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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the concept of inclusive education and suggests that the arts have both a valuable role to play in this context and also provide the skills that are in high demand for the 21st century workplace. The paper starts by reflecting on the meaning of inclusive education in the context of the Salamanca Statement, a human rights' approach. It then discusses some of the teaching and learning methodologies that have been shown to be highly pertinent for achieving inclusive quality education for all and shows the interrelation between quality inclusive practices and the arts. Following, the paper explores how arts education, beyond the rights-based approach, favours the acquisition of the skills demanded in the 21st Century. The arts, the paper concludes, are influential not only in supporting inclusive teaching and learning practices, but also in the bringing to all children the skills needed in the 21st Century.

ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS THROUGH THE ARTS

This paper explores opportunities from the fields of the arts and human rights to advance inclusive education while providing all students with the high-demand skills of the 21st Century. It does not address issues related to physical access to education or the financing of education, though these are obviously critical if high quality education is to be provided for all.

The paper is structured as follows: Section I discusses the concept of inclusive education, including the human rights-based approach that supports it. Section II elaborates on the notion of inclusive curriculum and presents various inclusive teaching and learning strategies. Section III suggests that arts education facilitate inclusive practices while bringing the skills and competencies needed to all children in the 21st Century. The last section concludes.

I. THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The definition of inclusive education used in this paper is that adopted by 92 governments and 25 international organisations at the World Conference on *Special Needs Education: Access and Quality*, held in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994:

Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. Focusing particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual. The ultimate goal of inclusive education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion. (UNESCO)

Article 26 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in particular, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948, recognises that everyone has the right to education and that education shall be directed towards the full development of the human personality and towards the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. A significant landmark toward advancing inclusive education is the legally binding *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*, which was adopted by the United Nations in December 2006 and currently has 139 signatories. Article 24 not only asserts that ‘... States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity,’ but also ensures that ‘effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.’

The *Salamanca Statement* goes well beyond the still-common view, which links inclusion only to the participation and learning of children with disabilities, by reaffirming the fundamental right to education for every child, and stressing their unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs (Booth & Dyssegaard 2008). It is in line with the strategy of building inclusive societies which all individuals can participate in and contribute to, with individual differences and diversity being valued.

The *Salamanca Statement* asserts that:

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs
3. Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
4. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools, which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
5. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system.

The conclusions and recommendations of the 48th Session of the *UNESCO International Conference on Education* (held in Geneva in November 2008 and attended by 153 Member States, 20 intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, foundations, and other institutions from Civil Society) reaffirm the importance of a broadened concept of inclusive education that addresses the diverse needs of all learners and that is relevant, equitable, and effective.

While the ultimate objective is to attain quality inclusive education, beneficial to all in a mainstream environment, it is worth pointing out that only if all the conditions are favourable can quality inclusive education happen in mainstream classrooms. At the European Hearing of Young People's 'Young Voices: Meeting Diversity in Education', held in Lisbon in September 2007, young people with special educational needs from 29 countries expressed their rights, needs, and challenges, and made recommendations to achieve inclusive education. These were reflected in the Lisbon Declaration, and in many ways could be applied to every child. On inclusive education, the participants declared that:

1. It is very important to give everyone the freedom to choose where they want to be educated.
2. Inclusive education is best if the conditions are right for us. This means the necessary support, resources and trained teachers should be available. Teachers need to be motivated, to be well informed about and understand our needs. They need to be well trained, ask us what we need and be well co-ordinated among themselves during all the school years.
3. We see a lot of benefits in inclusive education: we acquire more social skills; we live wider experiences; we learn about how to manage in the real world; we need to have and interact with friends with and without special needs.
4. Inclusive education with individualised, specialised support is the best preparation for higher education. Specialised centres would be of help to support us and to inform universities properly about the help we require.
5. Inclusive education is mutually beneficial to us and to everyone.

As suggested above and by the UNESCO, inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education systems, with the ultimate goal of providing to all children quality education from early childhood to higher education (Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education, 1994). Not only is inclusive

education the concern of every society, including western countries as well as developing countries, but there is also strong support for the idea that inclusive education is an unending process, implying that schools can always attain greater inclusion whatever their situation is (Carrington & Robinson 2004).

Even though much remains to be done in terms of legislation at national levels toward inclusive education, international declarations and conventions have not only proclaimed education to be a universal right but also and more specifically proclaimed the right of all children to receive a *quality* education within the general education system.

Based upon the positive impact in Western countries of mandatory policies and laws in supporting the effective implementation of inclusive programs, Eleweke & Rodda believe that 'the enactment of relevant legislation' will 'support aspects of the development and implementation of inclusive education programs' in developing countries (2002). The Salamanca Statement and other United Nations proclamations have a significant impact on inclusive education policies around the world, and this impact seems likely to increase in coming years, not least with the recent signature on July 20th 2009, by the United States of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

While there is international recognition that policies form an effective framework toward inclusive education, the practical implementation of effective inclusive general education can happen only with adequate support and commitment from governments, policy makers, communities, principals, and ultimately from the teachers, who are a 'decisive factor' (European Agency 2003). Advancing toward successful inclusive education therefore requires that all teachers and other players involved in this process acquire the essential skills and competencies to better perform their roles. For the teachers, this means access to thorough pre-service and ongoing in-service training to develop the essential skills of 'adapting curricula, using a variety of instructional strategies, identifying individual needs, collaborating and solving-problems, developing individualized education plans, and monitoring student progress' (Porter 1999).

II. INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND PRACTICES

The demographic of many classrooms in the US and around the world has been changing considerably over the last decades as the result of the democratisation of education, the complexity and extent of international migration, and global political and financial mobilisation to reach universal primary education by 2015. Today's schools comprise therefore a more diverse population with regards to gender, culture, socio-economic background, and family situation. While our student population has become more diverse and their uniqueness in the learning process demonstrated, education systems are not individualized.

There is general agreement that a 'one size fits all' curriculum only benefits a minority of learners, leaving many others far behind their academic and social-development potential and others with no education at all. There is, therefore, in the context of quality inclusive education, a real need to provide 'shared meaningful learning experiences for students with and without disabilities within the context of classroom activities that address the individualised learning needs of each student' (Giangreco & Doyle 2000). This objective is key for education policies in light of the increasing diversity and complexity of student populations in the classrooms. Delivering quality teaching and learning across the curriculum for all will therefore require the implementation of inclusive practices, not least with the classroom environment.

There are many ways of approaching curriculum theory and practice, for instance seeing curricula as body of knowledge/product, as process, as praxis, or in context. Within the inclusive education framework, curriculum places much emphasis on the learner as a unique subject in lieu of an 'object to be acted upon', creating a shift from teaching to learning. Such a shift leads to student-centered curriculum planning based on the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the learners, with differentiation in the selection of the content and teaching strategies to meet individual needs (Smith 2000). To make it happen, education systems need to be flexible and 'responsive to the diverse and often complex needs of individual learners' (European Agency 2003). Therefore, providing a learning environment that could optimise access and successful participation in the education of all students requires a more flexible curriculum, starting with a 'shift from a focus on what was wrong in the learner... to the acceptance of differences between students as ordinary aspects of human development' (Florian 2008).

As mentioned above, one key factor in attaining quality inclusive education is to provide curricula; a curricula, whose design and content, teaching and learning environment and practices, and assessment methods are adaptable enough to address each learner's uniqueness. Research shows that the techniques, practices, procedures, and in many cases the content which have been found to be effective for students with disabilities and gifted students are generally effective for all students because of the fundamental recognition and acceptance of the uniqueness of each learner (Cook & Schirmer 2003).

Various curricular and instructional design strategies, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI), have been universally conceived in the sense that they create frameworks to support both inclusive teaching and learning practices, which ultimately benefit *all* students (Table 1). UDL provides more of a framework for planning an accessible curriculum when DI offers planned and ongoing instructional strategies (Barnum & Glass 2009)

Universal Design For Learning And Multiple Intelligence Theory

As Rose and Meyer put it:

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework, based on research in the learning sciences, that guides the development of flexible learning environments which can accommodate individual learning differences (2002).

The UDL approach is based on the idea that the Recognition, Strategic, and Affective neurological brain networks are essential elements to consider in designing inclusive curricula, as they create pathways to better address the diverse needs and uniqueness of each individual in his/her learning experience (Hall, Strangman & Meyer 2009). This approach builds on the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky's theory of social cognitive development that identifies three main processes for learning: 'recognition of the information to be learned, the application of strategies to process that information, and the engagement with the learning tasks.' (Vygotsky 1962)

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction (DI) provides an opportunity to plan a curriculum and instruction that honours each student's learning needs and maximises their learning capacity by meeting them where they are and assisting them in the learning process (Tomlinson 1999; NCAC 2002). The starting point for the teacher is therefore to start

by identifying their students' readiness levels, interests, and preferred ways of learning in order to 'design learning objectives options to tap into these three factors' (Corley 2005). Even though DI addresses students' unique ways of learning, this does not necessarily imply an individualised curriculum, but is more so looking at ' "ballparks" or "zones" in which students cluster' (Tomlinson 2003). Some of the instructional strategies advocated for DI include:

- Temporary scaffolding
- Tiering
- Guided practice to independent practice
- Multiple grouping strategies
- Diagnostic and formative, ongoing assessment (Barnum & Glass 2009)

TABLE 1: INCLUSIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

	Vygotsky' Theory of Social cognitive Development	Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Differentiated Instruction (DI)
	Learning based on a three step process	Curriculum Design based on the Recognition, Strategic, and Affective neurological brain networks	Curriculum and Instruction Planning based on the Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile of the learners
Access	Recognition of Information	Recognition Network Multiple means of representation to give learners different pathways to access information	Explore Curriculum Variety of ways to explore the Curriculum
Process	Process of Information	Recognition Network Multiple means of representation to give learners different pathways acquire knowledge	Acquire Information and Ideas Variety of activities through which students can come to understand and own information and ideas
Product		Strategic Network Multiple means of Action and Expression to allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge in various ways)	Demonstrate their Understanding Variety of options through which students can demonstrate their understanding of the curriculum
Engagement	Engagement with Learning	Affective Network Multiple means of engagement to interest, challenge, and motivate learners	Student Engagement With student understanding, student engagement as one of the two main elements for successful teaching

Other Inclusive Practices

The study *Inclusive Education and Effective Classroom Practices*, which results from an international literature review and case studies in 15 countries, identifies five groups of factors to be effective in an inclusive setting:

- *Co-operative teaching* occurs when several educators work together by bringing their specialisations and complementarities in a joined effort and with the common objective being to provide all children the best education in the general education classroom (Bauwens & Hourcade 2001)

- *Co-operative learning* occurs when students work together in group conditions that meet five criteria: positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills, and regular self-assessment of team functioning (Johnson & Smith 1998).
- *Collaborative problem-solving* occurs when, facing a challenging situation with a child with social and behavioral problems, the teacher will tackle the situation in a collaborative way by inviting the student to define an action plan that is mutually acceptable and realistic.
- *Heterogeneous grouping* (mixed-ability or collaborative grouping), which is a pre-requisite for co-operative learning, occurs when students with different skills levels are placed in the same group or classroom, but with differentiated goals.
- *Effective teaching* occurs when curriculum accommodation is provided, with the idea that an Individual Education Plan should fit within the normal curriculum framework (European Agency 2003).

Finally, there are other educational practices for students who are both far above and far beyond grade level, including multi-level curriculum and instruction, and curriculum overlapping. These practices, which are based on differentiation of learning outcomes, allow teachers 'to stretch their curriculum away from a middle zone in which all students share the same curricular content, level, and amount of work' (Giangreco, 2007). In that sense, they go beyond the 'middle zone' boundaries within which differentiated instruction occurs.

III. INCLUSIVE PRACTICES, 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND ARTS EDUCATION

Understanding how arts education facilitates inclusive practices and promotes 21st century skills in education requires that one takes a broader look at works of art. Conventional wisdom might simply see a work as a finished piece hanging on a wall or performed on a stage. The all-too-common view is that such work demonstrates a particular talent that an individual either has or not, and that the limited resources of education in this area should be directed towards those who possess the talent. Such a view has an extraordinarily detrimental effect on the potential of the arts in education. A work of art is an action that engages the cognitive capacities of the imagination and creativity. Beyond talent, these cognitive capacities exist in every individual, and arts education represents a distinct and rare opportunity to engage every student. This engagement is what facilitates the multiple means of representation and expression for the student, as well as co-operative learning and collaborative teaching for educators.

Arts education encompasses both the arts as a discipline and arts integrated curriculum. Addressing the impact of arts education on inclusive quality education is therefore not about questioning arts as a discipline versus arts integrated curriculum; rather it is about understanding how arts education as a whole impacts quality inclusive education. Besides, Arts education is a universal human right, as reflected in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and should therefore receive formal recognition in the school curriculum around the world (UNESCO 2006).

Arts education support inclusive educational practices, they are crucial to acquire highly demanded skills in the 21st Century, and they can be powerful toward social cohesion.

Learning through the Arts

Arts education favours and supports various teaching techniques and strategies to accommodate each learner's unique way of accessing curriculum, processing information, and demonstrating their understanding.

In that sense, Gardner's multiple intelligences (MI) theory (Gardner 1983) elucidates the view that students possess diverse kinds of minds and cognitive strengths and therefore use varied practices to learn, remember, understand, and perform. Gardner's theory has emerged, from empirical work that he initially undertook with gifted children and from working with patients with brain-injuries, which led him to believe that '... the standard view of a single, unitary, indecomposable intelligence could not be correct' (Project Zero 2008). This suggests that our schools should acknowledge and reward visual/spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences equally as verbal and logical-mathematical intelligences (Gardner 1983).

The MI theory is thereby entirely in line with the very same principles of inclusive education and UDL that encourages individualizing education systems on the basis that each student learns in a way that is very unique to her/him.

For instance, arts education favours the application of MI as it supports learning styles that are interrelated to the intelligences identified by Gardner. For example, students could undertake the following activities while studying a painting:

- Linguistic Intelligence: Write a story/a poem that the painting inspires.
- Logical Mathematical: Measuring the frame of the painting, counting certain objects in the painting.
- Visual Spatial: Drawing a character/part of the painting observed.
- Musical: Identify a music piece that the painting inspires, or play an instrument.
- Physical: Make the painting alive by acting out the story they see in it.
- Inter-Personal: Discuss in group the composition of the painting.
- Intra-Personal: Understand the emotions you feel watching the painting

Dee Dickinson's paper 'Learning through the arts' provides research based cases that support Gardner's theory and show how visual arts, music, dance, and drama contribute significantly to better learning for all students across curriculum as 'most students through these arts forms will not only find the means for communication and self expression, but the tools to construct meaning and learn almost any subject effectively' (Dickinson 2009).

By creating pathways for all students to access the curriculum, the arts stimulate also their motivation and engagement in the learning process, raise their self esteem, and consequently students attain higher achievement across the curriculum (Boyes & Reid 2005)

Even though there is evidence proving that the arts facilitate, by their nature, inclusive curricular and instructional strategies (Riffel 2007), the planning of effective arts integrated lessons suggest that teaching follows five basic principles: 'targeted outcomes must be clear, all possible arts and intelligences must be included, the learning must be accomplished through the arts and supported by teaching through the arts, all intelligences should be fostered while students continue to use reading, writing, and math skills in conjunction with the arts, and the assessment must fit the mode of presentation' (Whiterell 2000).

Learning in the Arts

Our 21st century is marked by changes in technology and global competition that have altered not only the skill demands in the labor market but also their unpredictability. In fact, as new generations of workers will most likely move between sectors of activity through their professional life, they will need 'a wide range of generic competences to enable them to adapt' (Commission of the European Communities 2007). The report of the new commission on the skills and the American workforce *Tough Choices or Tough Times* published in 2007 by the National Center on Education and the Economy urges:

Strong skills in English, mathematics, technology, and science, as well as in literature, history, and the arts will be essential for many. Beyond this, candidates will have to be comfortable with ideas and abstractions, good at both analysis and synthesis, creative and innovative, self-disciplined and well organized, able to learn very quickly and work well as a member of a team and have the flexibility to adapt quickly to frequent changes in the labor market as the shifts in the economy become ever faster and more dramatic.

This suggests that besides and despite much debate and controversy around core knowledge/subjects versus non-cognitive skills, there has arisen support for the need to adapt the curriculum of basic as well as post-basic education for students to also develop non-cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving and behavioral skills (Fasih 2008). And the arts, as a subject, aide learners in acquiring some of the key skills and competencies for the 21st Century, such as learning and innovation skills, information, media, technology skills, and life and career skills (Stone 2008).

Education systems will therefore be made accountable for delivering curricula that allow learners not only to acquire core knowledge but also to reach 'their fullest potential in terms of emotional and creative capacities' (UNESCO 2005).

Over the last ten years, there has been a global urge for an education that will push our students to be more creative in their thinking process. Ten years ago, the Director General of UNESCO issued an appeal on and for arts education, highlighting the importance for the school of the 21st Century to accord a special place to the teaching of artistic values and subjects in order to encourage creativity (Mayor 1999).

At a time when family and social structures are changing, with often adverse effects on children and adolescents, the school of the 21st Century must be able to anticipate the new needs by according a special place to the teaching of artistic values and subjects in order to encourage creativity, which is a distinctive attribute of the human species. Creativity is our hope. (Mayor 1999)

Ten years later, US President Barack Obama restated this appeal by declaring that 'in addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education' (President Obama 2008).

To remain competitive in the global economy, America needs to reinvigorate the kind of creativity and innovation that has made this country great. To do so, we must nourish our children's creative skills. In addition to giving our children the science and math skills they need to compete in the new global

context, we should also encourage the ability to think creatively that comes from a meaningful arts education. (2008)

Arts education naturally engages students in a very rich problem solving process through which they develop fundamental learning and innovation skills, such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, and communication and collaboration (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 2010; <http://dpi.wi.gov/cal/art-design.html>).

In a 2005 report for the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Curriculum Marautanga Project and the subsequent revision of the Arts curriculum, O'Connor & Dunmill evidence on how the arts provide a rich and meaningful context for the development of all forms of thinking – including both cognitive and emotional thinking – making meaning, relating to others, managing oneself, and participating and contributing (O'Connor & Dunmill 2005).

The concept of creativity is often linked to those of imagination and innovation, since the inter-relation of the three represents the overall creative process. As Sir Ken Robinson puts it, '...The first step is imagination, the capacity we all have to see something in the mind's eye. Creativity is then using that imagination to solve problems – call it applied imagination. Then innovation is putting that creativity into practice as applied creativity' (Scanlon 2006). In that context, Professor Damasio insists on the value of arts and humanities education since it cultivates the imagination that is needed for innovation. He also vividly argues that arts education should be part of every curriculum because of the numerous attributes arts and humanities education bring to every learner and ultimately to wider society (UNESCO 2006).

A recent report from the OECD on *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from Talis* points out the importance of the humanities and creative and practical subjects, including the arts. As the arts promote student-oriented practices, they provide learning experiences that 'allow students to take responsibility and to self-organize' as much as 'they help develop a broad spectrum of skills that will be helpful for their future professional life' (2009). There is indeed strong evidence to support this. The very informative paper *Arts Education and Instrumental Outcomes* (O'Farrell & Meban 2003) demonstrates how 'the arts have the capacity to cultivate habits of mind such as persistence, focused perception, and divergent thinking, and personal and social capacities, such as empathy for others, collaboration, self-esteem, and positive risk taking'. Importantly, research also shows that learning in the arts is largely inquiry-based and that inquiry-based curricula positively influence gains in critical thinking (Lampert 2006). The Ontario Curriculum clearly argues that:

In arts courses, students develop their ability to reason and to think critically as well as creatively. They develop their communication and collaborative skills, as well as skills in using different forms of technology. Through studying various works of art, they deepen their appreciation of diverse perspectives and develop the ability to approach others with openness and flexibility. They also learn to approach issues and present ideas in new ways, to teach and persuade, to entertain, and to make designs with attention to aesthetic considerations.

Participation in arts courses helps students develop their ability to listen and observe, and enables them to become more self-aware and self-confident. It encourages them to take risks, to solve problems in creative ways, and to draw on their resourcefulness. In short, the knowledge and skills developed in the study of the arts can be applied in many other endeavours. (O'Farrell & Meban 2003)

Quality arts education goes beyond the positive effects it has on cognitive and emotional developments in learners. The 'Global Research Compendium on the Impact of the Arts in Education', conducted by Professor Ann Bamford in 2004, offers strong evidence that a quality arts education not only improves teaching and learning environments, but also brings stronger partnerships between the community and the school.

CONCLUSION

Moving toward the inclusion of marginalised learners within mainstream environments is not only a legal obligation but also an opportunity to improve the overall quality of education systems around the world. Including *arts education* and *arts in education* in this process should be of policy education concern because the arts naturally develop some of the aptitudes – creativity, innovation, and tolerance – critically demanded by current and prospective labor markets, because they support and encourage inclusive learning and teaching practices. Of course, there is much to be done to translate this vision into reality including, not least, better understanding of the relative cost-effectiveness of inclusive education and of the needs of the teachers to whom the real work ultimately falls. This paper aims, finally, to encourage more research on the impact of the arts in facilitating inclusive practices and facilitating the acquisition of 21st Century skills, which ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning across curriculum. Arts in and through education has much to offer to provide a high quality and relevant inclusive curriculum to our learners, but as long as the arts will 'be put on the back seat in our school, we will leave many of our learners there as well' (Hayes Jacob 2009).

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