

EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF ART HISTORY AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT AREA IN PROGRAMMES OF FORMAL EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA: THE ASPECT OF *VZGOJA*, ACCORDING TO GENERAL EUROPEAN GUIDELINES⁴⁵

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ABSTRACT

Programmes of formal education establish a systematic transfer of knowledge as well as universal values from one generation to another. By that, they ensure the survival of social structures, prevent radical disruptions in their continuity, and serve as basis for general development of a society. Their content and didactic arrangements include interweaving of two basic aspects: the cognitive one and the one related to *vzgoja* (i.e. upbringing, moral/value education etc.). The latter aims to achieve the ideals of a tolerant, just and lifelong learning society, but seems to be facing increasing challenges, mainly emerging from neoliberal capitalist mentality. Art history as a school subject area in elementary and secondary education may provide an insight beneath the surface of historical events. Thus, it helps develop a critical view towards them and consequently towards the present real-life situations, which contributes to ascending the taxonomic scale of conative educational goals.

Key words: art history, formal education system, *vzgoja*, moral/value education, European guidelines

INTRODUCTION

As in every scientific discipline, new art history theories and interpretations of known facts are born, confirmed or disproved within its academic circles. They represent the undisputed cutting edge of human thought that initiates positive change, i.e. the development on any level of a society. In other words, they serve as tools to make the world a better place. This general idea of bettering humanity is summed up in the term *sustainable development*, which is also one of the main development efforts of the United Nations organisation ("United Nations: Development," n.d.). As first defined in 1987 (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], p. 41), "sustainability calls for a decent standard of living

⁴⁵ The topic was partially presented at the symposium Slovenian Art History and its Producers: The Past and Present Work of Professionals and their Social Role, Ljubljana, 5-6 December 2014.

for everyone without compromising the needs of future generations.”⁴⁶ An ability of individuals as well as the society altogether to hold to long-term improvement strategies instead of providing momentarily pleasant situations can only grow out of the individual’s firm inner system of universal human values. The study of humanities that incessantly try to answer the existential question ‘Who am I?’, is directly concerned with the reflection of values and hereby first of all teaches how to be (Komel, 2004, pp. 122–124). In this sense, scientific findings can fulfil their purpose only when they are considered beyond the closed scholarly discourse and are appropriately merged into other social structures. The process of dissemination can be intentional or unintentional, it occurs in different forms, and involves various target groups. If we concentrate solely on the intentional moral education, academic thoughts most intensively spread and socially apply through the programmes of formal education that can influence the widest audience.

The role of art history in upbringing and moral education is not explicitly evident and cannot be described in exact terms, as its effects reveal after a longer period through a more complex decision-making of an individual. Nevertheless, knowing and understanding the past and present art forms and concepts of one’s own cultural environment as well as the awareness of its importance in creating his or hers individual identity stimulate the formation of a more independent system of values and trigger a critical attitude towards the present reality. Art history knowledge raises new questions regarding moral responsibility and reasonableness of the individual’s conduct in a world of unbridled capitalism and hence contributes to the re-evaluation of established practices and ideological orientations that are otherwise on a daily basis accepted without any real consideration. The aim of the present paper is therefore to enlighten those aspects of art history as a school subject area that are crucial for successful education, more specifically the part that “implies the teacher’s intentional guidance of children in their moral, personal, social, aesthetical, physical, and spiritual advancement” (Skubic Ermenc, in print, [p. 1]), which in Slovenian is called *vzgoja*. The objectives are: (1) to define the purpose of art history courses as a part of general education in Slovenian elementary and secondary schools; (2) to clarify general European guidelines regarding *vzgoja* in formal educational processes; (3) to set out the formal aspect of *vzgoja* in Slovenian school system and the involvement of its goals in the curricula of art history subjects in elementary and secondary education; (4) to present the benefits of achieving the goals of *vzgoja* in connection to art history topics.

Accomplishment of these tasks will be attempted using different research methods: (1) an analysis of EU and Slovenian acts and other formal documents concerning education; (2) an analysis of curricula, containing art history topics in Slovenian elementary and secondary schools; (3) drawing inductive inferences based on author’s personal teaching experiences; (4) deductive applying of conclusions of theoretical research from attainable literature.

46 For a more detailed explanation of the sustainable development concept, see WCED (1987).

DETERMINATION OF *VZGOJA* AS A SPECIFIC ASPECT OF EDUCATION – A CRUCIAL TERMINOLOGICAL DILEMMA

Before we discuss the impact of studying art history topics on the student's personal growth in terms of values, moral standards, empathy and critical thinking, we have to clarify the meaning of the term *vzgoja* itself. Although it is sometimes translated in English as upbringing, or moral/spiritual/aesthetic education, the Slovenian concept has some specifics that obstruct from finding an accurate English terminological parallel (Skubic Ermenc, in print, [p. 4]). For this reason, we leave the term untranslated. According to Mojca Peček Čuk and Irena Lesar (2009, pp. 23–26, as cited in Skubic Ermenc, in print), *vzgoja*

/.../ implies the following dimensions: (1) it is an intentional process aimed at reaching aims related to the development (formation) of the whole child; (2) it is a relational process established in communication; (3) it is a process presupposing child's activity; and (4) it is a process embedded in historical and societal context. ([p. 4])

Within this concept, the mentioned author (Skubic Ermenc, personal communication, January 18, 2015) distinguishes between two different levels of *vzgoja*. On the one hand, the pedagogical micro level that deals with the principles of student-pedagogue relationship, and on the other hand, the pedagogical macro level which refers to "the activities of pedagogical staff and students in bringing about the democratic and inclusive school ethos" (ibid.). In the following chapters, the latter of these two aspects will be taken in consideration.⁴⁷

ART HISTORY AS A GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOL SUBJECT

The school subject area of art history is defined by the humanistic nature of the discipline itself. All school subjects in programmes of formal education that derive from this area are thus to be found within the group of general education subjects. The main characteristic of general education, which distinguishes it from the vocational/professional education, refers to the proposition that it represents a value in itself (Kodelja, 2004, p. 38). Moreover, its purpose is focused on "understanding oneself and the world around" rather than on achieving certain external, utilitarian goals (id., p. 36–38). The sociological value of general education was pointed out as far back as three decades ago by MacIntyre (1987, as cited in Šimenc, 2004, p. 56) who set out its role in the establishment of so-called "standards of rational objectivity". These standards represent the bases for a cogent discussion that, severed from the individual's emotion and interests, leads to confirmation or rejection of a proposed thesis (ibid.).

General European guidelines in terms of *vzgoja* in formal educational processes: the four pillars of education

Besides the obvious contribution to general education and partly just because of it, art history holds strong potentials in terms of *vzgoja*. Although we can observe and discuss it separately, *vzgoja* is tightly, even inseparably bound up with

⁴⁷ For a more exhaustive discussion on *vzgoja*, see Peček Čuk & Lesar (2009).

the cognitive aspect of education (Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, pp. 36–40). Accordingly, the achieving of cognitive educational goals cannot be realised in isolation from the goals related to *vzgoja* (ibid.). Furthermore, their deliberate and conscious interweaving may increase the effects in both areas of education (ibid.). This interdependence is important from a viewpoint of learning outcomes as well - knowledge without evenly balanced development of value criteria can quickly become dangerous and vice versa: pure moral education, from which the cognitive component is fully excluded, often proves to be ineffective, as it usually drops to the level of mere moralizing and therefore suffers resistance (ibid.). Clearly, no educational process can be performed ignoring the conative and affective part of a student's mind. Even when the teacher refuses to deal with them, he or she ignites changes simply by being present, by passing comments on the discussed topics and by the manner of his/hers professional and private functioning. Hence it follows that a teacher must be aware of key goals regarding *vzgoja*, which helps him or her avoid unconscious manipulation and indoctrination in the strict sense of the word. In this respect, Gert Biesta (2004) stated that:

/.../ teachers' professional judgement is not only about whether particular means are desirable but also about whether they are *educationally* desirable. To make such judgements, teachers need to have ideas about what is educationally worthwhile, ideas about what it means to be an educated person, ideas about 'the good life,' and ideals about 'the good society.' They need, in other words, educational ideals. (p. 4)

Democratically organised society considers its members as unique beings with diverse needs, expectations and desires and is by that opened to the formation of a social image on the basis of their personal decisions. The absence of a direct, formal and normative ideological code, delegates the responsibility for attaining the ideal of a tolerant, just and lifelong learning society, straight to individuals (cf. Delors, 1996, p. 14; Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, p. 120).⁴⁸

In the Report to UNESCO from the International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century, Jacques Delors (1996, pp. 16–17) put out the main tensions of the twenty-first century society.⁴⁹ The top-three ranked were the following:

- the tension between the global and the local that encourages people to become world citizens without losing their roots;
- the tension between the universal and the individual that calls attention to the importance of one's own traditions and culture, threatened to fade away on account of globalization;

48 According to John Dewey's (1916/2004) liberal stance towards the role of education in a modern society, there can be no successful democracy without a proper formal education: "The devotion of democracy to education is a familiar fact. The superficial explanation is that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." (p. 83)

49 According to the revision of the report from 2013 (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013, p. 8), "/.../ the vision outlined in the report is arguably still a relevant guiding framework for education development in today's world".

- the tension between tradition and modernity that, along with the request to adapt to change, raises the risk of turning back on the past.

In order to confront and overcome these tensions successfully, re-evaluation of the moral and cultural dimensions of education is of great necessity, "but this process must begin with self-understanding through an inner voyage whose milestones are knowledge, meditation and the practice of self-criticism" (id., p. 18). Art history lessons can actively engage in resolving the mentioned tensions: the first two tensions (global/local and universal/individual) by studying national art monuments and putting them into a wider, European and global context. The tension between tradition and modernity can be overcome either through seeking the timeless message of the classic works of art and its actualization or by learning about contemporary artistic creativity and its modified conceptual grounds in comparison with the art of previous periods.

According to UNESCO's report (Delors et al., 1996, pp. 77–88), the educational processes need to lean onto the so-called four pillars of education: (1) learning to know, (2) learning to do, (3) learning to live together, learning to live with others and (4) learning to be.

The first pillar – learning to know (id., pp. 78–80), is a well-known concept in the Slovenian school system, as it represented the only educational motive as well as its aim until the very end of the nineteenth century. In this aspect, art history contributes a systematic review of art periods, styles and movements with a selection of key artworks. The importance of this pillar lies in the knowledge itself, which is seen as a currency of *cultural capital*, and, due to its inalienable nature, maintains its value for an entire lifetime: "This embodied capital, external wealth converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus, cannot be transmitted instantaneously (unlike money, property rights, or even titles of nobility) by gift or bequest, purchase or exchange" (Bourdieu, 1986/2007, p. 85; cf. Lamont & Lareau, 1988, pp. 153–168). Nonetheless, art history knowledge serves its purpose only when its transmission is based on explaining a logical course of development according to the concept of cause and effect. Proper art historical contextualisation and making connections to other areas of human activity, enable interweaving of otherwise particularly discussed topics concerning our past. In this way, art history can form common conceptual frames and increase the probability that the knowledge will be stored in long-term memory.

The efforts for the implementation of *the second pillar – learning to do* (Delors et al., 1996, pp. 80–83) have a long history as well, since the appearance of the tendency towards *the concept of new school*.⁵⁰ In spite of that, we can hardly imagine its presence within art history lessons, at least when considered in terms of very specific work procedures and narrowly targeted skills. Let me refer to Dejan Hozjan (2004, p. 72) who stated that the conception of a working person has changed significantly: he is no longer a passive figure, but has to be constantly adapting to

50 This concept came into existence at the turn of the nineteenth century as a reaction to the so called *old school*, which was strongly pervaded by verbalism, formalism and dogmatism. In opposition to the old manner of teaching and learning which followed the motto *Repetitio est mater studiorum*, the *new school* rather relied on performing concrete activities (Poljak, 1983, pp. 10–11).

new circumstances and unique working situations. This is the main reason that contemporary Slovenian pedagogues and educators emphasize the importance of developing general competencies rather than previously endorsed qualifications (*ibid.*; cf. *The white paper on education in the Republic of Slovenia*, 2011, pp. 22–23). Competencies are defined as inseparable combinations of knowledge, skills and personal qualities that enable efficient functioning of an individual (cf. Hozjan, 2004, p. 73; cf. Rychen, 2004, pp. 21–22; cf. Tiana, 2004, pp. 36–38). Some of them have been recognised as crucial “for an individual to lead a successful and responsible life and for society to face the challenges of the present and the future” (Tiana, 2004, p. 39; cf. Rychen, 2004, p. 22) and are therefore determined as key competencies. Among them, art history lessons may help in developing social and citizenship competencies that are fostered only when familiarising with art heritage and contemporary art practices is followed by a critical social contextualisation.

The construction of the last two pillars that do not refer to cognitive processes but engage in the affective and moral sphere of the human mind is of greater challenge. They aim to form a wholesome, autonomous and critically oriented personality and tend to develop the ability to establish as well as maintain constructive relations with other members of social community. *The third pillar - learning to live together, learning to live with others*, embraces one of the highly topical issues of the contemporary society and involves training for tolerant coexistence (Delors et al., 1996, p. 84). We may overcome negative prejudices and choose healthy competition over relentless rivalry by discovering others but that can be successfully achieved only by discovering ourselves (*id.*, pp. 84–86). When students become familiar with the art historical assemblage of their environments, the knowledge about the past affects their emotions and their inner world of values (cf. Golob, 1997, p. 303), as it answers the basic existential questions: ‘Where do I come from?’ and ‘What role does the art heritage of my predecessors play in formation of my personal identity?’ These questions usually evoke a deeper reflection about one’s own beliefs, desires and fears, and later reflect in the real-life decision-making.

The fourth pillar - learning to be, is a logical next step from the previous three and deals with an individual’s personal responsibility for living in a more hospitable world (Delors et al., 1996, pp. 86–88). It is formed via development of independent, critical thinking, and an ability of one’s own judgement. These are also the two most obvious expressions of personal freedom, bound up with the awareness of taking a certain responsibility (*ibid.*). The construction of this pillar cannot be pursued simply by gaining art historical knowledge. This knowledge needs to encourage a deeper evaluation of a monument’s message and its social effects on the environment in and for which it was created. However, this is still not enough: contemplation, when constrained to historical situations, does not impact actual life stance. The pillar begins to build up when these messages from the past are crystallised into universal, timeless ethical and moral concepts. The same process needs to be performed while studying, observing or participating in contemporary art practices. In this case, the actualisation is no longer necessary and the connection to student’s moral evaluation criteria is more easily established.

An important role of art history lessons in moral socialization was already brought up by Nataša Golob (2006) who compared them to literature and music lessons, /.../ as they likewise analyse the creations of the past and the present in a sense of expressing artist's experiences, emotions and thoughts, responses to certain circumstances of his or hers life; therefore, every discussed artwork by definition represents a document of human cultural and civilizational development. (p. 2)

FORMAL ASPECT

Assuming that the education is aiming for tolerance and democracy, the formal education system is an essential mechanism that ensures the enforcement of general human values, focusing on their ethical dimensions. The implementation of these tasks can be monitored through the educational goals, related to *vzgoja*, which are in the latest time put on equal footing with the cognitive goals (cf. Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, p. 66; Musek 2008, p. 78).⁵¹ Among them, we will discuss those that can be implemented directly through art historical contents.

1. Educational objectives of art-historical school subjects in Slovenian formal education

The core object of art-historical study is fine art production of all historical periods. Art history therefore provides an insight beneath the surface of historical events and by that contributes to ascending the taxonomic scale of conative goals.⁵² Hence it follows that, from the perspective of *vzgoja*, art history can be considered one of the most important disciplines of formal education.⁵³ This statement is supported by the fact that the Slovenian Grammar School Act (ZGim, 1996) dictates a number of tasks which directly touch the field of art history, namely:

- to raise awareness of the integrity of the individual;
- to raise awareness of national identity and to increase knowledge of Slovenian history and its culture;
- to develop and maintain one's own cultural traditions and learn about other cultures and civilizations;
- to train for the general cultural and civilizational values that originate from the European tradition;
- to nurture talents and learn to appreciate works of art and artistic expression. (article 2)

51 For more information about the educational tasks referring to *vzgoja*, see Peček Čuk & Lesar (2009, pp. 159–220).

52 The taxonomy of conative goals is represented in a five-point scale: (1) acceptance or recognition of values, (2) reacting and consideration of values, (3) acquisition and defending values, (4) organization of values, and (5) developing a comprehensive personality and constructing one's own worldview (Marentič Požarnik, 2000, pp. 114–115).

53 Delors et al. (1996) about the education for pluralism: It is not only about the acquisition of a democratic spirit; the more important is to help a student at his entrance into life by training for comprehending the essential subjects which effect his personal and the common social fate. From this point of view, the integration of social sciences and humanities that are directly related to the very existence and social phenomena is of really great importance. (p. 54)

All mentioned tasks, except the forth listed, are also dictated by the Slovenian Vocational School Act (ZPI SI-1, 2006, article 2) and even by the Slovenian Elementary School Act (ZOsN-UPB3, 2006, article 2).

The curriculum of Slovenian elementary school foresees three optional art history subjects. Due to the lack of art historians among elementary school teachers, they are in most schools unfortunately not being taught. Regardless of this situation, these subjects' goals involve the affective and conative aspect of education to a very large extent. We can illustrate this with the two following examples (*Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Subject in Slovenian Elementary School*, 2002):

- students come to know art as a value by itself and
- students develop a sense of personal responsibility for the art monuments and their preservation. (p. 6).⁵⁴

In secondary education, art history can be found only in grammar schools, embodied in three different subjects with their own curricula. Only one of them, which takes place in the first year of grammar school, is compulsory for all students. Even more, only a half of the provided seventy hours is dedicated to art history topics, while the rest is reserved for practical work. There are also two optional art history subjects: one can be performed in the second and the third year and the other one in the final year of grammar school as a preparation for the optional part of the final external exams, called *matura*.⁵⁵ Yet again, they are often offered only as a theoretical option, since in many cases the programme is not carried out due to the lack of funding.

In the curricula of mentioned subjects, the value of art history education is mostly seen in the terms of upbringing and moral education, as "it significantly contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the human being" (*Curriculum of Art History as a Regular Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 25) and is at the same time "of great importance for the understanding of the concept of national cultural identity" (*ibid.*). This perspective is also evident in the established goals of art history subjects. Some of them (listed below) are repeated in all three curricula (*id.*, p. 26; *Curriculum of Art in Slovenia as an Optional Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 5; *Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Matura Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 5):

Art history:

- raises awareness of national artistic identity as a value in contemporary globalization processes;
- represents a connection and interdependence between creation, art work and social environment; sharpens the view on the artistic heritage of one's own home town, his region and wider;

54 The introductory chapters, where »the big idea« of these subjects is outlined, emphasize the developing of competencies of the affective-motivational sphere as well (cf. *Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Subject in Slovenian Elementary School*, 2002, p. 5).

55 The Matura is a school-leaving exam required for the completion of secondary education and for university entrance. Thus the Matura represents not only a final exam but also a continuation regulating the transition from secondary to tertiary education /.../." (*National Examinations Centre*)

- arouses interest in various forms of artistic expression and encourages tolerance, acceptance of critical views on art and culture of dialogue.

The universality of art history in terms of moral education can also be recognised through some general goals of the two concepts that shape the Slovenian grammar school education and are established on a formal basis: training for active citizenship and training for peace, family and nonviolence. These two concepts represent an approximate equivalent to the elementary school subject Civic culture and ethics.

2. Development of critical thinking

UNESCO's documents set out that the developing of critical thinking is crucial for moulding autonomous and socially responsible personalities, considering that it is based on a dialogical tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Delors et al., 1996, p. 44). Also the Slovenian acts on secondary education (Zgim, 1996, article 2; ZP SI-1, 2006, article 2) dictate "the development of autonomous critical thinking and training to act in a responsible way" as one of the general aims of formal education. Despite the fact that the development of necessary skills for critical acceptance of information in modern communication society is a demanding task, it is included in the Slovenian Elementary School Act as well (ZOsn-UPB3, 2006) as "the acquisition of general and useful skills that enable to independently, effectively, and creatively cope with the social and natural environment and the development of critical power of judgment" (article 2).

One of the many purposes of art in general is to take a socially engaged position and to show the weakest points of a society. They are revealed, highlighted, or even caricatured through artworks in different media. According to that, gaining competence of critical thinking is set among the major efforts of art history subjects. In the curriculum of each subject, this request is formulated at least in one of their goals which are listed below:

Art history:

- "develops the ability of comprehending artworks and expressing one's own opinion on them" (*Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Subject in Slovenian Elementary School*, 2002, p. 6);
- "forms a critical view on the representative works of Slovenian and world art" (*Curriculum of Art History as a Regular Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 26; *Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Matura Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 6);
- "trains a critical eye for the evaluation of artistic creativity and stimulates one's own creativity" (ibid.);
- "arouses interest in various forms of expression and trains students for tolerance and critical acceptance of different perspectives on art and the culture of dialogue" (*Curriculum of Art in Slovenia as an Optional Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 6; *Curriculum of Art History as an Optional Matura Subject in Slovenian Grammar School*, 2008, p. 6);
- "teaches the correct use of different sources as well as active and critical exploration and evaluation of information" (ibid.).

ACHIEVING THE GOALS, RELATED TO THE ASPECT OF *VZGOJA*, VIA ART HISTORY LEARNING TOPICS

As already stated in the second chapter, the achieving of the cognitive goals unavoidably takes its course hand in hand with the attaining of the *vzgoja* related goals. When we focus on art history topics as an upbringing tool, the very first step is to be taken by the teacher himself or herself. He or she needs to be fully aware of the upbringing potentials of fine art *per se* as well as of its societal contextualisation. These potentials can be recognised and realised within the three most common forms of art history teaching: regular lessons in classroom, interdisciplinary lessons and field learning.

Regular lessons in classroom

We cannot deny the historical component of art history - nonetheless it is all about studying the history of fine art practices. Despite this fact, in order to enable achieving the goals of *vzgoja*, a teacher should not stop at transmitting mere facts, answering only questions like, 'Who?', 'When?', 'Where?', and 'What?'. Only when we process these facts by considering questions as: 'Why the artwork is made as it is?', 'What is the core message?', 'What was its social impact at the time of its creation?', and also 'What can we learn from it in terms of our contemporary society?', we have reached the level of impactful discussion. But why is an interpretation of this sort so important? Because it enables teachers to put theoretically designed methods of *vzgoja* into actual practice.

The main risk of every interpretation lies in its subjectivity that is to some extent always present and not necessarily recognised by students. The teacher's aspect, presented via the given explanation, can quickly become the only correct one or even the only possible one and that may cause the formation of one-sided conceptions of students. Such intentional or unintentional manipulation needs to be deliberately minimized by illustrating different points of view, practicing different approaches and giving not only the representative examples of a certain problem. It is also of great importance to always remain willing to listen to the student's own perception and evaluation, which are corrected or rejected solely on the basis of solid arguments: wrong conclusions derived from individual premises or the lack of correct data. With all this in mind, students can become deeply engaged in the expressed ideas and eventually come to the idea that even ancient monuments carry a clear message that is timeless and therefore, though in different social circumstances, still very alive and meaningful. The actualisation of artworks and the transmission of their contents to the present situation may evoke the act of introspection and spontaneous self-evaluation as well as the need to observe the surroundings mindfully.

The discussed processes rarely commence by themselves, so it is necessary to consider the use of appropriate teaching styles and methods of work that serve as their catalysts. The priority should be given to those by which the students are more active and have the opportunity to express their own views on learning topics (cf. Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, pp. 207–208). Among them, we should mention the so-

-called dialogical methods of teaching, such as a dialogue and a more organised discussion. We have to be aware that choosing the right method in itself does not guarantee success. The authoritarian way of leading a dialogue can also result in nothing more than confirming the teacher's beliefs. In this case, the students are given an illusion of apparent freedom, while their train of thought is still strictly controlled, which is even more dangerous and comes really close to manipulation (cf. *id.*, pp. 34–36). Unfortunately, a large number of students in the classroom and strict time limits do not allow illustrating different approaches to every single topic. This can be partially substituted by a writing method: students write a reflection on a particular topic, an essay, or a seminar paper which they later present in class.

Beside the regular learning topics prescribed in curricula, some others also come to mind. Those arise from current events and experiences of students and thus importantly co-create their social *habitus* (*id.*, p. 205). The question of what further subjects are worth speaking about is left entirely to the judgement of a teacher (in some cases the school principal as well) and his or her sensibility towards the environment and current events. In every way, the teacher's efforts should begin with being up to date with artistic creativity in the local environment and pointing out the events that can provide contact with art outside the school premises.

Cross-curricular teaching

Art history as a scientific discipline and a field of study is deeply imbued with a need for interdisciplinary connections, such as with history, archaeology, sociology, anthropology, literary science, musicology, psychology, etc. With that in mind, we cannot imagine art history lessons performed completely isolated from other school subject areas. The cross-curricular approach has recently been recognised as one of the most successful forms of teaching in terms of the so-called global learning⁵⁶ (cf. Paulič, 2008, p. 10) as it enables understanding of art history topics in a wider context of other fields: humanities and social sciences as well as natural sciences and technics.⁵⁷ Interdisciplinary lessons that are performed in collaboration of two or more teachers tend to enlighten different aspects of the same problem. This can evoke a new doubt in the absolute truth of the received information and activate the need for critical consideration, one of the most important purposes of elementary and secondary education. Simultaneously, it develops the ability to lead a constructive discourse, the ability of weighing various opinions and the ability of tolerance (Planinšič, 2008, p. 157).

Field learning

The third way of achieving the goals of *vzgoja* is possible via field learning. This teaching approach is in formal education most commonly performed at learning excursion trips that can be focused on one school subject or, even more often,

56 “/.../ Global Education – development education, human rights education, intercultural learning, education for peace and conflict resolution, environmental education and education for sustainability” (Rugaas, 2003, p. 18).

57 More about connecting art and sciences school subjects via cross-curricular teaching in Planinšič (2008).

involve several different fields. Art history subjects inevitably require this kind of authentic learning, since no reproduction can replace observing the original and at the same time, no teacher's explanation can give the same impact as the artwork and its expression itself.

When we compare the traditional classroom learning course with the one that is carried out *in situ*, we come to the conclusion that there is no significant decline in achieving cognitive learning goals. High quality reproductions together with the tools of information and communications technology (ICT) effectively help to transmit all the information, necessary for gaining new knowledge. A bigger challenge lies in activating student's affective sphere with his or her emotions, beliefs and values which can happen only by experiencing the expression and message of an actual artwork.

A short comparison of the upbringing impact of these two approaches can be made in the case of the San Vitale church in Ravenna (Italy). A classical presentation of spatial organization, architectural layout and iconographic and morphological analysis of sculpture and mosaic decoration can be followed by interesting information from historical sources about how it was visited by Charlemagne. He was thrilled with the church in Ravenna and got the idea for the construction of his own chapel at his court in Aachen (Germany). The well-known story can help the teacher explain how the Middle Eastern art influenced the Western European culture. It may be as well used as an example of complexity and continuity of the development of fine arts in general. In the classroom, the story will very possibly function only on a level of a likable historical anecdote – some of the students will remember it and some of them will not. However, it will certainly have a completely different impact when its message is delivered on an actual field trip, since students will have an opportunity to experience the spaciousness and lightness of the church as well as the effects of multi-coloured marble and mosaics in gold, blue and green. In this case, they will easily put themselves into Charlemagne's shoes and understand his enthusiasm for the San Vitale church that will likely never be forgotten.

The given example shows us that field teaching and learning have much more potential for activating the student's emotional and experiential world than performing lessons in classroom. Ascending the taxonomic scale of conative goals, in order to create a complex and autonomous worldview, requires not only the conquest of new knowledge - the content also needs "to touch the student's desires and emotions" (Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, pp. 38–39).

CONCLUSION

We cannot delude ourselves that a constructive education without the upbringing and moral components is even possible (cf. *id.*, pp. 36–40). Rather, we need to think ahead and consider a proper planning of teaching performance, so that it will as much as possible reflect the general education ideals that are embodied in the two fundamental documents: *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (1953) on the basis of the *Universal Declaration of Human*

Rights (1948) and *European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights* (1996) on the basis of *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (1959).

Slovenian education system on the elementary and secondary level formally does take into consideration the importance of the aspect of *vzgoja*. It is incorporated in the acts of related legislation, as well as in the official curricula of individual school subjects. The goals regarding *vzgoja* are mostly focused upon civic education with an emphasis on non-violence, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, critical thinking and autonomous decision-making in all life situations. Their common purpose is to train young generations in being able to confront the quickly emerging new challenges and at the same time maintain social harmony.

The starting point for accomplishing the mentioned tasks can be found in developing and nurturing the skill of empathy. In a modern consumer society, based on the ethics of self-preservation and strongly marked by self-orientation, this is getting harder and harder every day (Peček Čuk & Lesar, 2009, p. 121). The empathy for others, leading to recognition of one's coexistence and respect for his or hers personal integrity, is only possible on the grounds of knowing ourselves, i.e. with the knowledge about all main features that create an individual's identity. Being familiar with the cultural past of one's own local and wider environment is among the most important.

In this context, art history subjects cannot be seen merely as an opportunity for learning about the course of the development of fine arts. Their purpose goes beyond historical facts and, by putting individual works of art in a wider social context, tries to reach their deeper meanings. The final outcome of this process is getting quick glances at the *Zeitgeist* of a certain time and space. They encompass everything from the political and intellectual climate, to a specific worldview, different social concepts and various value systems. The evaluation of art historical findings and drawing comparisons among them, therefore form and nurture critical thinking and stimulate personal responsibility as foundations for achieving our ideals of a modern society.

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