The Individual and the Arts in a Globalised Society

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Abstract:
In today's increasingly globalised and multiracial society, it is only reasonable to wonder how the arts policies in our organisations, schools and communities have adapted with the times. It has become vital to scrutinise the modus operandi of the community and public organisations and those who engage particularly with the youth and change makers to clarify the effects they are having on the ever relevant notions of identity, belonging and difference of individuals, communities and in turn society. More than ever, we need to ask the right questions to reflect on whether our current policies and methodologies and thinking modes are aiding the public in engaging with the changing world and the changing everyday situations they encounter and in turn be part of the new society and culture that is being created.

Key words: Arts education, multiculturalism, Multi racial, Global citizenship, Otherness, Social innovation

Introduction:

More than ever in the history of educational models in schools and community organisations, there is a need for social, political and literary agendas to be curated as part of the curriculum and the content delivered to the youth and the public consumers.

The 2003 UNESCO study on artistic practices and techniques in Europe and North America proves that enough importance is not been given to arts and peace education or cohesion favouring programmes in the school curriculums hence impairing the ability to be exposed to a new way of thinking that focuses on humanity rather than differences(Wagner,2003).

A primary focus group for this examination on the need to implement new societal and youth generational values in to the educational and community initiative systems is the generation of multi racial youth who has more than two cultural or racial heritage factors, bi racial youth with two racial identities and people who have a universal culture or lifestyle by choice, association, upbringing or lifestyle.

In 2010, it was estimated that there were 4.2 million multiracial or biracial youth in the United States of America. Multiracial or biracial population has increased significantly by 50 percent in the last ten years (US Census brief, 2010). They are fastest growing group of youth demographic in the nation and more than 2.9 percent of the population identify themselves as two or more races. Usually this demographic identify themselves as a universal race or as one race (as per the one drop rule in America)or all their ancestral races and cultures (Targ,2014).

This emerging demographic brings a new meaning to what it means to be a person with identity that has absolutely nothing to do with racial or cultural markers but has everything to do with upbringing, choice, lifestyle, association and chosen patterns of thinking.

Art and Peace education: The medium of social change

The role of Arts education in mediation and cultural activism has long been debated. UNESCO has conducted several studies into the phenomena and trends of peace education in the context of uniting cultures and countries as well as developing cultural literacy and as an aid in developing cultural identity. The importance of educational drama as well as solidarity developing activities through educational and art games has been discussed in relation to focussing on community identity or identity as a human being rather than a certain racial or national identity.

A relevant question to be asked is whether teachers should integrate multiculturalism into their school curriculum or not. There are already schools such as the ones in Texas, Arizona and Washington in USA that are incorporating the cultural history of Hispanic countries and native american-ism into their curriculum.

After all, the focus of implementing artistic practices in education that support social cohesion and peace is partly to accept diversity in human relations and hence promoting diversity in teaching methods and world views. It further enables students

to create their individual artistic language enabling their own development-emotively and mentally. It is vital to infuse social and cultural issues into arts education.

Art has for long been an avenue of activism where in lie an opportunity to draw attention to con-temporary social conditions that need to be addressed such as ecological concerns, offering culture and access to culture and populations especially those of poor and war ravaged countries, living conditions in economically underdeveloped regions of the world, effects of terrorism and war, improving the conditions of people working in art institutions, attracting attention to the plight of immigrants and so forth. In a way, it is a medium of social change-changing the reality of the society itself. Art activism has been a recent phenomenon at the Copenhagen climate summit in recent years. So has the Manifesta , Documenta and Whitney biennales of recent years spanning different continents. In "Kin" which is literally slang for shutting down someone's voice, the Deborah Kim movie explores the problem of multiculturalism in South Korea and the life story of a biracial young man in contemporary South Korea (Korea today, 2013).

In such an opportunistic hour, it is prudent to give importance to incorporate activities which fight the ignorance of otherness and not seeing other races as another which makes communities and in turn societies miss out on potential approaches that could be a boon to solving the conundrum of procuring a new arts educational model that could significantly transform the way the new generation of youth could view the new world they are being raised in and coming into contact with. In turn, it could develop their individual ideals and identities and viewpoints.

Social innovation in the context of skill sharing and exchanges between various communities and countries in the arts field as well as community organisations field is a new developing context that has arisen in countries such as USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand recently. It addresses many issues such as unemployment, homelessness and other social problems which often comes up with problem solving abilities inherent in arts model thinking and in turn arts educational and community models as a solution. Incorporating such models into educational and community models is hence a timely necessity.

These new educational models hence do clash with traditional educational models since they do not merely stick to idealistic view points but also being proactive socially and in developing the individual's identity and goals further. They focus on humanity rather than differences or appearances or culture for the sake of it. Commonalities in national pride or general values are given precedence. Incorporating social, political, literary, global agendas as well as contemporary youth as well as technology and social media movements and strategies as part of the model is to be considered. Student led initiatives in arts programmes in communities as well as performing arts and plays in arts and peace education in schools and communities are to be encouraged and promoted as part of the curriculum. These elements as part of cultural activism based on studies on the process of creating new situational and personal globalist cultures have been a hallmark of the Arts platform centre in the UK.

Educational drama can be incorporated as part of the arts initiatives in schools and dramas that ex-amine the contexts of conflict, diversity and differences. A prime

example is the way an education-al field titled education of mutual understanding was implemented into the school curriculums in Northern Ireland which employed conflict resolution techniques as well. Although the idea worked generally for the youth, it could not be used as a vehicle for overcoming long term religious and cultural prejudices in the country (Fyfe, 1996).

The right kind of educational and art game programming need to be considered which would focus properly on these same above mentioned contexts. For example, in a performing arts drama study conducted by, the theme of exclusion was the buzz word for a drama group and their theatre pro-gram. The theme of exclusion which is an enduring theme to young people and this in turn extends

to people growing up multi-culturally and multi-racially in a globalised society who often feel excluded as outsiders often on the fringes of 'normal' society (Wagner,2003).

Deliberate blind casting where one purposely casts actors in roles that traditionally went to specific people based on race and appearance are now being allotted to those who are racially vague or universal in appearance or to people with multiracial heritage is another part of this model which is now seen more and more in contemporary media and performing arts culture. It is common to see a diverse cast in many shows and movies in the industry now. More importantly, it is interesting to see the trend of actors refusing to be portrayed based on their racial or cultural background or the stereotypes that go along with it .A similar trend is where many a show and movie rework scripts in a way that people of multiracial or even exotic backgrounds take over roles that usually require someone of completely European heritage.

Global Citizenship

Global citizenship education (GCE) is a concept advocated by UNESCO which signals a shift in the role and purpose of education in creating more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. The United Nations Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), launched in 2012, has raised significant awareness about the role of global citizenship to building a better future for all.

GCE equips learners with competencies to deal with the dynamic and interdependent world of the twenty first century (UNESCO, 2014). Despite varying applications in different contexts, regions and communities, it generally aspires to install in its learners:

a. An understanding of multiple levels of identity, and the potential for a 'collective identity' transcending individual cultural, religious, ethnic or other differences;

b. A thorough understanding of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity, minority rights and respect;

c. Cognitive skills to think critically, systemically and creatively. It promotes a multi-perspective approach that considers the different dimensions, perspectives and angles of issues;

d.   Non-cognitive skills including social skills such as empathy and conflict resolution, communication skills and aptitudes for networking and interacting with people of different backgrounds, origins, cultures and perspectives

e.   Ability to act collaboratively and responsibly to find global solutions for global challenges, and to strive for the collective good.

In short, GCE promotes universality (e.g. common and collective identity, interest, participation, duty), at the same time acknowledging singularity (e.g. individual rights, self- improvement).

Global citizenship education (GCE) intends to initiate action, partnerships, dialogue and cooperation via the mediums formal and non-formal education. GCE employs a multifaceted approach from areas such as human rights education, peace education, education for sustainable development and education for international understanding. It inspires an ethos of curiosity, solidarity and shared responsibility (UNESCO, 2014).

Advancements in information and communication technologies(ICT), helps people to connect and interact with others around the globe anywhere, anytime. This has led to an intensified perception and reality of being inter-connected and living beyond local perimeters which in turn has led to helping people think and act globally and locally at the same time.

The formal education system could be the main mode of delivery for global citizenship education. Flexible and pedagogical approaches will be more useful in targeting populations outside the formal system and those who are likely to engage with social media.

Global citizenship education can be delivered as part of an existing subject (e.g., civics or citizen-ship education) or as an independent subject area.

Major inclusions to global citizenship education include knowledge and understanding of specific global issues and trends, and knowledge of and respect for key universal values (e.g., peace and human rights, diversity, justice, democracy, caring, non- discrimination, tolerance).It also includes cognitive skills for critical, creative and innovative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making; non-cognitive skills such as empathy, openness to experiences and other perspectives, inter-personal/communicative skills and aptitude for networking and interacting with people of different backgrounds and origins and the ability to launch and engage in proactive actions (UNESCO,2014).

Reflecting these in the local curricula is important and includes converting globally accepted concepts into locally relevant ones.

Governments need to recognise the importance of arts in emphasising these skills and integrate them pragmatically into their schools. Artistic methods need to be employed as problem solving tools and to address challenges that the youth confront in today's society through social education to open up their eyes to the concepts of tolerance and peace, civil education imparting knowledge about children's rights, health, sexuality, respect for people and institutions, behaviour and cultural

diversity.

Conclusion:

The British thespian, Thandie Newton spoke at the TED x Ideas platform on the concept of otherness, a concept that is pivotal in arts education being used to address the challenges of modern day society. As a biracial in a catholic all girls' school, Newton experienced the phenomena of otherness where one feels separate from others due to their appearance or world view. Instead of this trait being used as a tool to bring a different unique perspective into society, she defined herself by that fact that her skin tone and hair was different from her peers. However through performance arts, she learnt to embrace herself and her otherness as a tool to experience oneness with self so to speak which freed her from this illusion of otherness and hence made her overcome her self-consciousness (Newton, 2004).

This is an instance of how performance arts and in turn arts education equips the learners and hence the new generation of globalised youth in an increasingly diverse society with the skills to navigate the conflicts that come along with the opportunities the scenario presents. Arts education affects the evolution of the concepts of identity, persona, community and belonging in an individual while they explore themselves and their emotions and ever evolving thought patterns with the tools provided as part of arts education. This ever evolving scenario of globalisation and centralised knowledge and diversity more than ever requires new and relevant arts educational models implemented by arts institutions and public institutions and community organisations that are directed towards co creating a new and relevant culture and society for the world that has nothing to do with physical factors but everything to do with humanity.

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Profile

Violette Du Geneville is the founder of Sky High international, an arts consultancy. She has curated independent projects for various councils, firms and institutions, mostly with social and literary agendas. She has represented artists across various realms as an artist consultant through her company. She graduated from Auckland University of Technology in Auckland and has also been to the University of Dundee in Scotland for Business studies. She currently works as director for an Arts Festival foundation in New Zealand and occupies her spare time with writings and research on global and contemporary issues. She runs program development classes through her firm and has been a public speaker on many forums on Arts programmes and their places in self actualisation, societal development and education.

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