Pupils' and teachers' perceptions of visual art education:

A case study based on one of Greece’s new secondary arts schools

Volume 1 of 2

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Abstract

This study sets out to interpret pupils’ and teachers’ perceptions about learning in visual arts in the context of the third year visual art class of one of the three specialist arts schools in Greece.

The rationale for the research was to understand how pupils and teachers in this type of specialist arts school perceived the learning process, which could have some transfer value to other contexts of learning in the visual art subject. The research may contribute to the body of knowledge and the practice of art education in Greece, and possibly inform future curriculum development in the subject.

In Greece, since 1985, the development of art education and pupils' aesthetic understanding has been one of the five fundamental aims for secondary and primary education. To improve art education at the primary and secondary level, the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs has undertaken several initiatives. One such initiative has been the development of specialist arts schools. These alternative specialist schools exist in several European countries. In 2003 the Greek Ministry of Education announced the establishment of the first arts school of the country. The year the research was conducted 2008-2009, three arts schools were operated in Greece.

The research endeavoured to understand issues related to the learning process in one of the new specialist arts schools, as perceived by third year pupils (aged fourteen and fifteen years old) and their visual art teachers. The research used the interpretive research paradigm, as it is the most suitable method to explore the socio-cultural reality in which the pupils and teachers are situated. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews, observations, and focus groups. The analysis of findings revealed a learning experience very closely related with the philosophy and the content of the Greece’s national curriculum of visual art. However, according to the findings of this study further attention needs to be given to the issue of developing imaginative thinking, within the framework of the art curriculum. The study proposes an alternative version of the art curriculum, with a view to facilitating imaginative thinking, in
the art curriculum of specialist arts schools in Greece as well as the teaching of art in normal secondary schools.

It is hoped that the results of the study will offer ground for discussions and oppositions in the area of art education in Greece, in which area not much research has been undertaken. The study’s proposal for the revisions to the existing art curriculum for the specialist arts schools, as they are resulted from evidences embedded in pupils and teachers views, stress on the significance and the originality of the findings and for this reason it is hoped to concern the writing aspect of Greece’s future curriculum writers. This will add to the development of art education in Greece and further will foster relationships between the members of the particular school where the research was carried out.
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