

A study of learning activities of community arts education through children's art festival

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of this Study is to make clear a principal of community arts educator's need for learning and subject. We conducted a survey using a questionnaire form to 32 adult participants through the community arts project; Children's Arts Festival. The results show that most of all the participants want to feel children's imaginative spirit and freely feeling of expression first. They are the persons who have a special concern with children and arts. Most of them did not have a special training for arts education in teachers college. In the diversity of civilian daily life, community arts educators require a wider and deeper social perspective and a problem solving approach not only for pedagogy but for adult education, citizenship activity, management of nonprofit organization, and social venture business. Through the arts workshop, parents acquired communication skills it gave them a good understanding of children's feelings and emotions. To combine many talented participants is very important in community arts education. The ability to coordinate and produce a good harmony of participant's talents is required of a facilitator or director. The contemporary world consists of various multi-layered small communities. Peaceful coexistence and inclusive society construction requires mutual understanding and communication of children and adults. Community arts education requires diversity of learning subjects such as sensibility areas and participants' talents, and the ability of facilitators and directors to act as coordinators and producers.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 40 years, regional subdivision has progressed in Japan. Consequently it caused many social problems especially in the relationships between children and adults. Traditional reciprocity and mutual communication in sharing the children's feelings and emotions was lost. In a rapid globalization movement, a sense of solidarity of community is very important. In the late 1990's arts education was expanded in the area of social education as community arts education, using workshops, arts projects, arts festivals and so on. Kohya Kitada (1986) proposed that community arts and cultural activities are a counter culture to national civilian control. Despite the assumed necessity to increase community arts education, however, there was little clear research and educational investigation about it in Japan. Therefore the purpose of this study is to investigate community arts education and its learning subjects through an action research on a "Children's Arts Festival" (CAF).

(1) Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to make clear:

- a) what is a need for learning
- b) necessary subjects for learning

Community arts education practitioners are not specialists, but generalists.

(2) Research Design

To make clear the purpose of the study, I focused on the community arts project for children "Children's Arts Festival" (CAF). Through the project I experiment on action research. After the project participants filled out questionnaires. This creates useful data for this study.

- I make an analysis of the data from the point of:
Participants background; Attribution
- Why and for what reason people participated in CAF; motivation.
- Participants' reflection :What the participants obtained through CAF.

Analysis leads to discussion and conclusion.

BACKGROUND OF COMMUNITY ARTS EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Since the 1990s, the number of arts education practitioners has increased in Japan. There are some reasons that workshop style arts creation activities are a major part of the art educator. This has caused a new movement in art museum education, and law support system for nonprofit organization and empowered community based art education. As figure 1 shows community art educators' backgrounds and profiles are diverse. Most did not take a formal arts educator training course in university. Some of them learned graphic design, social innovation study, fine arts, or psychology. To become a community arts educator does not require a license like school teachers. However, they feel the need to learn in order to raise their arts education activities' quality and, thus, the children's well-being.

Based on such a situation of Japanese community arts education, I planned a learning program for community arts educators from 2008 to 2011. In this paper I describe the actual conditions of community art education, in this study I examine the "Children's Art Festival in Kyoto 2011" (CAF) (figure 2, 3). Participants of CAF are not funded by the national education and cultural policy supports. They have an economic instability. On the other

hand, their relatively free position provides a possibility for unique arts education practices, and such a possibility enables a diverse area of community arts education. I indicate the real condition of the community arts educator is as important as an enforce community arts educator and rethink about school art education from the view point of the community, which human living based on fundamental requirement. Especially through globalization with its complex social problems, an alternative functioning of communities (Latouche, 2004, 2007), and community arts education as a humanities and social democratic construction will be more important. In figure 1, I describe the CAF community arts educators' background.

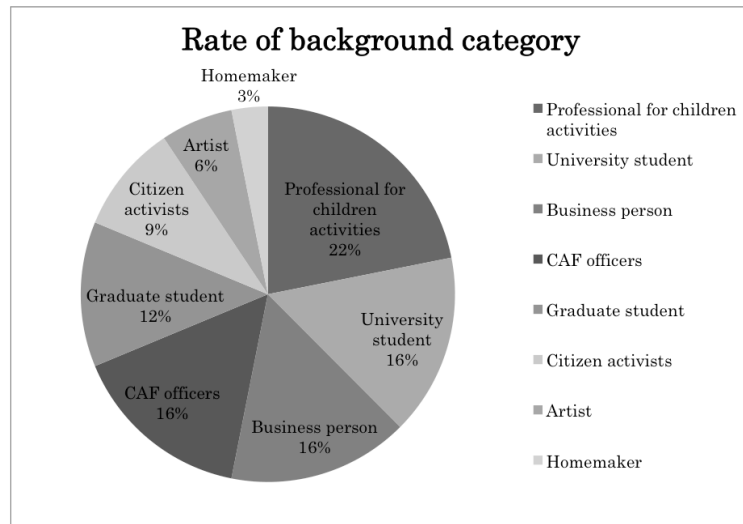


Figure 1: Rate of background category

INFORMATION OF CAF IN DETAIL

CAF is held in Kyoto city in Japan. The population of the city is 1,200,000. There are many traditional and historical temples and a row of old houses along the street. There are five Arts Universities and Colleges. CAF is planned by the nonprofit art education office "Art Communication Design" and funded by the governmental foundation of youth education. CAF consists of two official meetings and a two-day event and reflection meeting. In addition some small group meetings was held for preparation. The first meeting was for contents planning and the second for publicity planning. They were held in Kyo-machiya, a Kyoto style traditional old house. 32 adults and 32 children participated in CAF. After preparation meetings, we carried out the CAF event at the Child Rearing Support Center of Kyoto City "Kodomo-Mirai-Kan" on 26th February 2011. There were ten programs in CAF. Altogether 230 children and parents gathered and joined in. The total planning was supported by Kitashirakawa Children's Center of Kyoto city, and the Non-profit organization Child and Art. (Figure 2,3)



Figure 2: flyer of CAF front



Figure 3: flyer of CAF reverse

BACKGROUND OF THE CAF PARTICIPANTS

Participants consisted of 32 adults and 32 children. The booth member's background of the ten programs is as follows. In this study 32 children are exception.

Booth	staffs	details
Scratch drawing	2	Artist, university student.
Art Duster making	5	University staff who sometimes plan workshops, University student who volunteers at a child center, two ecology activists, alternative space director.
Video Art	2	University student who studies education, free artist who has learned contemporary arts in a foreign country.
Picture book making	2	President of a picture book shop, business person.
Traditional dying towel making	3	Two graduate students who study social policy, business person who learns at a design school.
Colorful paper formation	2	Two Art University students.
Block making with disused house's old woods	1	Graduate student who is the president of educational consultant.
Picture book making with original rubber stamp	2	University staff, homemaker.
Refrigerator picture book design work shop	2	Two professional work shop facilitators.
Children's center booth for play and craft	(32) 5	32 pupils, three children's center staffs.
Management volunteer staff	3	Graduate student, educator and president of a small private art atelier for children, work goods office worker who sometimes plans a handicraft work shop.
CAF officers	5	Professors, CAF chief facilitator, arts educator and researcher.



Figure 4: Refrigerator picture book design work shop

This ratio indicates that half of the participants are concerned and interested in children's art activity and education through arts. On the other hand, 16% of business person are important, although, they are not artist and had no training for arts education or teachers college, they are people who wish to contribute to arts education for children in the community. Besides citizen activists and homemakers concern for arts education, it might enable the hypothesis that there are a group of people who are concerned about arts education for children although they have no special arts education training and they are willing to start an arts education activity in their nearby community. I suggest that there is a necessity for a program to enable the training of community arts educators. The desire of participants to participate in a project such as CAF is important. In the following the participants' reasons for participating in CAF are listed.

WHY AND FOR WHAT REASON DO PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN CAF?

What is the reason for participating in CAF? In the following, the views of different participants are presented.

Professional for children activities

- To meet children's power of imagination.
- I want to enjoy to have an event with children.

University student

- interest in child and art, Arts Education.
- To get a chance to care for children.
- Studying a child and art study. I want to do a practice of children's art workshop to meet children and various people.
- I want to study about the workshop for children.

Business person

- interest in children, life and art, I want to plan the workshop activity.
- interest in how children enjoy and experience our program.
- I felt CAF makes a contribution with art and handy craft for children.
- I like art and children besides the event and the festival.

Management volunteer staff

- I have a concern with children and feel a similarity between my ideas and the concept of CAF.

Graduate student

- I simply feel the pleasure!
- I want to do something together with children.
- Studying father's nurture support. CAF is the event for child and parent.
- To help my Graduate schoolmate.

Citizen activists

- I want children to feel closeness to ecology and house cleaning.
- I think it is good and effective to participate in CAF.
- I decided to participate in CAF in order to help other members of citizen activities.

Artist

- I want to start a community business for children's activities and I am very interested in workshops for children.
- interest in events planning to connect children with art.

Homemaker

- No data.



Figure 5: Scratch drawing

This data suggest the following. Firstly many participants are concerned with children. They want to feel the children's pleasure and power of imagination and not for the desire to exercise their ability of expression or educational arts technique. Many participants believe that children's viewpoint is very important. As I said earlier, most of them did not have any special training experience and I recognized that they possess such an attitude as non-professionals, indicating that recognition of the goals of arts education exists among common people. Participants receive pleasure from caring for children. I can say that there is a reciprocity by the communication through arts and it is a new effect of arts as a communication (Kumakura, 2000). 1990s Arts expression style has changed to making arts work as workshop and project work, it includes appreciators and citizens. Communication became a key concept in the contemporary Arts scene. Artistic objects are not necessarily needed for Arts communication today; however they want to have a deeper understanding of children's feelings. There are possibilities to make communication with Arts as communication.

Secondly many of the participants want to exercise and plan the arts workshops and events for and with children, including some of the students studying child and art. They want to get a job in the area of arts education; not in the school but in community educational and cultural activities. They are not students of teachers colleges. Recently graduates of teachers colleges obtained jobs in various fields of arts education, not only as art teacher in schools. Of course knowledge and skills for arts education for children overlap between schools and the area of community social education. However, in the situation of diversity of civilian daily life, to continue community arts education activities without public fundamental support needs a wide and deep social perspective and problem solving approach not only within pedagogy but also adult's education, citizenship activity, management of nonprofit organization and social venture businesses. As some of the participants want to start community businesses for children's activities through arts, it is necessary to integrate such areas to open up a new vista of the future for coexistence of child and adult, from different backgrounds and from different value sharing people. Only then can we accomplish and expand the effectiveness and possibilities of arts education.

Participants are concerned with children and want to share the pleasure through arts workshops and events. At once they look for an opportunity to participate from the beginning of planning. At the same time, they look for an opportunity to learn about such a manifold area as on the job training.



Figure 6. Making blocks with disused house's old woods

PARTICIPANTS' REFLECTIONS

I will now discuss the participants' reflections in detail.

Professional for children activities

- I feel pleasure with children; they try to make very much and many children join in. My program Scratch drawing was designed to give a minimum instruction; I enjoyed seeing the children's slow expressions. The children's mothers said this art work is useful in daily life; this gives me a new idea about learning.
- I was able to touch the children's independency; on the other hand there were some children who wouldn't collaborate with others well.
- There are many earnest children and parents.

University student

- I intended my activity to be an amazing experience for children, in which they could explore the use of their hands and make new discoveries.
- I could observe mothers talking to each other and it seemed to be enjoyable.
- I like very much to play with children, and they are powerful.
- I could understand that everyone makes with their own idea and device. I feel good because the parents let the children be free; parents abstained from helping the children too much.

- I want to create a space and situation where children and parents can make something together, because I think it is boring when parents make all by themselves without the children.
- There is a difference between fathers and mothers in this kind of event. Fathers are particularly concerned with making something, while mothers keep company with children and fathers.

Business person

- I was very happy that many children joined the program. I understood that children can accomplish delicate operations like using scissors, tie a rope, using a wire.
- I had a prejudice that children would be tired immediately but many of them participated in the activities for long time.
- I felt that if there is more relationship between parents and children with much fun, child raising would not be such a heavy task.
- There were various concerns between parents and children in the workshop. Some parents should have let their children act more freely and spontaneously.

Management volunteer staff

- I am concerned that mothers control their words and the communication with children. "Just a moment, it is not my image" "Why don't you do it that way?" Some of parents gave their own image to children. I hope that they receive the children's expressions.

Graduate student

- Though I was not able to see all states of the CAF activity, children understood the way of making traditional dying towels, and I found some mothers also were concentrating on the activity.
- It impressed me that parents looked at children who were deeply absorbed in the activity.

Citizen activists

- I was very interested in the reactions of children and parents. For some of them making an Art Duster is new and for others it is nostalgic.
- Dusters are close to some adults or no concern in today's life for some adults, making dusters is not a difficult activity for children, I hope for children it will be a help when they are cleaning everyday.
- The preparation of many colorful cloths for our duster-making activity was fun for many children. After we ran out of material for making dusters, parent watched the sample intently using a guide paper to make it. They prompted children to help cleaning with the Duster.

Artist

- Most parents and children are frank, if there is good instructions they can enjoy the activity more deeply.

Homemaker

- No data.

As the above reflections show, many participants enjoyed the experience with children. They understood the children's abilities as a delicate operation, device and unique idea, and they got a new understanding of what children are. Otherwise many of them point out that the parents are too much concerned with their children and that the parents should give the children more freedom and respect their wishes. In other words, they want the

parents to let the children feel free so that the children's imaginative capacities and feelings develop freely. This problem is spreading in Japanese society and Japanese childcare scene broadly. It is no exaggeration to say that arts education in community aims at redesigning the relationship and communication between children and parents through arts workshop processes. It is a problem of relation and communication. Many parents cannot understand and take children as they are. Communication skills through arts expression are necessary for all people.

As is well known, arts education at school has the potential for self-change and self education. However, it is directed at children solely. To be a happy we need to change each other; it is a problem concerning both, the individual and the relationships of different generations. Therefore, community arts education activities have two aims, one directed at children, the other at adults; both may change their selves and their relationship with one another. Concerning this point, Takashi Kujiraoka (1997) suggested that the development of the relationship between child and adult is important to construct a structure of community arts education which has multi layer learning subjects: pedagogy, andragogy, aesthetics, creativity and imagination, and, moreover, social change (date and page number). In consequence, evaluation of these aspects and a study area for training is necessary, also many participants want to feel a connection with others. It could say that community arts consist from area of sensibility.

Brandt suggest that participants bring their bodies, minds, and spirits into a process of communicating and sharing their experiences; they affirm their lives as sources of knowledge, and they stimulate each other in synergistic process of collective knowledge production (Brandt ,353-354). Communication in the community arts is central to participants' motivation for participation.

WHAT IS NECESSARY FOR THEIR LEARNING?

In chapter 6, the participants' views show what is necessary for their community arts education activity. In the questionnaire form that they filled out after CAF they described what kind of study was necessary for them. The description is as follows.



Figure 7: Making traditional dying towels

Professional for children activities

- I want to do the activity that we did with the participants from the start to putting things in order.

University student

- I want to continue this CAF project.
- I want to learn how to care for and support children with disabilities.
- I want to do the activity that connects parents and children, children and region, children and various people.
- I want to learn variations in children's interest, how to do a workshop for children with disabilities.

Business person

- I need an opportunity for events and learning activities like this.
- I want an opportunity to see children's ideas freely.

Management volunteer staff

- Art seminar workshops which children and adults can enjoy together.

Graduate student

- Learning and activities make place for mothers to exchange between the generations.
- Workshop for food, clothing and shelter and art for life.

Citizen activists

- Many children and parents came to play much. It is good to have this festival once a year.

Artist

- Project of real art. I want to use the scraps from the enterprise for the children's art activities.

Homemaker

- No data.

Above views show what participants need next. Opportunity to feel and act with children is first. Second, they want the workshop to develop skills for children with disabilities and that children and adults can enjoy the experience together. Some of them said I want an opportunity like this CAF event. This reply means efficacy of CAF; however, it shows a state of no classification of issues of participants at the same time. To make this clearer, further research will be needed. However, it is clear that workshops need to address disabled persons needs, communication program design for children and adult practices, planning and learning. Such continuous learning activities make the real issue clear. The discipline for learning activity and what we need for the curriculum of community arts education are still being developed. Community peace based on diversity requires these learning subjects, as compared to school arts education it requires multi area of learning subjects.

It is important to acknowledge many different potential roles for the artist or research facilitator, which will be determined ultimately by the main purposes of the project, the nature of the issue, the community participants, and the orientation of the artist/facilitator herself (Brandt,355).

Therefore, community arts education must carry on by diversity of talents, not only teachers who have trained in art education at teacher's colleges. To combine many talented participants is very important in community arts education; it is necessary for facilitators to be able to coordinate and produce a good harmony of the different participant's talents.

CONCLUSION

This paper elaborated on aspects of community arts education in a limited small community arts education activity. Nevertheless, it is of interest to the people who have a special concern with children and arts. It was found that they want to meet and feel the children's pleasure and power of imagination not for the desire to exercise their ability of expression or educational arts technique. Most of them did not experience special training for arts education in teachers college. However, in the situation of diversity of civilian daily life, community arts educators will be need a wide and deep social perspective with a problem solving approach that includes not only pedagogy but adult's education, citizenship activity, management of nonprofit organization and social venture business. This assists in the design of content for a learning curriculum for community arts education. A continuous study would need to clarify the detail of the curriculum.

Arts education is thought of as a basic culture and education for peace (Read, 1956). There is an important relation between individual peace and social peace. The contemporary world consists of various small communities. Everyone lives in such a small community. Peaceful coexistence and inclusive society construction require mutual understanding between children and adults, because the problem of peace cannot sweep away generation succession and relational development (Kujiraoka,1997). It needs to start with small and local community activities (Latouche, 2004; 2007) and if it considers communities involving diversity, the efficacy of community arts education has a big possibility.

In the community arts education, It is very important that a redefinition of arts as a communication to feel and touch to each other. Inter-individual communication and inter-local community communication must be based on reciprocity. The community arts practitioner has a need for learning and a necessity to learn particular subjects; child and adults study, Arts and expression study. It should include a management study and sensibility study such a feeling and emotion private motivation area. The area is fundamental and essential for human and human relationship. It is the same for the area of community arts.

Therefore community arts education needs a diversity of learning subjects and participant talents, and ability for the facilitator or director as coordinator and producer. It must based on area of sensibility. Next step I will plan a learning activity and workshop based on such requests and results of this research. As Garber describes, there are some confusion between the education of specialists and the development of critical, reflective, and participatory citizen (Garber, 2010,121). However in this study I can show what the participants need and feel in their concern with community arts projects and explicate the perspective and structure of the community arts education field in future studies.

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