"Every library has its own rules of Internet use, which are very important, and this is the place where the main conditions are specified, and a librarian tries to control them."* But in some cases, the usefulness of these rules is put under question: *"The rules are displayed on the wall. But how many of them have actually read it – I don't know!"*

2. Awareness of own role as mediator

Findings show that librarians are often confused, non-aware of their role and responsibilities to influence processes related to youngsters' online activities in libraries, as has been the case with parental mediation as well [e. g. Livingstone & Helsper 2008]. For example, they express confusion with the lack of understanding of their own role together with rights to influence on youth gaming: *"I don't know if I have the right to my opinion, but I think that they don't need to play online games all day long. It can turn anyone into a fool. Some of them are completely addicted to it. I have no idea what can be done there"* (Interviewee 3). Librarians also admitted their poor understanding about online gaming: *"Those shooting games they play there; they can always find them. I do not understand it. They are much smarter than me in terms of computer games"* (Interviewee 5). These examples show librarians' understanding of youth gaming based on the transmission framework, since they are worried about the effects [e. g. Sefton-Green et al. 2009] and their wish to apply restricting as mediation [Jiow et al. 2017].

One librarian respondent reflects her role as mediator with *critical aspect on the autonomy of librarian* when providing anonymity-based public services balancing with personalized supervision online, as in this example: *"It is a complicated matter*

when it comes to the use of social networking sites in libraries and to what extent a librarian can get involved in it... The idea is that the public library services should be anonymous. In theory a librarian cannot really control the use of social networking sites. On the other hand, users are only children and young people, who require supervision. Where is that balance?" (Interviewee 3).

There is prevailing opinion in the interviews with librarians and expert focus group discussions that the librarian should be capable of teaching a child that the Internet can be used for other things but entertainment or communication in social networking sites: "*In terms of information literacy, the most important task of the librarian is to encourage a child to study. A librarian should be able to understand the child's interests and to show how to search for what is interesting to him and also needed for his studies"* (Expert 5). Results show that librarians do not really know their role in supervising it: *"I would like to say that the situation is very poor when it comes to researching and learning something on the Internet. They are simply not interested. And I cannot really restrict them, what should I tell them – that they should not play computer games and do something else?"* (Interviewee 4). Similar observations prevail in the statements of majority librarians as respondents of this study transmission based, still hesitating some other possible solutions to interact with young people as this latter interviewee states. Mixed transmission and pragmatic orientations showed up [e. g. Jones & Hafner 2012; Meyers et al. 2013]. Both librarians and experts arrived at the same conclusion that the most important task of librarians would be to teach youngsters how to work with information: *"To search for information on particular topics correctly, to master various guides, to look for the shortest way. Information evaluation. It can be the basic task. For slightly more advanced teenagers – practical skills in audio processing, video processing. Different creative expressions"* (Interviewee 8).

The librarians pointed out that in order to provide professional support to children and young people in the field of digital literacy they need to understand what their role is and what kind of knowledge and skills are necessary to fulfil their duties: *"If I know what I need to know, I will learn it. But I have to tell that there are children who are smarter than me. They grasp everything faster"* (Interviewee 8).

3. Technological preparedness

Nearly all librarians and experts admitted that children have much better capabilities to use new digital technologies than they have: *"Nowadays children understand what to do with a computer. You may laugh but nowadays those wearing nappies, have a better understanding of computers than I do"* (Interviewee 5). However, librarians do not self-assess their digital skills and capabilities equally, librarians working in cities evaluate themselves higher, whereas the librarians of country regions with some exceptions are more critical. It is also acknowledged in the expert

discussion: *"The level is much higher in the city libraries of regional centres. You will not always come across a parish librarian with the highest level of skill"* (Expert 3).

The role of training and teaching courses providing the pure technological knowledge and skills for librarians was emphasized both in librarian interviews and expert discussions as *transmission-based understanding* [e. g. Sefton-Geen et al. 2009]. Library experts described how the management of libraries plays a significant role in the provision of librarian training. Currently, there is lack of public resources and non-awareness in applying for funding. This situation leaves librarians on their own for educating themselves: *"Public libraries had very many courses, everybody went to some training. Now, it is up to a librarian to think of it or it depends on the library's management. In the places where the library's management is not so advanced and able to attract funding, librarians are left alone with their problem"* (Expert 11).

It was described as a challenge requiring time and effort from librarians to follow up with any changes in the development of technologies: *"It is a common situation that at the beginning it is difficult for a librarian to accept the novelties. You feel yourself comfortable with what you have learnt, and whenever there is something new that needs to be mastered and you need to make yourself do it, it is extra time and efforts that are needed"* (Expert 4). Posing that problem together with significant changes in the use of technologies, experts brought the necessity for more *transformative approaches* to the work of librarians with young people: to work with children through collaborative means rather than only monitor and supervise based on transmission-oriented top-down ways: *"The emphasis and roles of the Internet use and especially the use of technologies has changed, as often as not it is the children who train the older generation"* (Expert 5).

Discussion

This case study indicates that librarians are not well prepared and do not have a clear understanding of their role, rights and responsibilities in supervising of young people's digital activities. This is the main contextual hindering aspect for mediation practices in digital literacy for young people among respondents. Because of the lacking understanding together with the lack of time and low level of technological competence, librarians in this case study often avoid taking any mediation activities at all.

Non-awareness of their role as mediator together with lack of time from other daily-based duties seem to lead to a **giving-up attitude**. It means that they let young people to act, play and communicate online on their own in the library. This is the main finding of this study.

If not given up, they mostly apply **restrictive mediation practices** through *transmission framework-based understanding,* which is in the line with studies on

parental mediation [e. g. Livingstone & Helsper 2008; Jiow et al. 2017]. Findings in this case study suggest a wish to technically monitor youth activities: librarians were missing, for example, technological filters. Moreover, librarians and experts were worried about the effects of media, especially gaming and if there was too much usage of entertainment online instead of studying online.

Even though transmission framework shows up as mainstream in this study, many of the respondents were hesitating some other possible solutions to interact with young people. *Mixed transmission and pragmatic orientations* showed up as well, which follows previous library studies [e. g. Jones & Hafner 2012; Vassilakaki & Moniarou-Papaconstantinou 2015]. Both librarians and experts arrived at the same conclusion that the most important task of librarians would be to teach youngsters how to work with information as youth-based creations by digital means. Especially, expert respondents brought the necessity for more transformative, critical approaches to the work of librarians with young people: to work with children through collaborative means rather than only monitor and supervise based on transmission-oriented top-down ways. Based on the case study, this kind of **active, collaborative mediation practices** are in the evolving stage.

According to librarians themselves in order to provide professional support to children and young people in the field of digital literacy, many of them were keen to understand, clarify their role: what kind of knowledge and skills are necessary to fulfil their duties. Moreover, **reflection with critical aspect on the autonomy** of librarian was visible in the study, asking the balance between supervision of youth groups and anonymity-based public services in the library. Even librarian respondents would be interested in educating themselves, this study shows the lack of public resources and management of libraries which leave education to librarians themselves, even pure technological one. How then to overcome a solution for educating librarians?

Conclusions

Despite the limitations of this study as a qualitative culture-sensitive Latvian case study not reaching any generalizations [Bennett & Elman 2008], some suggestions can be made based on it. Data collection of this study is from 2015–2017, so it can be considered a bit old in a changing digital society. Still, for example, Heinonen has pointed out the need for finding ways to update and stabilize the ways of updating librarians' interest and skills in digital media literacy in Finland, even though the country has had cultural policy guidelines for media literacy since 2013, updated 2019 [Ministry of Education and Culture 2019].

As practical conclusion, first youth involvement will be highlighted as one solution. Younger people have potential to become not only the beneficiaries of digital literacy, but also the drivers of this field as being the ones who gain the

knowledge and educate others like librarians. It can be suggested that young people can become agents of change in libraries who can fill the knowledge gaps regarding different aspects of digital literacy. It is essential to change the mindset and redefine librarians' roles focussing on their potential support in creating libraries as connected, interest-driven and peer-supported environments for young people allowing them dictate directions by themselves [Clegg & Subramaniam 2018].

This is in line with the second conclusion, the social value of public libraries as cooperation, with their capacity to bring together different stakeholders – including government, community organizations as schools, retirement homes to create effective partner networks with these institutions [Field & Tran 2018]. For example, Virve Miettinen [Miettinen 2018] suggests co-designing with the users of library, a method which highlights new possibilities to develop libraries as places of community's collective life. Libraries have a good potential to become also community hubs for digital and media literacy education, where patrons of libraries are active and interested in learning. Libraries encourage community engagement via providing different innovative teaching-learning programs and services [Hobbs et al. 2019]. Moreover, data suggested that it is important to support librarians by providing opportunities for them to participate in professional development programs in digital literacy, designed based on knowledge about librarians' needs and understanding of their motivation to learn as similarly it is suggested by Hobbs & Coiro [Hobbs & Coiro 2018]. This conclusion is also supported by recent quantitative research aiming to map librarians` professional development needs in Europe [Zignani et al. 2020]. According to results of this research majority of librarians in public libraries in Latvia agree that it is highly important for them to regularly improve digital skills related to information, data, and media literacy [Zignani et al. 2020].

Third solution is collaborative research initiatives with academy and library. The opportunity to serve the research needs of libraries cover digital literacies as well as plural, both from the perspective of professional experts as librarians, perspective of children and youths and, perspective of library as an institution and a community hub. Large-scale statistical evidence-based studies can be suggested including comparative settings which are needed, for example, in the Nordic region with close of each other having networks of public libraries. But it is important to develop innovative research approaches, appropriate for a fast-changing world to serve society, but also at general approach to educational policy and, professional development. The participatory research methods-based approach can be the way forward to work together with librarians and young people to create a future-oriented environment in public libraries, suitable for informal learning activities and promoting digitally sustainable life.

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