

EMU General Assembly part II, 21st May 2009

Working group:

“Benefits of cooperation between music schools and other arts”

Aspects from:

Arts4all – The European Art Schools Network

By Mechthild Eickhoff, Arts4all, c/o bjke e.V., Kurpark 5, 59425 Unna, Germany, fon: +49 (0) 2303 – 6 56 18, fax: +49 (0) 2303 – 6 50 57; mechthild.eickhoff@bjke.de

“Benefits of cooperation between other arts and music schools”

Written form of the lecture given on 21st May 2009, EMU-conference in Linz, Austria
The following text/lecture aims at giving some aspects to think about while talking about cooperation for cultural education nowadays.

Introduction to “Arts4all”:

Mixed already

Arts4all is a young non formal network of art- and culture school-associations (7) and single art schools (4) from 10 countries in Europe by now.

It started in 2005 with the publication of a magazine in Germany which collected portraits of art schools from 13 different countries in Europe. In 2006 about 35 representatives from institutions and associations of 8 European countries met for a first three-day-conference in Düsseldorf/ Germany, co-financed by the EU-Youth programme. The participants of the meeting affirmed the importance to keep in contact with partners from different European countries to inspire the national but also the international work for cultural education.

Topics and challenges of the cultural and artistic work with children and youth can be discussed in order to enhance the quality and find effective ways of e.g. political support.

In the moment the “Kunstconnectie” from the Netherlands and the bjke (Federal association of art schools) from Germany are the administrative unit.

Art(s) Schools

„Arts“ mean all artistic lines, considering that the music schools do have their own network called EMU – European Music School Union.

„Schools“ mean arts and cultural education on an institutional level outside of regular school. The network represents these institutions and their national and/or regional associations. It is not a network of private persons.

Aims

The Arts4all-network intends

- to strengthen and represent „art schools“ all over Europe
- to develop and initiate cultural education by exchanging knowledge and people (youngsters and adults)
- to attract media attention to arts education and its institutional basis especially in „art schools“

Different national structures

In every single nation there are different structures of art schools/culture schools on local and national levels. In one country you will find a national association just for visual art schools, in the other country the national organisation includes e.g. “centres of creativity” in which all the arts – including music – could be found.

At the moment Arts4all consists of 7 partners who represent a nationwide network of art or culture schools: national association from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium (two associations: French and Flemish part of Belgium). The local members of 4 of these associations already offer several artistic disciplines for the local public (art/culture schools in Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Norway follows). And in Latvia, where is no nationwide association for art schools, you will find some music- and art schools, too.

The 4 institutional members from Iceland, Latvia, Estonia and Russia are visual art schools but, as far as we can see, they do cooperate with music schools on a local level.

What are the “other arts”?

Every artistic line needs a special approach to its topic. Therefore visual artists differ from musicians, musicians differ from actors, dancers differ from writers. And within all these disciplines you will find different sub-disciplines and crossover art. Even in the music sector it is like an intercultural encounter when a pop musician meets a chamber musician or in the visual arts: some say: “graffiti is art” some say it is not and just illegal youth culture.

Institutions for cultural education – like music-, art-, dance schools a.s.o. – therefore develop their own pedagogical methods to teach the specialty of one art in a professional way. (And next to the artistic “method” youngsters learn about the way “their” art teacher is thinking, exploring reality and dealing with challenges.)

Arts education and reality or: “in” reality

We are living in a visual world: There is nearly no message without a picture. Some people proclaimed the “iconic turn” in which the icon, the visual element is the most important one in society. And art schools are working on pictures and on the construction and creation of (visual) reality which is very complex in the media like in the newscast or the “www”.

But reality and especially reality of children and youngsters is “crossover” already. All the arts are mixed in the media and all-day-life.

This mix has its own artistic qualities that we have to keep in mind for our work and the relation to young people.

Enhancements and innovation aren’t possible by wearing blinders. To be open and curious are very important artistic attributes – and by the way seem to be important key competences in the globalized world.

Some questions

What does that mean to the cultural education which we do represent?

What do young people need today? What are our aims in cultural education – yesterday, today, tomorrow? Do we want to mediate art or the art of living through arts?

Do we have to mix, too or should we stay apart to give clear orientation and fundamental knowledge about the roots of crossover arts?

Will the future of our institutions be like this: separate art departments (music, visual arts, dance, theatre, literature, digital media) and one inter-cultural department for cooperation and innovation

on contemporary art (education)?

What does that mean for our national and European associations? Who is inspiring how local, regional, European innovation?

Cooperation or Co-existence?

Arts4all – impressions of a little non-representative questionnaire in which we asked for the future of art and/or culture schools, the local cooperation with music schools and the cooperation of Arts4all and EMU (“Response from...” see below!)

Summary:

There is not one clear vision of the future. But the cooperation between art schools and music schools seem to be usual on a local level. Two partners say that there are going to be more “culture schools” in their country (Denmark, Netherlands) – “No” from Belgium/FPCEC, Germany and Finland.

In some countries (Belgium/FPCEC, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark) there are already art schools or centres of creativity which include all the arts or visual arts and music.

Most of the Arts4all-partners mentioned that youngsters they know are interested in more than just one art discipline. We should provide that they could find their own artistic specialty.

And contemporary artists and cultural activities of non-professionals ignore institutional or artistic borders.

Most of the responses were also about the different structures and working methods art and music schools are based on. Music schools and their national unions are strong partners and get a high public or political attention.

This means for some partners in “Arts4all” that it is difficult to be seen as equal partners and places for a professional cultural/artistic education. Music schools and art schools do also compete for state funding. And e.g. in Finland and in Germany you will find a huge difference between music- and art school funding. A second theme is the respect towards each others methods: Even the EMU questionnaire shows that some members are afraid of less quality in the cooperation with other arts or art schools. On the other hand some of our Arts4all-partners pointed at the strict structure and curriculum system in music schools, which is sometimes difficult to connect to the different methodical way of visual artists.

Because of this (different methods, different structures and funding, different political attention) all partners stressed that a cooperation with EMU might be interesting to strengthen cultural education in general; but they also pointed out that art schools and “Arts4all” has to strengthen the special way art schools work – and that is different from music schools. It is very important to be seen on a local, national and European level. The basis must be a mutual respect to each other’s quality and professional approach to cultural education.

Finland seems to have a respectful partnership of all national associations dealing with “basic arts education”. They registered a new umbrella organisation called “The Association of the Basic Education in the Arts”. The basis is a nationwide curriculum for “Basic education in arts” including all the arts. So the visual art schools follow this curriculum with their focus, too.

Kunstconnectie in the Netherlands is already the umbrella organisation for culture schools, like SMOK in Sweden and the same in Norway – here based on political will.

So there are in (my opinion) at least three aspects on every level (local, national, European) we have to consider for every cooperation:

1. visibility and appreciation; a) public and political attention to particular profiles, b) respect to each other's professionalism
2. money and consequently strong or weak structures

and most important:

3. innovation and closeness to the youngsters demands and needs (in social and cultural reality and future)

Response from:

National associations

Belgium

FPCEC, Association for Centres of Expression and Creativity, Wallonia
Namur, Belgium
www.fpcec.be

Denmark

National Union of Children,
Art and Pictures,
Hornslet, Denmark

Finland

The Finnish Association of Art Schools for Children and Young People,
Helsinki, FINLAND

Germany

Federal Association of Youth Art Schools Germany/bjke, Unna, GERMANY

(in former discussions: **Netherlands**: Kunstconnectie, Utrecht, NETHERLANDS)

Single Institutions:

Iceland

The Reykjavik School of Visual Art
Reykjavik, Iceland

Latvia

Riga School of Art
Riga, Latvia