

ART DIDACTICS AND CREATIVE TECHNOLOGIES: DIGITAL CULTURE AND NEW FORMS OF STUDENTS' ACTIVATION

Agnes Papadopoulou¹, Polyxeni Kaimara², Sofia Maria Poulimenou³,
Ioannis Deliyannis⁴

¹Special Research and Teaching Personnel, Department of Audio and Visual Arts,
Ionian University, e-mail: a.papadop@ionio.gr

² PhD Candidate-MSc Developmental Psychology,
Department of Audio and Visual Arts, Ionian University, e-mail: a16kaim@ionio.gr

³ PhD Candidate, Department of Audio and Visual Arts, Ionian University,
e-mail: poulimenoufaye@gmail.com

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Audio and Visual Arts, Ionian University,
email: yiannis@ionio.gr

Abstract

This paper deals with the contribution of Art Didactics and Creative Technologies in the adoption of an active attitude to decision making processes on the part of students and their participation in issues both at the level of culture and at the level of knowledge and means. The usage and the study of specific artworks is carried out in a frame of correspondence with the requirements of the multisensory experience of contemporary cultural reality, in a context of synthesis and application, encouraging students in creative processes. Students create virtual societies (through digital games and drawings), where their thinking is presented as a natural action, reaching suggestions. The concept of design is understood as a conflict between form and content. The narrative (students' design suggestions in relation to the city) could be removed from any linear structure due to digital games and Web 2.0 applications, while a possibility is added to reconstruct stories designed by others and do not satisfy them in relation to what is experienced within the city or their own vision.

Keywords: *Art Didactics, Creative Technologies, Citizenship, Creativity*

Introduction

The field of education, criticism of the pre-existing or the evolution of what is considered to be data, the examination of the basic elements which they define or specify, even in the sense of constraint, presupposes knowledge, understanding and application of a new way of viewing, thinking and acting which will redefine boundaries, fields, and correlations. Critical thinking, creative thinking, reflection are necessary skills for understanding issues that affect life inside and outside of school (Biesta, 2017). This "arsenal" is enriched and empowered through Art lessons. The aim of teaching art is to make the educational intention, educational act and multiplicity of approaches, multisensory experience -that are inherent characteristics of the artistic phenomenon

(Wesseling, 2011)- to be a way of looking at social challenges, how to deal with and negotiate social needs, in correlation with learning. The artistic act is not limited to a single perception, so it enhances the possibility of action (Kemp, 2014) and at the same time examines and analyses it. The reshaping of knowledge, in terms and qualities of art commentaries (Gillian, 2016), regulates a way that objectives and results of learning is again an effort to deal with society's challenges.

An inevitable reference to Benjamin's thought (Buck-Morss, 2014) which focuses on the integration of sociological concerns and the theory of artistic form as a means of reflection, as well as Adorno, who defends art because art comments or suggests an alternative view of society, develops the concept of "culture industry" (Adorno, 2001), and his philosophy raises questions about the prospects for a world in which political violence, democratic deficits threaten to make life impossible (Gillian, 2014) and influences many educators in the area of critical pedagogy and media education.

Culture is not a set of works of high art, but a system of communicational relationships, values, practices of life in which cultural products bring meaning and purpose to reality (Borgdorff, 2011). Therefore, the necessity of a new aesthetic approach and, above all, the defence of the new attitude (Schmidt & Cohen, 2014) enters dynamically already in elementary education, where students realise that every aesthetic approach and every aesthetic act has political dimensions (Kossoff, 2015).

The primary educational goal is to provide stimuli in order to enable students to be led to learning under realistic conditions. Using strategies and good judgment requires more than a good information processing system. It is necessary to cultivate interaction behaviours, ways of participation, social competence, so students work effectively in different social contexts, developing problem-solving and manage adversarial situations (Vuorikari & Muñoz, 2016).

The goal is that students understand that a social balance comes as a result of cooperation and simultaneously maintaining their personal utopia. That brings a sense of well-being, personal development, ability to evaluate things in their true dimensions, cultivate positive relationships with other individuals and control environmental influences (Hoskyns, 2014). Cultivating student's invention and creativity as skills, contribute to their empowerment within a multicultural, multilingual, multidimensional society. Students learn how to engage in diverse groups, to negotiate, even in aggravating circumstances, to adopt functional ways of thinking, interpreting life events, invent alternative choices and acquire the ability of rationalising skills.

Studying the important factors in determining the urban structure

The image of the city is made up by every sense, general impression of the place and information given about it, eventually its every mental footprint. According to Batty (Batty, 2008), cities are no longer considered disrupted systems. Behind the apparent chaos and the variety of the physical form, class and standards are distinguished, cities are therefore complex organisms presenting order in many observation views.

Two main axes define, compose and shape the way of teaching, on the one hand, the intangible, virtual space with the main realisation of it, is the internet, that means students study how sensitised political acts for social change with the interference of technology (Crockett & Churches, 2017), which affects politics and justify the correlated aesthetic phenomena and, on the other hand, how citizens live in the city's neighbourhoods, act within the inner neighbourhood, affect from collective consciousness and alter the city's special environment. That means, students discuss the value systems, the citizens' civil practices and in this context their suggestions and works are created. Students'

suggestions act as annotations for the investigation of the nature of relationship between the aesthetic and political choices and the truth of this inevitable, strong relationship (Leavy, 2015).

Focusing on the concept of citizenship as a social obligation, a right and a prerequisite for the quality of students' life, requires the use of active methodological approaches to make them take part. First of all, understanding relationships, associations and interpretations of things, dimensions and processes behind students' experiences with technology, trigger debates (interaction, construction, and evaluation) about the already formed views and attitudes of the students (Ali- Azzawi, 2013).

The described framework (*Ubiquitous Computing*) -many aspects of experience (conversation about 3C, Computer, Communication, Child)), diverse set of definitions, theories (Capra & Luisi, 2014) - requires how experience is related to physical qualities and not only with the abstract qualities of technology, but technology reinforces the processes of constructing an alternative model, highlighting errors and shortcomings in reality, indicating the need for new proposals, new learning paths in relation to the problems identified or those about to present themselves. The devaluation of the current situation requires the usage of knowledge that allows students to function democratically and identify student-city relationships.

Students identify problems, that is, what exactly happens in their neighbourhood and afterwards in their city that may be bothering, as a stage of analysis and on a second level, comprehend that the most important variable to manage problems is contextualised action. Next major variable is defining conflicting elements, where a Gallup poll is proposed. Students ask elderly what they perceive as a conflicting element, to report inconvenient public facilities, failures in social services and what exactly characterise as a political incompetence. Their responses are categorised either by a conventional framework (which has been discussed in the class), or as a novel suggestion (Potter & Novy, 2009), even as a utopian idea. Subsequently, newspaper articles commenting on issues related to the city and associated with cultural topics, eg. the restoration of cultural sites, the creation of new and so on. Students focus on articles with aphorisms, pre-election announcements that have been not delivered, and discuss if these aphorisms provoke only negative impressions, with no suggestion at all or even a clear and complete analysis. The goal is for students to think that such aphorisms don't contribute to any change and ultimately don't help but rather weaken reactions because any attempt seems hopeless. The aim is precisely the opposite, any emancipative attempt could not be accused as utopian and problematic (Ryan, et al., 1997).

The constructivist research example is chosen as a system of beliefs (sometimes referred to as an exemplary example (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) where the investigation should be extended without restrictions and authenticities (Psoinos, 2010).

Students will be given various pictures -snapshots of forms of "entertainment" - such as fans' festivities, overcrowding in entertainment places, pictures from opera, classical music concerts. There will be an evaluation that means students will choose between ratings: boring, limiting, minimal, satisfactory, extremely satisfying. In the discussion of the images about the observation of an opera or watching an artistic performance, concerns may arise about the elitism of culture, and thus a debate on cultural correlation, pluralism and heterogeneity. Questions arise if these forms of art are away from the daily practice of most residents and why.

Cartoon sketches are selected, more focused on postmodern urban planning. The economic exchange as a dominant practice in human transactions transforms the entire society into a system of use-value and exchange-value (Baudrillard, 1981). Reference to the work of Barbara Kruger (Whose Hopes? Whose Fears?) contributes in clarification of the real human necessities. Students study also the work of Okuda San Miguel, a Spanish street artist and his own version of the facade of educational buildings, to transform these places into spectacles and give a clear essence of urban art.

Students are asked how many shops are in their neighbourhood and if there is a gallery, a theatre, a bookstore, and mention any “core” of gathering experience, knowledge and offers a chance of human interaction. Also, touring their city is suggested for information collection that city provides. The processing of this information (usually posters, advertising panels lead to the conclusion that this is not knowledge of the city but information for commercial reasons with a spread across the city network. Students discuss the project *Sleepwalkers*, the work of Doug Aitken, an American artist that creates an array of site-specific installations and his work ranges from photography, print media, sculpture, architectural interventions, films and live performance.

Art, Design, Creative City to live

Students will learn how to make a functional city, build bridges, roads in *SimCity Buildit*, *Cities: Skylines* intending to enable residents to stay in touch with each other and create junctions with the parts of the city.

Simulation is a training technique for presenting a complex and transmuting reality using rules that players follow and their decisions influence the outcome of the game. Following the simulation process, the teacher and the students discuss about subjects that arise and students prepare themselves as active citizens while they play the simulation.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the creation of cultural centres and easy access to them. A common place is the effort, the way of thinking, the way of reaction. A common place means common targets and ensured synergy. The work of artist JR (*Inside Out, Au Panthéon! Dome, Paris, France*) has to be mentioned.

Thereafter, students are divided into groups and draw, form three-dimensional constructions aiming at the renewal of the cities (Papadopoulou, 2015). The questions that will have to be answered in order to implement their action has to be, how the orientation of the buildings will be chosen, how their neighbourhood will be shaped, whether there will be a square, other social facilities, if care will be taken for the creation of a collective space and areas of cultural events and at last how the city cultivates people’s readiness to undertake particular aesthetic experiences.

Social authorities practically act as guides in the search for good planning (Grosz, 2001). Each group creates its own neighbourhood focusing on a collective space and other city features mentioned above and study artworks (such as monumental photographs by artist JR: *The Wrinkles of the City*, Los Angeles). Art will not be cut off from the public areas and mutilated by the umbilical cord of a society and therefore, artworks have not to be away from schools and concealed only in galleries. The goal is a playful and frequent (everyday) contact with art and through art people make changes in their life. The exhibition of the students’ artworks is a social event and is accepted as their own social work intervention.

Students learn from their adventures and also their leisure time in the city and through the developed knowledge in school, involving teaching techniques and strategies that are consistent with a more compositive and less analytical interpretation of art (Panosfky, 1972/1991, Kleinauer & Slavens, 1982). This approach opens new educational paths.

Students' research is descriptive-diagnostic, reflective, complex and qualitative (Vamvoukas, 2000). Qualitative research is being done progressively, with successive reductions, testing claims, through revisions (DiSalvo, 2012). Students use the method of obtaining bibliographic information on the negotiated concepts, analyse the resources and get used to formulate questions. Finally, their design proposals are based on the conclusions they came to (CityEngine allows students to create and maintain 3D City Scenes).

Conclusion

The basic pursuit of the educational process is preparing a democratic and conscious citizenship, a citizen of the world with understanding of society. The teaching of Art have to support a dynamic education, which interacts with the social reality (Bransford, et al., 2000).

A holistic approach to the use of digital tools (wikis technologies, digital games, design programs and applications) structurally organised, through visual and semantic criteria, allows the interconnection of tools, resources, ideas and knowledge and operates as a catalyst to educational interventions of the concept of citizenship (Kroeger, 2008). An extended field of collective practice is created, where the synergy of Art and Technology offers important opportunities for learning (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Art is important in human society, morally and politically (Lebbeus Woods, *High Houses*, from the series War and Architecture, 1995-1996). The pluralism in art forces students/citizens to organise information and explanations of how one faces reality, learns and explores (Arnheim, 2005). Starting from visual communication as a social activity (Kenney, 2009), components and directions are given to help students identify their relationships with the city and the importance of these relationships (Becker, et al., 2014). Students should consider the existence of variables and parameters such as temporal and local constraints, mixed in various groups so they provoke addition or removal of cultural elements. Students also have to accomplish the significant task, that is, the recipient of their design suggestions (Bartholomew & Rutherford, 2013) becomes an acute observer (Rancière, 2009) with intellectual abilities to communicate better with the other inhabitants of the city and improve their surrounding environment.

References

- Adorno, T. (2001). *The Culture Industry*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Ali-Azzawi, A. (2013). *Experience with Technology: Dynamics of User Experience with Mobile Media Devices*. London:Springer.
- Arheim, R. (2005). *Art and Visual Perception- A psychology of the Creative Eye*. Athens: Themelio Publications.
- Bartholomew, J. & Rutherford, S. (2013). *The Design Student's Handbook*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Batty, M. (2008). The Size, Scale, and Shape of Cities. *Science*, 319 (5864), 769-771. doi:10.1126/science.1151419

- Baudrillard J. (1981). *For a critique of the political economy of the sign*. New York: Telos press Ltd.
- Becker, J., Fletcher, J.D., Littmann, B., Woods, L. (2014). *Lebbeus Woods, Architect*. Dortmund: Verlag Kettler.
- Biesta, G. (2017). *The rediscovery of teaching*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Borgdorff, H. (2011). The production of knowledge in artistic research. In M. Biggs, & H. Karlsson, H. (Ed.). *The Routledge companion to research in the arts*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. & Cocking, R. (2000). How people learn: Mind, brain, experience, and school. *Washington, DC: National Research Council*.
- Buck-Morss, S. (2014). *The Dialectics of Seeing. Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*. Heraklion: Crete University Press.
- Capra, F. & Luisi, P.L. (2014). *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, A. & Halverson, R. (2009). *Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Crockett, L.W. & Churches, A. (2017). *Growing Global Digital Citizens: Better Learners (A Guide to Increasing Student Citizenship and 21st Century Skills with Digital Technology)*. USA: Solution Tree.
- DiSalvo, C. (2012). *Adversarial Design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Gillian, R. (2014). *The Melancholy Science. An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor Adorno*. London, New York: Verso.
- Gillian, R. (2016). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Grosz, E. (2001). *Architecture from the Outside. Essays on Virtual and Real Space*. Cambridge, Massachusetts London: The MIT Press.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzi & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hoskyns, T. (2014). *The Empty Place: Democracy and Public Space*. Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Kemp, M. (2014). *Continuity, Change and Progress*. Athens: Gavriilidis.
- Kenney, K. (2009). *Visual Communication Research Designs*. Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge.
- Kleinbauer, W.E., & Slavens, T. (1982). *Research guide to the history of Western Art*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Kossoff, G. (2015). Holism and the reconstitution of everyday life: a framework for transition to a sustainable society. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 13(1), 25-38.
- Kroeger, M. (2008). *Paul Rand: Conversations with students*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Leavy, P. (2015). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Miles, Malcolm (1997). *Art, Space and the City*. London, USA, Canada: Routledge.
- Panosfky, E. (1972/1991). *Studies in Iconology*. London: Icon Editions.
- Papadopoulou, A. (2015). Art and Computer Usage: Representational Environments of Digital Games and handling them as non-verbal communication actions. In *Global Journal For Research Analysis*, Vol.4, Issue-8, ISSN No 2277-8160, 333-334.

- Potter, C. & Novy, J. (2009). Conclusion - Just City on the horizon: summing up, moving forward. In Marcuse, P.Connolly, J., Novy, J., Olivio, I., Potter, C., and Steil, J. (Eds). *Searching for the Just City: Debates in Urban Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge, 229-39.
- Psoinos, M. (2010). Exploring highly educated refugees' subjective theories of their psychosocial experiences. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 7: 69-97.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. London: Verso.
- Ryan, R. M., Kuhl, J., & Deci, E. L. (1997). Nature and autonomy: An organizational view of social and neurobiological aspects of self-regulation in behavior and development. *Development and Psychopathology*, 9, 701-728.
- Schmidt, E.,Cohen, J. (2014). *New digital age*. Athens: Diavlos Publications SA.
- Vamvoukas, M. (2000). *Introduction to Educational Psychology research and methodology*. Athens: Delphi.
- Vuorikari, R., Muñoz, J.C. (Eds). (2016). *Research Evidence on the Use of Learning Analytics*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, European Union.
- Wesseling, J. (2011). "See it again, Say it again: The artist as researcher. Introduction". In Wesseling, J. (ed). *See it again, Say it again: The artist as researcher*. Amsterdam:Valiz.