2. INTERCULTURAL STUDY OF ART - CONTEMPORARY DIMENSION

Marinela Rusu[283]

Abstract: *The contemporary world includes more diverse cultural events, sometimes performing a mix of ethnic traits, which are specific to different cultures. At the same time, we are witnessing a substantial migration of populations around the world, trying to build a new destiny and to integrate themselves in the cultures in which they migrated. Intercultural education becomes an actual concept and includes requirements and inherent manifestation of the modern world, which is constantly moving. More specifically it is an education for **cultural equality**, **cultural tolerance** or for the broader objective of **multicultural education** as it was proposed by M. A. Gibson (1984). For artist and educator who strives to understand the role of art in culture, and the role of culture in art and want to include his students in the cultural phenomenon, anthropological theories on culture and on ethnical specific alike, are generally necessary.*
Key words: *art education, art, culture, educator, artist, school*

It is obvious that changing the economic, actional, value and financial profile of current societies lead to unexpected fragmentation of cultures. This makes them different from the "monolithic" cultures of the 40's; but the question you can ask is: what in the culture unit remains and what has changed? In such renewed contexts, art itself goes into a process of change, of renewal. However, the creators of art appeals more or less the elements of culture, the patterns that already exist in the society in which they live.

Ralph Smith (1983) professor of art and critical philosopher proposes four attitudinal modes of approaching the art of other cultures. The models which he analyzes reflect different types of interaction. He also emphasizes the educational implications of each of the proposed models. The starting idea is that of *transposition of the categories* used by Kaufman (1977) in the literature on visual arts.

The first attitudinal model refers, to "those who reject their own culture and approach another one with idealized enthusiasm in order to prove how wrong their own culture is and it is named ***exegetics***[284]. In the evaluation process they are selective and biased in responding to the other culture." In terms of education, this position is wrong and therefore, it is not recommended to be addressed by teachers. Such an approach stimulates only the existing ideas and stifles openness to new perspectives and feedback.

The second way is ***dogmatism.*** While the exegetics perceive authority in terms of culture, dogmatists maintain authority within themselves. Addressing ethnocentrism they look other cultures through the eyes of their own culture. This approach gives only small benefits for education as many misjudges are involved and too little new information is assimilated.

[283]Researcher PhD, Romanian Academy, Institute "Gh. Zane" from Iaşi Branch of Romania, email: marinela1808@yahoo.com
[284]Smith R. A. (1983). "Forms of multi-cultural education in the arts." Journal of Multi-cultural and Cross-cultural Research in Art Education

There is also the danger of reaching the other extreme, trying to overcome ethnocentrism through extreme relativism. In this situation, teachers will feel that they should not try to change the student's behavior, as they will be labeled as "ethnocentric" reacting so.

The third way is *agnosticism*. This approach does not prejudge in any way the cultural ethnocentric elements, nor approaches art in terms of exegetics but believes that the work of art is *a creation independent of any cultural-historical factor* and, therefore, can be interpreted only aesthetically. From the educational point of view, this approach contains interesting valuable elements, but at the same time contains the danger of becoming extremely shallow. Smith notes that aesthetic interpretation comes to be confined to sensory perceptual response. However, if there is a prior aesthetic education, then, aesthetic understanding (which will include cognitive elements also) can reach the deepest dimensions of the artwork. People who have high aesthetic and perceptual skills may be more able to distinguish the nuances and meanings of art of another culture, rather than individuals who have only factual information on cultural structure.

Dialectics is the fourth way, which Smith examines, but it is not in the Marxist sense of the term. He describes it as a process of open dialogue between the individual's questioning mind and the works of art of other cultures. Dialectic viewers remove the bias that either everything is good or everything is bad and, conversely, are located in an open circuit between their own values and those expressed in culture and art. Live cultures are considered in this case as significant items ("the significant other") and their cooperation contributes to the development of the individual's personal values and of others around him.

Finally, Smith warns that humanist's too much confidence in the support from their institutions to find their way in another culture is unsubstantiated, as to understand another culture requires considerable effort. This requires much more than a simple dialogue.

While all four methods described by Smith are variable in relation to the intercultural experience of a person, the general goal is the freedom and ability to be impartial in intercultural encounters. Educators should be aware that sometimes the results of such actions may be delayed. Comparisons made in this area by some well-known anthropologists show how much personality influence their perceptions, the same as the academic dialogue with another culture. Intercultural education involves several objectives such as:

- Providing equal opportunities for pupils coming from a different culture than the one considered *basic*.
  - Increasing the level of understanding of students from other cultures;
  - Maintaining existing sub-cultures within a given society and
  - Helping students to act effectively in two cultures simultaneously.

However, because the requirements described above are limited by existential needs of each ethnic group, culture, American researcher Margaret Alison Gibson (1984) adds another element, unique at the time, and based on anthropological literature - that goes beyond the needs of any group and addresses *universal intercultural education*. The author defines multicultural

education as "the process by which a person develops skills of perception, judgment, belief and action in multiple standards systems"(p. 112)[285]. This does not necessarily mean acquiring knowledge of other cultures but getting that cognitive and empathic ability defined by Cole in these words *"knowing how another culture thinks"*[286]. In other words, the goal of **multicultural education** can achieve a certain level of multicultural knowledge. Thus, it can reach a deeper understanding of different cultures and their artistic creations. From this intercultural perspective, more enriched, all patterns, boundaries and cultural opportunities in the area will become more visible.

If we look at education as a process of cultural transmission, in which interact all aspects of culture, the school being also included here, then, teachers everywhere will be looking for some specific concerns. To understand their students, educators must first understand their cultural acquisitions:

- Overcoming the stereotype that considers a culture mainly ethnic; culture may consist of several ethnic groups;

- We cannot assume that all students and adults in a particular cultural group understand or are just addicted or attached to the same extent, to the cultural mores of origin;

- Many individuals are already proficient in two or more cultures. This may become the norm, as, cultural isolation begins to shrink more and more;

- There are many common elements between the cultures and it is important that they are understood, as well as the existent differences;

All these aspects are involved in the educational act and must be known by the teacher in interaction with students. If we have an intercultural approach to art we will have a less elitist position about art, from any cultural perspective we discuss. Art can be studied in its many variations as manifested expression of different cultural values, but also as a distinct structure of knowledge and experience. Cultural similarities and differences identified and analyzed can lead to understanding culture and this can lead to a more profound and authentic artistic creation. Also, different variations of art, the knowledge resulting from many cultures can help students become aware of the diversity that exists in their own culture.

Frances Anderson (1979) notes that **cross-cultural psychology** is today a reference discipline. It compares and identifies the term *artistic* with *knowledge* as they were used by Berry and Dasens' (1975), being, at the same time, two objectives of the intercultural research. The first to be known and understood are the effects of culture, ecology and environment organization on the cognitive (art) processes' "that produce variability and facilitates exchanges between cultures; then it is necessary to understand which are the common elements to different cultures in the "cognitive (artistic)" process in order to define the universal "cognitive (artistic)" concept.

---

[285] Gibson, M., A. (1984). "Approaches to multi-cultural education in the United States--1976 (Special Issue)." Anthropology and Education Quarterly 15, p. 112
[286] Cole M. and S. Scribner. (1974). "Culture and thought: A psychological introduction". New York: John Wiley

Some of the problems that the researcher identifies (and which are also present in Western European or of the Eastern Europeans education researchers) are:

-studying at least one culture, so that not to appear extreme dichotomy in appreciation of different cultures;

- development of some ethnic studies from two perspectives: 1) to look culture from outside, being analyzed with other instruments and from other cultural perspectives and 2) *emic*[287] approach through cultural instruments specific to the studied culture, in order to analyze it's structure and characteristics[288].

Elliot Eisner (1979) is another researcher who has studied the issue of inter-culturalism (being an art teacher and *curriculum* specialist). He has an empirical, personal approach, by "referring to the world"[289]; his theory is, however, more descriptive, referring especially to situations in progress, rather than offering explanations in an experimental research.

He is also interested in empirical research in its qualitative aspects, using descriptive phrases and metaphors that schools, operating under research, among other activities, can use. Intervention, however, does not occur. He warns that the presence of the researcher in the school, to assist in conducting research will be considered as a form of intervention. The researcher claims that this method can be used in cross-cultural study, in which two or more cultures are compared.

The reason that propels the idea of intercultural education is the very reality that societies are becoming more intercultural. North American societies, especially, are becoming more diverse beginning with continental and intercontinental migration, which is also true in the case of Western Europe countries. Migrants retire in their houses, trying to rebuild subcultures, so that cities acquires new cultural dimensions that are different from the forms of culture developed by the great migrations of the last decades of the nineteenth century. The school population is quite different from the last decade. Thus the need for intercultural education is not necessarily understood by addressing more distant cultures but by understanding the culture and art of the people, manifested at the corner of our street or upstairs in our residential block. Of course, it is necessary that teachers can understand students who are from different cultures but at the same time, they have to understand the children's or adolescents' sub-culture specific to different ages.

Elliot Eisner (1979) divided his model into two major parts: one part contains art study in terms of what is measured, corresponding to specific values of the culture that reigns the group; the second part examines the aesthetic values and symbols that are found in a particular culture. Also, in his

---

[287]*Emic* - approach in anthropology that refers to stable elements of a culture; it is an analysis of the community from inside (a.m.).

[288]Anderson F. E. (1979)."Approaches to cross-cultural research in art education", Studies in Art Education,17-26

[289]Eisner E. (1979). "Cross-cultural research in arts education: Problems, issues and prospects", Studies in Art Education, 27-35

preoccupations he wanted to delineate which are the defining elements of artist's personality.

There are several dimensions that can be added to those presented until here. For example, Geertz (1983) indicated that teachers should be aware of their own conceptions and aesthetic standards, of what is or is not art, "in order to be able to recognize which are the bases of making art criticism or the appreciation of art, in the studied cultures or in the student's subculture."[290] Private art objects can have special qualities judged by our criteria but they will appear as just other functional things for the members of another group. Coming from another culture it is possible that we may not understand how they are used and perceived.

Western teachers would have to avoid biased assessments when they analyze the so-called "primitive" art as contrasted with "civilized" art. Chalmers in some degree mitigates this by approaching all art as *tribal art* - when he describes as *tribal* an artist working within an "urban avant-garde cultural minority" and a group of Hollywood businessmen-image-makers, "for a huge tribe that spans continents and shows a certain youthful identity"[291].

The researcher also turns his gaze to the chronological development of the definition of art and history and requires greater interdisciplinary approach. It refers more specifically at the interface between the historical study of art as object and the social, cultural and psychological factors influencing the creation, quality, style, dissemination and meaning of art. It describes the trends and changes that occur in the definition of art history and suggests ways in which the impact would have a deeper, more complex meaning, as an inter-cultural comparison - in order not to be as isolated as in Western traditions. He also refers to the study of art in terms of the dominant human institutions such as politics, social organization, economy and development.

Education through art - a theory based on psycho-cultural factors.

We recognized so far the role of cultural factors in arts education. In the past, the theory mainly focused on intercultural factors that were required to be recognized in the teaching-learning process, when students use their own perceptions to delineate the phenomenon of art. When this process focuses on intercultural education, personal development factors are further discussed. The current review of the literature indicates how many cognitive factors patterns, perceptual and knowledge patterns are affecting art, as much as art knowledge generally, and the process of creation. Even if the structure of the theory is the same, descriptors - in most of the categories - have been expanded and refined to incorporate cultural influences in any historical moment. Theory dimensions are designed to simplify the system, so that the parts can be addressed by educators in creating the *curriculum.*

---

[290]Geertz C. (1983). "Local knowledge". New York: Basic Books, p.63
[291]Chalmers F. G. (1978). "Teaching and studying art history: Some anthropological and sociological considerations." Studies in Art Education 20, p.7

Education through art forms perceptions, emotions and value judgments regarding reception of works of art. One can even speak of a ***cultural adjustment of the aesthetic emotions.*** Addressing the beauty differs from one culture to another. "Norms for emotions and, therefore, the end points of emotion regulation may have big differences when it comes to different cultures. Not just American cultural models tolerate activation of happiness but more experience facilitates acceptance and intensification of emotion and its expression. Cultures in which success and self-confidence is considered threatening the harmonious interpersonal relationships, are seeking to prevent or inhibit the experience and expression of this kind of happiness" (M. Rusu, 2014)[292].

An important contribution to the literature on emotions regulation is to show that this process is not only an interpersonal one. Moreover, emotions are modeled in a significant proportion by the way our world is structured, the way our life is organized. Cultural emotion regulation occurs at a structural level of cultural practices and the level of basic psychological tendencies. Personality, perception and cognitive research from which derive the theory can be found in *Preparation for Art* (2d Ed.) (McFee, 1970) and in *Art, Culture and Environment* (McFee and Degg, 1980). Thus, we can describe some "specific dimensions in the perception of art - as it addresses the educational process"[293]:

1. Individual preparation of the student. Experience, cognitive skills, style, and personality factors of the learners are essential in this process; each of the factors listed above is influenced and guided by the orientation provided by the current cultural interface. Perceptual styles and cognitive patterns derived from the background sub-culture from which the individual originates, the visual work reflected in the products of that culture, along with all the specific motivational elements of the cultural background and the educational experience, all affect how learning occurs and the way in which specific content will be assimilated.

Each of the ways of knowledge is influenced by culture, by how the cultural learning guides individuals through the exercise of their own skills, to a certain structure of knowledge and to a specific way of processing new information. Categories and systems of values included or reflected in educational items are also culturally influenced. The researches on differences between *cognitive styles* were made, especially in Western countries, and therefore, they do not cover the specific differences of other cultures, where the meaning of the concept of *self* and *other*, *inside - outside*, for example, are different. A certain kind of creative approach may be inadequate for students who come from societies where creativity is integrated into generational structures, where the creative act is incompatible or unacceptable for someone of a particular gender, rank or age; a liberal approach to creativity can come into contradiction with the

[292]Rusu, Marinela, (2014), ”Reglarea culturală a emoțiilor”, în vol. 27, ”Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane”. Ed. Limes & Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 185-198
[293] McFee J. K. and R. Degge. (1980). "Art, culture and environment." Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt

mentality which gives minimal meaning to creativity and the same is true for societies where creativity is a group behavior and not an individual one.

It is not yet accepted the idea that *cultural determinism* is controlling the individual development, education and his training in the society. Diversity of individuals in societies with a very controlled culture is obvious, but the unique composite of skills and abilities of each individual belonging to it, is more or less shaped by their cultural context. Thus, some individuals conform to one particular cultural norm. Others, however, can operate successfully in multiple subcultures or in a double culture that can be one successfully goal of multicultural education in a world that is in a continuous process of interpenetration.

2. Psihocultural class medium. The background of teachers' cultural education and the dominant culture of the school education system, often differ from those of many students. Such cultural differences are more pronounced, while many political societies increasingly developed, are becoming increasingly multicultural, too. As some segments of society are changing faster than others, teacher-student cultural separation increases. Different classes will have different cultural structures. Proportions, similarities and differences in school culture will affect the life environment as well as the changes that occur in skills and personality level. Strategies for the development of a psycho-cultural support for all students in a class, requires knowledge of the cultural differences and commonalities, but also of the experience in developing and implementing educational strategies.

3. Visual-physical learning environment. This step requires a prior knowledge of the points 1 and 2. Teacher should translate into educational process the content, presentation, organization of the learning spaces, timing and scheduling *curriculum*, so that students as a group and as individuals, to be able to access the taught information. Selecting the content that must be taught must be realized keeping in mind the students' cultural and psychological variety. Fortunately, in art there are examples of cultural significance (great creators, artistic masterpieces of humanity etc.) which make known the art for different students and at different levels of complexity and abstraction. Through the study of art in its cultural depth as an universal size and a size of human genius and creativity, students gain a good knowledge of their own self and of other cultures, and thus having the freedom to choose from perpetuating their culture and values or not.

4. Handling the individual information. This element is essential for the one who is the subject of the educational process and it requires a special sensitivity of the educator. The decision to allow a student to handle alone in learning or to encourage his support will consider alternatives and will have to be made, both with knowledge and consideration. *Cognitive styles* are very important in this process. Some students may need to return on the motivational aspects, before they can accept items that are foreign to the culture of their origin. Others will need more time to reflect. Impulsive students need more encouragement to

reflect more. For other students, the action is identical with the act of reflection, so that in these cases, results can be achieved much faster.

5. Delimitation. Both ways, visual and verbal, can be used by students to refresh what they have already learned that it works, because they acted as individuals and previously evolved in a given group. The task of the art teacher is to provide concrete options on development of the skills appropriate to the message of each student, making it either through their own artistic creation, or by analyzing the art of others. All knowledge and information previously acquired need to be reconsidered so that different students to have time to acquire new skills and abilities, without being pushed back one level but also not be pushed forward without being already prepared.

6. Feedback. This is the time to do a re-evaluation of the training of young people, to see how effective it is and where it can interfere with further changes that might help. Equally, students and teachers will perform in the educational process and, as each student is working and contributing to the system, the educational process itself can be changed. This may appear at first glance to be too complex, so that teachers have the feeling that they could not work with it. But, once educators become more aware of psychosocial dynamics that are ongoing in their class and become familiar with the types of variables that can affect learning, they understand that the efficiency of these theories become more accessible and visible. This awareness provides numerous options to make the lesson more accessible, more efficient and having a coherent sense for many students at once. Thus, it is improved the quality of teaching and learning experience.

Conclusions

The ideas presented in this paper helps us to identify those criteria that can be used in the formulation and evaluation of educational goals and of those objectives related to cross-cultural study of art. It can also lead to evaluate assumed reasons underlying the need for such educational approach, more precisely, it is about an education for ***cultural equality, cultural tolerance***, and for the broader objective of ***multicultural education*** as proposed by Margaret Alison Gibson (1984).

The presented ideas come in support of the *curriculum* realization, for teachers and also for the classroom practice, to evaluate their own assumptions and to question the selection of content made by themselves and the educational strategies, in terms of the *cultural context* which the school offers and with the subculture represented in the student's population, with their different motivations.

The mentioned authors present the overall - leaving aside minor items of disagreement - a complex process of teaching-learning which can be enriched by various types of objective-subjective research, in an experimental field, including quantitative and qualitative modalities.

Multicultural anthropologists and psychologists provides an enlightening perspective to the essence of multicultural or cross-cultural education, providing

a basis for developing educational experience that will help students, in a certain degree to know, to feel, see and understand as others know, feel, see and understand. In this way, the study of the meaning of art, can become a tool and a domain of an elevated aesthetic experiences and a multicultural awareness. Emerges a more pan-cultural perspective than ethno-centric, in which art can be viewed and interpreted. This does not mean, however, to separate *art* and *culture* but to understand art and culture in their interrelated diversity.

Finally, the study of categories and cognitive styles of Western art and of the specific culture of school can broaden the base from which a subject is defined, analyzed and developed through education.

References

1. Anderson F. E. (1979). "Approaches to cross-cultural research in art education." Studies in Art Education 21, 17-26
2. Berry J. W., and P. R. Dasen. (1975). Culture and cognition: Readings in cross-cultural perspectives on learning. New York: Wiley
3. Chalmers F. G. (1978). "Teaching and studying art history: Some anthropological and sociological considerations." Studies in Art Education 20
4. Cole M. and S. Scribner. (1974). Culture and thought: A psychological introduction. New York: John Wiley
5. Eisner E. (1979). "Cross-cultural research in arts education: Problems, issues and prospects." Studies in Art Education 21, 27-35
6. Geertz C. (1983). Local knowledge. New York: Basic Books
7. Gibson M. A. (1984). "Approaches to multi-cultural education in the United States--1976 (Special Issue)." Anthropology and Education Quarterly 15
8. Kaufman W. (1977). The art of reading. In The future of the humanities. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Chap. 2
9. McFee J. K. (1970). "Preparation for art" (2nd Ed.). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth
10. McFee J. K. and R. Degge. (1980). "Art, culture and environment." Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt
11. Rusu, Marinela, (2014), "Reglarea culturală a emoțiilor", în vol. 27, "Studii și cercetări din domeniul științelor socio-umane." Ed. Limes & Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p. 185-198
12. Smith R. A. (1983). "Forms of multi-cultural education in the arts." Journal of Multi-cultural and Cross- cultural Research in Art Education