

https://doi.org/10.15388/Culture_Creative.2022.2

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES: THE PROBLEM OF A CREATION OR WHEN WE LOSE THE ABILITY TO COMPARE

Irena Alperytė, PhD

Vilnius University of Applied Sciences, associate professor, PhD

Telephone: +37060043107

Email: alperyte@outlook.com

ABSTRACT

In 2021, the association “Knowledge Economy Forum” published their research “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”. The mentioned paper included analysis of countries’ cultural education practices designed for children and youth (including Lithuania and its comparison to international practices). In general, the assessment of the impact of the existing cultural education “mapping” in Lithuania is welcomed, and this paper is based on empirical research. The most important drawback of the mentioned research is a lack of scientific criteria.

KEYWORDS: culture, education, children/youth, creativity, impacts.

JEL CLASSIFICATION

Introduction

In 2021, the association *Žinių ekonomikos forumas* (“Knowledge Economy Forum”) published a research “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”. The fact itself is highly welcoming and proves the need to assess what has been done in the area by several partner countries.

The main objective

The main objective of the research is to **evaluate the results** of the research indicated above. The authors of the “Knowledge Economy Forum” claim that the most important tasks of the research included the comparative analysis of particular foreign countries’ cultural education practices designed for children and youth, as well as cultural education measures in Lithuania, and their comparison to foreign experiences. This consecutively asks us to evaluate this analysis and possibly use their conclusions for further development of the field.

Also, the impact assessment of the artistic education was attempted to complete in the examined paper, depending on a type of cooperation with cultural and/or artistic organizations, developers and stakeholders. This raised the second objective of our research to **comprehend the logics** of the impact measurement, meaning the factors and criteria that were selected by the mentioned research.

Finally, the assessment of the impact of the existing cultural education measures in Lithuania is presented as indicated in the examined paper, and was based on the existing studies, what we call the secondary data, available via reports and feedback summaries. In addition, other qualitative and quantitative assessment methods were employed. This prompted us to solve the third problem related to the paper and to **understand what exactly in the impact analysis is being sought** in the examined paper. In other words, what is the method of the impact measurement and how it proves to be realistic and reasonable.

Having appreciated the completed results of the paper “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”, however, the author needed to confess that the main direction of the research is confusing. What is compared in this paper and what recommendations can be suggested based on the research?

I. The assessment in the go

While trying to come to deduction of the logics of the authors of “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”, we have discovered the following areas to be revised:

- Managerial method

From the explanation of the introductory part of the paper we learn that there are various cultural education programs and their smaller elements in Lithuania, but today they are not coordinated properly with each other. In terms of management, perhaps we should interpret this part as a lack of a **systematic approach** towards the artistic education in the context of the general education.

- Scarce and scattered funding

From the Lithuanian data, we can judge that there is no clear strategy for supporting artistic initiatives in education at national level: different funds support similar activities, whereas the average level of funding is very humble and at the same time poorly administered.

- Meek offer

What we have read in the paper under analysis is the testimony of the variety of the cultural or artistic education in Lithuania. However, in general, there are very not so diverse cultural education activities in Lithuania and one cannot find too many wide-spread national measures to involve young people in extra-curricular activities.

- Random competence

According to this paper, general education schools lack competencies (and resources) to integrate cultural education. Immediately here comes the question who is usually appointed to administer those activities and what criteria for their selection are. Also, whether these specialists are paid for the extra-curricular activities.

- Missing links

Another drawback of the cultural education is detected by the researchers: there is lack of links between cultural education and formal education. It would have been very

useful to have some statistical data that could back up the statements of the virtually ill-balanced ration between the numbers in cultural education and formal education.

- Impacts not measured

Moving towards the further achievements of the analysed paper, one needs to say that the impact of the vast majority of activities and projects is not assessed. When you want to measure something, you usually take the primary data, and the final results. The difference between those two could give you the most primitive linear impact of the absence of the impact of the process. We were confused to fail finding the results of this sort, and here a critical part of our insights starts growing.

- Lack of data

While examining a ‘panoramic’ view of the art education offered to the secondary schools at the Lithuanian level, the author noticed the lack of data. It would have been handy to have a number of schools in Lithuania in general, to be able to judge the number of the schoolchildren or students being served. That is to say that there is lack of data on cultural education provided in the analysed paper.

- Lack of criteria

“The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities” provides examples from rather different countries. They come from Norway, the Netherlands, Ireland, Latvia, France, however, the ‘geographical’ aspect in the research is not explained. This means that the countries seem to be selected randomly without little to none explanation of their role models. The confusion in the examples chosen from the different countries and the problem that arises here proves to demonstrate a certain lack of criteria for country selection. Is it by European political map? Or is it upon the cultural tradition? Or maybe it is based on country’s GDP spent on culture?

- The terms conceived

As the authors state in their study, the term for cultural and artistic education used in this study, includes two dimensions: (1) various forms of cultural and artistic education, which are primarily focused on the development of cultural and artistic competencies (Is it the Theatre? Music? Visual arts?), and also (2) the use of various cultural and artistic forms, fields, activities in education, primarily to achieve defined educational goals, not necessarily directly related to the development of artistic and cultural competencies (education through culture). Is the second related to the “performance”, “lesson” or “workshop”? At the moment of reading the paper it is difficult to understand.

- Comment on the examples presented






In this part we eventually receive the answers to our questions and are introduced to the interpretation of the term used. Examples of the first dimension are given as art education lessons, art education being complementary to formal education, non-formal art classes in schools, activities within the “cultural passport”, etc. Examples of the second dimension are various creative interventions aimed at solving problems existing at

schools, increasing students' motivation and involvement, developing critical thinking, solving social and psychological problems. For us who were reading this explanation it was still confusing to comprehend the term itself and the situations of its use.

II. Foreign practices

The practices described are presented in the following order:

Table 1. **The countries and corresponding education practices**

Symbol: money NORWAY		A funding program for young people and youth organisations	Goal: to encourage greater involvement of children and young people in cultural activities.
Symbol: partnership IRELAND		Initiative "Creative Schools"	The "creativity partner" helps schools to create and implement a unique creative school plan that strengthens links with cultural and art organisations creators and the non-governmental sector. The initiative is being implemented with the involvement of the artists.
Symbol: hands-on approach in learning THE NETHERLANDS		Initiative "Professional Artists in the Classroom"	These are trainings for artists planning to implement art education projects in schools during which they are prepared to work with various groups of children and youth to ensure the selection of appropriate pedagogical methods and the development of inclusive education.
Symbol: student's basket for culture FRANCE		500 euros which can be used for participation in cultural or artistic activities	In France every 18-year-old receives 500 euros which can be used for participation in cultural or artistic activities (active or passive) and for the purchase of cultural goods (books, films). A pilot version of the initiative is currently being carried out.
Symbol: activity area emphasis LATVIA		A selection of the best children's and youth books	This actively involves children and youth (both in selecting the best books and in rewarding those who read them).

As we can see, the cultural or artistic activities are envisioned in at least five different angles:

- Long-term financial support;
- Creating partnerships;
- Learning by doing;
- Short-term financial support;
- Education as a basis for further continuation of artistic development.

In this article the author tries to provide a suitable methodology to apply while measuring the impact of cultural education on society in general, and, especially, on scholars.

III. Methodology for impact measurement

Many literary sources can be used while measuring the impacts of artistic education. One of the interesting examples of the methodology is the one that was used in numerous cases while assessing the impacts of the artistic programs on various events in UK. Namely, Miah and García (2012) introduce two important keywords – ‘Impacts’ and ‘Legacy’. Although they speak about the movement of the Olympics, their attitude is quite highly transferrable towards artistic education of nations. In the other publication, Garcia provides much information about European Culture Capitals (Liverpool case) (Creating an impact: Liverpool’s experience as European Capital of Culture. Report by: Beatriz Garcia, Ruth Melville, Tamsin Cox, 2008).

*“We refer to **impact as measurable, direct effects** of the Games, such as the **number of visitors**[emphasis added by the author] that come to an Olympic city during the Olympic period. They are defined by reasonably tightly bound indicators, which can be measured either quantitatively or qualitatively with some reasonable assurance of connecting them to the Games period. In contrast, **legacy refers to effects** over a longer term, which may be difficult to identify in isolation since they may have been shaped by the Games as well as other related interventions over time. In the case of Olympic Games visitors, the legacy may include the feelings they have towards the city that persist in their impressions over a period of twenty years. For example, one may argue that the Barcelona 1992 Games created a legacy for the city that was about its transformation into a prime tourism destination many years after the event was over.” (Garcia and Miah, 2012, p. 157).*

Simply speaking, these authors manage to spot both quantitative and qualitative changes that the activities proposed influence main focus to establish a fixed set of indicators spread across what are presented as the “three internationally recognised areas of sustainable development”: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental.

The same authors express the idea that the cultural endeavours are acting as economic, socio-cultural and environmental drivers of the society. As the authors conclude,

“the analysis of legacies and impacts may be seen partly as an ideological or politicized framework, within which certain interests are elevated and assessed, while others are played down and overlooked.” Indeed, while the Games are often pursued by city stakeholders on the basis of an economic ‘growth agenda’ (Andranovich et al., 2001, p. 127), critics have identified that this tends to be based on a narrowly conceived consumption-based development (ibid.) which may not benefit every host citizen or may, in fact, disrupt alternative community traditions and practices. Given the relative novelty of Olympic impact and legacy debates, it is crucial that they are subject to as wide a range of interests as possible, so as to ensure that they reflect the multiple and rich dimensions of the Olympic experience. This means complementing International Olympic Committee-sanctioned studies with independent research, to ensure coherence and continuity of methods from one Games to the next, along with opportunities to raise difficult questions and challenge established models of assessment.

**IV. Practices for Lithuania:
a case of the “cultural passport”**

The “Cultural Passport” has been used by 96 per cent of the schoolchildren in Lithuania. The Cultural Passport is a means of developing the cultural cognition habits of all Lithuanian pupils studying according to general education programs and expanding their cultural experience by providing them with appropriate cultural and artistic services. It is considered that the formation of students’ cultural habits must be consistent and systematic, adapting cultural and artistic services to the needs, knowledge, and ability to accept and perceive information in each age group.¹

4.1 Principles for the implementation of the “cultural passport”

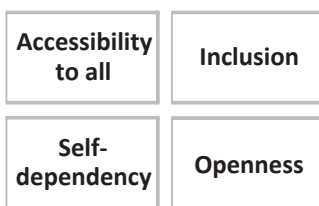


Figure 1. Principles for the “Cultural Passport”

To implement the “Cultural Passport” in 2022, € 12 per pupil is used to fund cultural passport services. Depending on the age group, the student uses cultural and artistic services to participate with the group/class.

Students in grades 9–12 since the 1st of September, 2022 will also be able to use the services individually. The range of available services per year depends on the price of

1 <https://lrkm.lrv.lt/lt/veikla/kulturos-pasas/kulturos-pasas-1>

the service. A set of cultural passport services, consisting of eligible cultural and artistic services for the purposes of a cultural passport, is published on a website for schools, teachers and students.

Expected outcome of the “cultural passport” for student goes below:

- students’ cultural awareness is promoted;
- creative personalities are developed;
- general artistic/cultural competencies necessary for independent and active participation in artistic creation and modern cultural life are strengthened;
- students’ cultural consumption habits are formed and students’ attitudes that cultural consumption is a meaningful activity are strengthened;
- students’ experience gained through participation in cultural events and/or cultural education activities helps them in their educational processes.

For cultural and arts institutions, the passport functions are:

- encouraging higher quality of service;
- the number of users of services provided by cultural and artistic institutions is increasing; the involvement of cultural and artistic institutions in the cultural education of students is increasing.

To the public it is meant to:

- strengthening the cultural identity and community of society;
- strengthening societal creativity and critical thinking;
- the circle of members of society who will choose high-quality cultural and artistic services is expanding.

The cultural passport was initiated and implemented by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania.

We conducted an interview with the drama artist **Birute Mar**, who is active in the educational activities expressed in the theatre performances.

This is what she said:

“We have been participating in the cultural passport program for the third year. We show performances (with a little education session before or after the performance) to students (our education is designed for senior students) – in a cultural institution (by renting it) or at a school where we are invited; students can also come to our repertoire – a ticket paid for by the “cultural passport” program.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have also prepared remote education sessions, in which we present the process of creating an author-performance, and show video excerpts from the performances. Benefits for us artists are the following: we are raising the younger generation of spectators (students later come to other performances of the Solo Theater,

they are interested in the theater), as well as financial benefits – because the income is not generated. The state funding goes only for a student's ticket to a performance – and teachers from distant cities/towns often want to come but don't have the finance to rent a bus. We also go to other towns as much as possible – to show performances in schools, but the conditions are very different: in some venues there are perfectly renovated theater halls, whereas there are some locales where you can see a completely "Soviet" storage – without equipment, with mobile calls in the middle of the performance, and the corridors with the noise of children running around during breaks ... It is impossible to create a theater aura in such conditions – and then the performance suffers on the actor's side. And you will not encourage children to love theater in this way ... The same goes with preparing students for education: in some schools you can notice that teachers have analyzed the work, the author's biography (before inviting a performance based on that work), and are well prepared; and in the other, students not only have not read, but even never heard about the author or their works, etc. The quality of the performances is very different depending on that.

The most invited performances are by those authors who are in the school curricula. But in general, the "Cultural Passport" really makes sense, I think, on both sides. This is evidenced by the children's feedback (one of which was sent to me spontaneously after "Antigone" at the Dance Theater after the presentation of education...) Birute encourages to visit her site at: <https://soloteatras.lt/educacija/> ... www.soloteatras.lt www.birutemar.lt

The case of the theatre company "TEATRIUKAS":

In 2019, 4,244 children saw the performances of the "Teatriukas" with the "Cultural Passport", and 21,220 Eur was earned. In 2020, 2,855 children saw the performances of the "Teatriukas", thanks to the "Cultural Passport", earning 15,750 Eur. In 2021, 1,750 Eur was devoted to 3,450 children for remote theater lessons, using the "Cultural Passport". Let us not forget about the competition – there are services for 1 or 2 Eur, which are carried out, for example, by teachers, librarians, individuals, and those 15 Eur designated for a student per annum are broken down. The goal would be at least 30 Eur for one child per year, and parents are already used to paying for events and no longer spend money on children's education when there is a "Cultural Passport".

V. Back to theory – what can be measured in the arts?

Traditionally, we can measure the following:

1. Communication. Art, at its simplest, is a form of communication. Emotions, moods and feelings are also communicated through art. It is a set of artefacts or images with symbolic meanings as a means of communication. – Steve Mithen
2. Art as entertainment. Art may seek to bring about a particular emotion or mood, for the purpose of relaxing or entertaining the viewer. This is often the function of the art industries of Motion Pictures and Video Games.

3. The novelty. Art for political change. One of the defining functions of early 20th century art has been to use visual images to bring about political change. Art movements that had this goal— Dadaism, Surrealism, Russian constructivism, and Abstract Expressionism, among others—are collectively referred to as the avant-garde arts. By contrast, the realistic attitude, inspired by positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, clearly seems to be hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement.

4. Art as a “free zone”, removed from the action of the social censure. Unlike the avant-garde movements, which wanted to erase cultural differences in order to produce new universal values, contemporary art has enhanced its tolerance towards cultural differences.

5. Art for social inquiry, subversion or anarchy. While similar to art for political change, subversive or deconstructivist art may seek to question aspects of society without any specific political goal.

Among other dimensions, we can measure:

6. Art for social causes. Art can be used to raise awareness for a large variety of causes. A number of art activities were aimed at raising awareness of autism, cancer, human trafficking, and a variety of other topics, such as ocean conservation, human rights in Darfur, murdered and missing Aboriginal women, elder abuse, and pollution.

7. Art for psychological and healing purposes. Art is also used by art therapists, psychotherapists and clinical psychologists as art therapy. The Diagnostic Drawing Series, for example, is used to determine the personality and emotional functioning of a patient. The resultant piece of artwork may also offer insight into the troubles experienced by the subject and may suggest suitable approaches to be used in more conventional forms of psychiatric therapy.

8. Art for propaganda or commercialism. Art is often utilized as a form of propaganda, and thus it can be used to subtly influence popular conceptions or mood.

9. Art as a fitness indicator. It has been argued that the ability of the human brain by far exceeds what was needed for survival in the ancestral environment. The human brain and associated traits (such as artistic ability and creativity) are the human equivalent of the peacock's tail. According to this theory, superior execution of art was evolutionarily important because it attracted mates.

What the author finds in the paper “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities” are the groups of the countries that play as role models for the classification of the Arts Education services:

Distribution by criteria

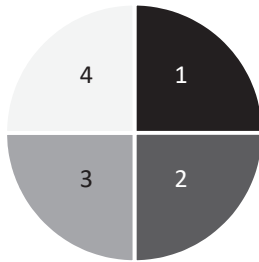


Fig. 2 **The Services of Arts Education**

1 – Generic supplement to education; 2 – Financial incentives; 3 – Artist’s exposure by target and genres; 4 – Random priority in arts/culture

There are regular funding schemes in certain countries to support art education (Norway and France). There is a group of other countries where artistic education is a strong addition to secondary education (Ireland). There is the third group that supports reciprocal ties of artists and children (The Netherlands). In the fourth group arts education is mostly developed in particular targets and genres (Latvia).

Conclusions

The existing funding from government is insufficient (for example, theatre gets: one child = 5 Eur multiplied by the number of children; whereas 15 Eur per year for one child is very little). The statistics show the dominance of some genres. However, the limited amount of art products is affordable. The tradition is non-existent. Further research could be conducted from this point. The more systematic approach should help here.

To summarize, the main objectives of our paper were the following:

- To evaluate the results of the research based on “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”;
- To comprehend the logics of the impact measurement in the discussed paper;
- To understand what exactly in the impact analysis is being sought while writing the analysed paper.

The answer that has developed while conducting our analysis of “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities” can be interpreted as follows:

It is absolutely positive that the research on the cultural and artistic activities has been initiated. However, in the research report we discovered a number of weaknesses that need to be worked on further. One of the drawbacks is the selection of the role models of the countries. There is no clear distinction or explanation why one or the other country has been chosen.

Also, the logics of the way of how to measure impact leaves us confused, as the provided examples are not possible to compare or benchmark. They are rather random observations that need stricter systematization.

In addition, the expectations or hypotheses of the authors of the paper are also rather undistinguishable. We would be a lot more convinced in the results while grasping a “method” in the impact analysis, rather than just a list of various policies applied in different countries.

SUMMARY

The goal of the article is to give some feedback on the research “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities” and discuss the problem of a criterion or the situation when we lose the ability to compare.

In 2021, the association *Žinių ekonomikos forumas* (“Knowledge Economy Forum”) published a research “The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities”. Among the goals there was benchmarking of the countries in the chosen area.

The authors claim that the most important tasks of the research included the comparative analysis of particular foreign countries’ cultural education practices designed for children and youth, as well as cultural education measures in Lithuania, and their comparison to foreign experiences. For this purpose, they chose five countries and partly USA.

Also, the impact assessment of these measures was attempted to complete here, having in mind a particular type of cooperation with cultural and/or artistic organizations, developers and stakeholders. The components or variables to be compared or assessed are not indicated.

The assessment of the impact of the existing cultural education measures in Lithuania is presented as based on the existing studies, what we call the secondary data, available via reports and feedback summaries. In addition, other qualitative and quantitative assessment methods are mentioned as potentially explained in the text. However, the main direction of the research seems to be confusing.

The term used in this study, includes two dimensions: (1) various “fixed” forms of cultural and artistic education, which are primarily focused on the development of cultural and artistic competencies, and also (2) the use of various cultural and artistic forms, fields, activities in education, primarily to achieve defined educational goals, so to say, the “fusion”.

Examples of the first dimension are given as art education lessons, art education being complementary to formal education, non-formal art classes in schools, also, “Cultural Passport” activities. Examples of the second dimension are various creative interventions aimed at solving problems existing at schools, increasing students’ motivation and involvement, developing critical thinking, solving social and psychological problem.

In the chapter “Importance of the participation of an artist for the impact of cultural education” it is stated that all “functions” or “roles” are necessary to create a lasting transfor-

mation throughout the school, in a particular classroom, or in teacher's pedagogical practice. In summary, the participation of the artist in the artistic education is understood as essential for cultural interventions and for the transformation of existing educational practices. However, there is no clear distinction or explanation why one or the other country has been chosen. Rather random observations are provided in the paper "The assessment of the impact of cultural education activities" that need stricter systematization. Choosing a more scientific "method" in the impact analysis, rather than just a list of various policies applied in different countries, would make the paper a lot more useful and applicable.

References

1. Andranovich, G., Burbank, M.J. and Heying, C.H. (2001), Olympic Cities: Lessons Learned from Mega-Event Politics, *Journal of Urban Affairs* 23(2): 113–31. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/4424109/Olympic_Cities_Lessons_Learned_from_Mega_Event_Politics Retrieved on 2022-04-19
2. Adorno, Theodor W. (1970), *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann. Available at: <https://vdocuments.net/aesthetic-theory-theodor-w-adorno.html?page=4>
3. Conceptual art (the definition of conceptual art by Oxford Dictionary), available at: Lexico.com Retrieved on 2022-04-19
4. Davies, S. (1991), *Definitions of Art*. Cornell University Press.
5. Einstein, A. (2011), *The World as I See It*. Available at: <http://www.aip.org/history/einstein/essay.htm> Retrieved on 2022-04-19
6. IMPACTS 08: European Capital of Culture Research Programme. Available at: Impacts 08 - University of Liverpool. <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/impacts08/> Retrieved on 2022-04-19
7. Garcia, B. (2013), *European capitals of culture: success strategies and long-term effects*. European Parliament. Available at: European Capitals of Culture: Success Strategies and Long Term Effects (researchgate.net) Retrieved on 2022-04-19
8. Garcia, B. and Miah, A. (2012), *The Olympics: the basics*. Routledge.
9. Gombrich, E. (2005), *Press Statement on The Story of Art*. The Gombrich Archive.
10. Kant, I. (1790), *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*. Available at: <https://bradleymurray.ca/kant-critique-of-judgment-pdf/>
11. Kultūros pasas. Available at: Kultūros pasas (Lietuvos Respublikos kultūros ministerija (Irv.lt)) Retrieved on 2022-04-19
12. Nickerson A. K. (2010), *A Journey into Michelangelo's Rome*. Available at: ReadHowYouWant.com.
13. Value of the Arts. Available at: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/value-in-art-explained#how-do-artists-use-value> Retrieved on 2022-04-19