Legitimation of art education.
Neurophysiologic and statistical evidence of the edifying/instructional and macroeconomic effect of art education

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Research findings on art education and evidence gained from practical pedagogical experience indisputably show that art and skills education has great importance for the growth and development of an individual's personality. Recent neurophysiologic findings in turn attest to the propensity of human aesthetic capabilities (the capacity of the senses to transmit information) for development and the dependence of expressivity and creativity on education and the operating environment. Hence, the scientific arguments for the advocacy of art education certainly exist.

The neurophysiologic argumentation is founded on the fact that the human being has a balanced, species-specific capacity for information transfer: the tip of a finger (tactile) conveys just as much information as the eye (visual); sight and hearing (auditive) both convey equal amounts of information, albeit to different parts of the brain. Practice enhances human sensory cognizance and an understanding of sensory qualities. It is these species-specific qualities that underpin both art, as the highest form of humanity, and the human ability to appreciate art and perceive phenomena in general. And it is here we find the ethical justification of art education: the world of aesthetic experience and the capacity for artistic expression exist as potential in every human being (1).

In advocacy, less attention has been accorded to the contribution of art education to the national economy and the creative economy. With the help of the UNCTAD Creative Economy statistical report (2) and the European Union's cultural statistics (3,4.) this paper seeks to show up the often latent significance of art education for national economies at different stages of development. The success of creative-economy service and commodity production and trade are namely dependent on two factors. They both rest on the quality and inclusiveness of national art education systems. One prerequisite for the development of the creative economy is the artistic capacity of creative people and the capacity of
society to turn this talent into products (production aspect), on the one hand, and the ability and desire of the public, that is consumers, to receive (experience, buy) these products and services (consumption aspect). The capacity for both art production and for art consumption in a nation and in a culture grows through art education.

There is abundant statistical evidence attesting to a growth in the consumption of cultural contents all over the world. In the global perspective, international trade in creative-sector products and services grew by 8.7% annually between 2000 and 2005. In 2003 the turnover in the cultural industries in Europe amounted to EUR 654 billion. Between 1999 and 2003, the growth was 12.3% faster than economic growth overall in the EU countries. In 2003 the cultural industries employed 5.6 million people in the EU.

The ongoing development of UN and EU statistics will make it possible to bolster the UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education with solid statistical data. By combining international statistical data on culture and on education, we can also demonstrate the clear contribution of art education to economic development.

In addition to its positive effect on the individual and on the economy, art education has benefits in the ethical dimension. 1. The UN-UNCTAD report showed that the creative economy has potential for boosting growth and progress in developing countries. At the moment, the benefits mainly accrue to the industrialised countries. 2. The value of creative economy products, also their value on the market, lies in their quality and uniqueness. Art education and the creative economy can constitute an important factor enhancing diversity and should have an important role in the implementation of the UNESCO diversity convention.

As a case study, the paper presents statistical studies conducted in Finland on the contribution of culture to the national economy and on the extent of art education (6). In 2007 the cultural sectors represented 3.2% of the GDP growth, which exceeds that of mass and paper production – the staples of Finnish export – and, for instance, tourism. The creative industries gave jobs to over 4% of the employed in Finland. (5, 7, 8.)
References

1. For more researched information about this, see Tuomikoski Paula, Taide ja ihminen (Art and the human being, in Finnish). 1992
2. Creative Economy Report 2008, UN-UNCTAD
3. The Economy of Culture in Europe, KEA 2006