

ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL SENSITIZATION IN ADULT EDUCATION

SENSIBILIZAREA ARTISTICĂ ȘI CULTURALĂ ÎN EDUCAȚIA ADULȚILOR

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Educația adulților a devenit unul din cele mai importante domenii ale programelor educaționale, în întreaga lume. Școlile care oferă “o a doua șansă” constituie efortul aplicat și susținut al multor guverne de a sprijini procesul de „învățare pe tot parcursul vieții”. În procesul de învățare, persoanele adulte tind să aibă nevoi diferite și abilități eterogene. Societățile moderne necesită un proces educațional adaptabil și care să fie îmbogățit în mod continuu, precum și o cunoaștere multi-dimensională și multi-națională. Programul de învățare pe tot parcursul vieții sporește dezvoltarea personală a adulților, integrarea socială și capacitatea acestora de a se angaja și menține în câmpul muncii. Sensibilizarea artistică și culturală joacă un rol important în educația adulților. Acest articol încearcă să demonstreze abordările aplicate în educația adulților privind sensibilizarea artistică și culturală și, totodată, să prezinte rezultatele calitative și progresul obținut în dezvoltarea personalității adulților.

Cuvinte cheie: sensibilizare artistică, sensibiliyare culturală, educația adulților, muzică, artă.

Adult Education has become one of the most prominent fields of the educational programs all over the world. Second Chance Schools constitute the predominant applied effort of many governments for supporting Lifelong Learning. Adults tend to have different necessities and heterogeneous capabilities in learning. Modern societies require continuously enriched and adaptive training, as well as multidimensional and broadly-based knowledge. Lifelong Learning enhances adults' personal development, social inclusion and employability. Artistic and Cultural Sensitization plays an important role in Adult Education. This article tries to demonstrate the applied approaches in adult education concerning artistic and cultural sensitization as well as presenting the qualitative results and the progress achieved in developing the adults personality.

Keywords: sensitization, artistic, cultural, adult education, music, art.

Introduction

Modern societies do not remain constant. They evolve rapidly and change drastically. Actually, a period of just a couple of years is long enough for these changes to become observable. Society is a very important part of our environment. Since, a) this environment changes and b) we interact continuously with it, we should always adapt to it in order to attain social inclusion, professional development and personal integration.

During the last decades, the conventional norm of our lives has changed. In contradiction to the past, nowadays the model of studying until 22-25 years and then working (without renewing and improving our knowledge) has been proved to be inappropriate for and incompatible with modern society needs.

This context has generated the necessity of Lifelong Learning and thereby the need of Adult Educational Programs. Second Chance Schools constitute a representative and effective materialization of Adult Educational Programs in many countries.

Many adults attend lessons in this program, since it is really attractive for them. The basic reasons are:

- 1) Adults have virtually no free time. Therefore, conventional education programs cannot be effective on them. Education at Second Chance Schools is based on "learning in the class", facilitating in this way their studies.
- 2) Adults have individual needs that premise a flexible educational approach. Second Chance Schools offer this flexibility, increasing in this way adults' interest and enhancing their efficiency on learning.
- 3) Second Chance Schools encourage adults to improve themselves. For this program it's not only their objective performance that matters, but additionally and equally their progress and development. In this way, adults improve themselves far more than attending conventional education programs.

Second Chance Schools' curriculum includes the necessary lessons for adult development. Courses typically include the following subjects: a) native language training, b) English language training, c) mathematics, d) science and technology, e) sociology, f) environmental awareness, g) Information and Communication Technologies (computers), h) aesthetics education and i) job orientation.

1. Triggering Adult interest in Art and Culture

Aesthetics education plays an important role at Second Chance Schools. Many adults who enter this program tend to ignore the importance of art and culture in our lives. This is, most of the time, a side effect of the Elementary School approach, which might have given them the wrong impression that culture and art are some kind of second class entities of our societies. Additionally, sometimes their individual environmental norms might have underestimated and undervalued both culture and art.

The educator can trigger adult interest in art and culture discussing with them about: a) Non-linguistic types of expression as a form of communication. For example, body language, facial expression and voice color carry information that cannot be replaced with words. Thus, non-linguistic communication is very important. b) Culture and art as a form of expression. Even people who are not skilled artists many times make more or less complex drawings on a piece of paper; they dance, sing, etc. This means that the need for artistic-like expression is carried in our nature and cannot be negated or replaced with words. c) Culture and society. All societies (even the primitive ones) require a minimal level of cultural adaptation of their members in order to become acceptable. Our choices of dress, hairdressing style, appearance, music taste, etc. play an important role for our social inclusion. A person with extreme choices might not be accepted by other people. d) Culture, art and personal development. In addition to social inclusion, cultural and artistic sensitization supports understanding our social environment. Actually, this is the first step for our personal development. e) Social environment individualities and personality formation. Different people coming from different societies (from the historical, geographical or cultural perspective) have different personalities and tend to

express themselves in different ways. f) Professional artistic creation. The artist is actually a person who, in addition to his inherent need for expression, has some more characteristics: i) he grew up in the appropriate environment for developing his artistic skills; ii) he is educated and most likely he has attended organized courses on his specialization; iii) his life experiences supplemented his studies and therefore integrated his knowledge and skills; iv) his potential of expressing himself artistically is merely guided by his talent. Because of all the above reasons, the artist can achieve a high level of (artistic) expression and creation. g) Fundamental level approach on culture and art. Traditional music and dances, popular songs, home decoration, etc. constitute some of the elementary artistic approaches for all people. Moreover, virtually all people, after having attended the appropriate courses, are capable of developing their artistic and cultural sensitivity, approaching in this way more complex forms of artistic expression. h) Culture and art evolution. Culture and art do not remain static; they always evolve. For example, a few years ago we used to have different house decoration style, listen to different types of songs, etc.

2. Applied lessons on aesthetics education

After triggering adult interest in culture and art, the educator can discuss with his group of pupils and decide in common which subjects are going to be presented and analyzed in the class. Here two applied series of lessons are going to be presented: a) classical music and b) painting and painters.

2.1. Classical music

Most people tend to have the impression that classical music is “old-fashioned”, “boring” or “strange”. Most likely they have formed this opinion because they can’t express themselves through this music genre. This is merely a side effect of wrong approaching which can be analyzed into the following factors: a) Wrong way of listening to classical music. This music genre requires concentration on and dedication to it. It’s almost impossible to enjoy classical music and at the same time speak with our friends. b) Wrong expectations from listening to classical music. Most people tend to listen to music in order to have fun, dance, sing, etc. This means that what they expect from music is an accompaniment or supplement to some other activity. Listening to classical music is a completely different experience. It’s merely a voyage of our imagination and emotions. c) Lack of specialized and technical knowledge on classical music. This negatively affects our preference on classical music, but it’s impossible to obtain this knowledge in the context of aesthetics education course at a Second Chance School.

After explaining these factors to the group, the educator should use the appropriate tools for supporting the group to “feel” and “imagine” while listening to classical music. He should always have in mind that insisting on many technical details is dangerous; the less he uses technical details, the more immediate his approach becomes.

Nowadays optical stimuli have been proved to be the best approach for many kinds of information. Under this perspective, Disney’s *Fantasia* is an excellent tool; it includes some of the most popular classical music pieces, the music performances are of great quality and the stories that are unfolding in this production are really attractive. So, the group can watch the movie and at the same time listen to music. The “story” that they watch carries all the information needed for triggering their imagination and emotions. The educator should explain that the stories were inspired from the music and actually each one of them is what the Disney artists imagined when they listened to it. Moreover, each one of us might imagine a different story while listening to the same music. After watching some individual stories of this movie, the educator can ask the adults to express the feelings that the story triggered to them. The adults have reported a variety of emotions. They found highly impressive the emotional alterations that made them travel inside a different and unprecedented “cosmos”.

At the end of this series of lessons, the adults listened to a classical music piece without an optical stimulus. In our example, the motet “*Super Flumina Babylonis*” by Palestrina was selected. The educator switched off the lights in the classroom in order to make the adults concentrate on the music and use their imagination. It’s highly remarkable that most of them, although having virtually no previous

experiences of listening to classical music, imagined that they were attending mass at church.

2.2. *Painting and painters*

Painting in adult education can be approached in two ways. If the educator is a trained painter himself, he can teach the basic techniques to his pupils and ask them to make their own paintings or drawings under his guiding and supervision. If the educator is not a painter, he can approach painting as a form of artistic expression. In our example, the adult group has watched a documentary about Vincent van Gogh and discussed it with the educator. Vincent van Gogh was selected because his paintings have realistic as well as both impressionistic and expressionistic elements.

The educator, having as a motive this documentary, can discuss with the group the following topics: a) Painting as an art is no more an effort for representing faithfully the reality. Photography has surpassed the accuracy even of the best painter. b) Painters are inspired sometimes by reality, but what they paint is their personal perspective on the selected subject. Their perspective carries and includes their emotions, feelings, symbolisms and generally personal intentions and style of expression. c) The painter's way of expression (style, theme selection, etc) has much to do with his environment, i.e. personal experiences, studies, professional correlations, character, etc. d) Painting at the end is a combination of lines, shapes and colors.

After this series of lessons the group visited a painting exhibition. The adults found very interesting watching the paintings, "inventing" their own stories about each one of the them, expressing their feelings and asking the painter about the factors that made him choose the specific subjects or even about generating his own style of expression.

The adult group reported that, before attending this course, a painting exhibition was unfamiliar to them, but now not only did it become familiar, but, even more importantly, they found it interesting if not exciting.

Conclusion

Artistic and cultural sensitization played an important role in adult development. It made the adult students interact with new knowledge and experiences and it resulted in their mental widening. Without actually using technical details, this simplified approach had remarkable results in adults' progress on aesthetics comprehension.