Abstract
This paper explores the relationship between art practice and dialogic forms of education. Drawing on theoretical framework and interviews with selected artists and stakeholders, the text examines these practitioners’ constructions of art practice and the perceptions of how they engage with learners. The reflections illuminate the opportunities afforded by artist-led teaching and learning, whilst drawing attention to some of the future challenges. The author introduces the concept of Community Arts and Music, as scientific discipline rooted in its practical origins, to the Italian artistic learning scene, engaging to provide information on the current situation of CM and to be descriptive as to the characteristics and different contexts. The model serves to help place art and music-making in the hands and voices of everyone by creating equal opportunities for people to enjoy active and creative participation in music and in the arts. The learning approach involves different groups of children, adults, young people, refugees and ethnic communities as well as other minority groups: recent research delivered strong and consistent evidence to suggest that group arts and music making is a powerful personal and social health promotion activity.
1. Introduction

«Art does not solve every kind of problems, but makes us aware of their existence», sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz has said. Years of research show that art is closely linked to almost everything that we as a nation say we want for our children and demand from our schools: academic achievement, social and emotional development, civic engagement, and equitable opportunity. In Europe, the role of arts education in forming the competences for young people for life in the 21st century is subject to many competing demands which have an influence on the organisation and content of arts education. Increasing globalisation has brought both benefits and challenges, including those arising from increased international competition, migration and multiculturalism, advancements in technology and the development of the knowledge economy. The education system may be viewed as a means of preparing children for their role in an increasingly uncertain world. Schools have a part to play in helping young people to develop a secure sense of themselves, both as individuals and members of various groups within society. There is also a recognised need to encourage young people to develop a wide range of skills and interests, to identify and foster their potential and to encourage creativity. Much of the educational focus in recent years has been on prioritising literacy and numeracy, both as a sure route to employment for pupils, and as the mechanism for building a ‘knowledge economy’. Concerned that creative subjects are sited an extra-curricular area of education, and so not for everyone, artist and educators have set out their different approaches. According to Fran Smith, «Involvement in the arts is associated with gains in math, reading, cognitive ability, critical thinking, and verbal skill. Arts learning can also improve motivation, concentration, confidence, and teamwork» (Smith, 2009). The Arts can connect people more deeply to the world and open them to new ways of seeing, creating the foundation to forge social bonds and community cohesion.

For this reason it is important to stimulate a strong artistic programming in all educational contexts. For John Dewey (1951), every person is capable of being an artist, living an artful life of social interaction that benefits and thereby beautifies the world and art functions as experience. According to this theoretical approach, the European Parliament's 2009 Resolution on Artistic Studies in the European Union\(^1\) has put forward key recommendations for the development of artistic education and has called for greater coordination of arts education at the European level: research on the potential of arts education to enhance the creativity of young people has underlined the need to continuously improve its quality. To help meet this need and help identify best practices, Eurydice Research instrument of European Union in 2009 has produced and interesting overview of the state of artistic and cultural education in Europe. According from foundings of research, educational systems are increasingly recognising the importance of developing children’s creativity and contributing to cultural education.

Taggart et al. (2004) found that nearly all of the 21 countries/states in their international study had similar aims for the arts curriculum. These included: developing artistic skills, knowledge and understanding, engaging with a variety of art-forms; increasing cultural understanding; sharing arts experiences; and become

\(^1\) [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/]
discriminating arts consumers and contributors. In addition to these artistic outcomes, personal and social/cultural outcomes, such as confidence and self-esteem, individual expression, teamwork, intercultural understanding and cultural participation, are emerged from arts education in most countries. In particular, a new focus on creativity (often in relation to its importance in innovation) and cultural education (in relation to both individual identity and promoting intercultural understanding) is apparent in the goals of arts education. In the European system, and even more so in the Italian system, the teaching of the arts is entrusted to a general teacher. But often these teachers are helped by the professional figure of the experienced artist outside the school.

2. Art for social bonds and community cohesion

John Dewey believed art communicates moral purpose and education. According to Patricia F. Goldblatt, changed perceptions, increased interest, and moral sensitivity engender thoughts and actions in regard to societal roles and responsibilities. As Dewey mentioned, art serving as a child’s curriculum, art «[…] provide[s] the material affording […] a consciousness of the world in which he/her has to play a part» (Dewey, 1897, 77-80). Art deepens understanding by vicarious entry in worlds symbolized beyond personal context. Art suggests touchstones in comprehending overarching values that unite societies, for «[…] art is the most complex expression of longing and aspirations of a society» (Dewey, 1934). As a tool to erase bias, art expresses global experiences. Since the publication of Francois Matarasso’s Use or Ornament (1997) in particular, there has been an increasing amount of academic and policy literature devoted to the importance of the arts and culture to the wellbeing, personal growth and social development of the individual within civil society. There has also been an ever growing body of academic literature attesting to the blurring of boundaries between audience and spectator (Bourriaud, 2004), professional and amateur arts (Gablik, 1991) and continuing debates as to the role of the artist and authorship (Bishop, 2006) and to the nature and future of what is termed ‘art’ today (Booth, 2009). The increasing use of arts activities led by professional artists in projects related to community and neighbourhood regeneration are an important alternative of education in informal and non formal context, (Howard-Spink, 2005). To achieve the community the knowledge transfer play an important role: there is an increasing recognition of the use of art and the skills acquired in participating in arts activities as a means of creating knowledge and developing understanding in other spheres of living (Kafewo, 2010). Recently, new directions in practices and modalities throughout the arts, as the public participation and social change, for example, (Bourriaud, 2004), have strongly demonstrate the importance of practice in the arts from school activities to the community. A significant number of factors seem to positively influence community’s (including the cultural community) perception of school attractiveness. These include:

- School as an open learning centre, where school provides opportunities for multiple forms of participation—that nurtures communities which students jointly develop their learning potential to its fullest. The vision is of a school in which learning is fostered as shared enterprise, participation, engagement, contribution, connection, experimentation, inquiry, reflection, identity. In this way, school
promotes individual responsibility is the sense of connectedness that grows out of membership and participation in a community.

- School as a hub of local life, where even community life generally is growing everywhere. Schools that provide a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of children and young people, their families and the wider community. Schools are community hubs, where all people can stay active and learn and participate in the activities of community based organisations. The community use of schools program helps students, parents and members of the community to be more active in a safe and healthy environment. School as and for community, a location where services can be accessed, that contribute to the health, wellbeing and learning of children and young people directly or indirectly via targeting families and the local community. Partnerships between the school and other agencies are created to deliver services to the school and wider community using a right service at the right time philosophy.

- School as place to promote the wellbeing, safety and education of students as a priority, promote schools to be the centre of neighbourhoods and communities, to provide improved access to services, facilities and programs for all promote a sense of pride in sharing our schools with communities, to demonstrate practical applications of how schools and community can work together to share their facilities.

- School as cultural institutions, where all children should have access to inspired teaching and creative learning through the arts. By building a culture of arts-driven collaboration and inquiry in community, arts has a measurable impact on students and teachers alike.

According to recent studies (Ramsden, Milling, Phillimore, McCabe, Fyfe, Simpson 2011), also for the development of society and community, the research demonstrates the arts within education provide one alternative for states looking to build the workforce of tomorrow. The arts can provide effective learning opportunities to the general student population, yielding increased academic performance, reduced absenteeism, and better skill-building. An even more compelling advantage is the striking success of arts-based educational programmes among disadvantaged populations, especially at-risk youth (El Sistema and Mus-e, constitute an impressive examples). For at-risk youth, that segment of society most likely to suffer from limited lifetime productivity, the arts contribute to lower recidivism rates; increased self-esteem; the acquisition of job skills; and the development of much needed creative thinking, problem solving and communications skills. However, very little has been explored concerning the effect of grassroots arts activities, and by this we mean here amateur arts activities, on the individual and on the community in which the activities take place. Broadly speaking, amateur arts activity is unregarded, unstudied and poorly represented, largely because its

2 UK Department for Education and Skills, 2006.
artistic content is perceived to be weak and its politics retrogressive and exclusionary. Such arts activity is visible as community activity, but invisible in the arts literature. Yet, if the claim is made that arts participation can operate both as community generating and enhancing, we need to know how these grassroots arts organisations serve and produce understandings of identity, locatedness, economy, culture, well-being and community.

3. Community Arts and Community Music: an innovative approach based on the practice. First findings from research

Community Art is an art process that involves professional artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective experience and public expression. It provides a way for communities to express themselves; it enables artists, through financial or other supports, to engage in creative activity with communities; and it is collaborative – the creative process is equally important as the artistic outcome (Ulbricht J, 2015). Through the data of my recent research in 5 schools of Reggio Emilia, Community Art is a way of including people, describing creative activities that bring people together in their communities and that give people the opportunity to gain new skills and new opportunities. Community Arts works to nurture the potential that exists in all communities to be creative and to find a voice to express their concerns through and using the Arts. Community Art is a new educational approach to integrate diversities; Community Arts sector is a sector of change, a sector about change; we are transforming lives, and this dynamic means that we need to be especially clear about what we are aiming to do.

Although quite varied, community arts programs are grassroots organizations that attempt to use the arts as a tool for human or material development (Costello 1998). Community arts programs almost universally involve community members in a creative activity leading to a public performance or exhibit. But how can we improve this practice in educational context in Italy? Which are the main key-concepts connecting on the theoretical framework?

Numerous studies reveal six benefits associated with arts in schools and community, including better reading and language skills, mathematics skills, thinking skills, social skills, motivation to learn and a positive school environment (Ruppert, 2006). Research data also tells us, that children in Reggio Emilia City do not have equal access to the arts in school. In this context, promote an Art program in the school, connected with the school curriculum, but applied as well in the school time or after school, can be very effective in contributing to the creation of community of practice, within the poor area of the city.

4 On September 2017 the Faculty of Education of Free University of Bolzano approved a Research on the role of art in education with special focus on the primary school. The research is now in progress. The model of Reggio Emilia Approach has been applied to 5 primary schools in Reggio Emilia. The title of the project is Art and Beyond. Muse for an inclusive and educating community.
As argued by David Elliot, Full Professor of Community Music at the New York University,

[...] Citizens must relate to the complexity of the world around them not exclusively through logic and pragmatic knowledge. One of the fundamental competences of active and responsible citizenship is narrative imagination, the ability to think as another person, to be an intelligent reader of one’s story, to understand the emotions, expectations and desires of those in front of us (Elliot, 2017).

The research for such empathy is an essential part of education and democracy understanding, both in West and East. A large part of it must take place within the family, but schools and educational agencies are also called upon to carry out a fundamental task in this direction. To accomplish this task, training agencies operating in formal, informal and non-formal contexts in Italy must assign a prominent place to artistic subjects by cultivating a participatory type of training that activates and perfects the ability to see the world through the eyes of another person.

Community Arts is an art process that involves professional artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective experience and public expression. It provides a way for communities to express themselves; enables artists, through financial or other supports, to engage in creative activity with communities; and is collaborative – the creative process is equally important as the artistic outcome (Ontario Arts Council, 2002).

Under this umbrella, born in 1990 Community Music Activity(CMA) Commission into ISME, International Society for Music Education. CMA states «[...] that everyone has the right and ability to make, create, and enjoy their own music». The commission’s mission statement stresses that «[...] active music-making should be encouraged and supported at all ages and at all levels of society» and that Community Music activities «[...]provide opportunities to construct personal and communal expressions of artistic, social, political, and cultural concerns» (CMA, 2016). Thus far, it is possible to abridge a possible understanding of what Community Music is as music making activities outside of formal training institutions with special partnership possibilities between the formal, non-formal, and the informal music education settings. What distinguishes Community Music activities from other more traditional types of participatory music making activities is the intention to create spaces for inclusive and participatory music making. Inclusion is a very important concept for the understanding of Community Music as it «[...] comes from a belief that music making is a fundamental aspect of the human experience and is therefore intrinsic and foundational part of human culture and society» (Higgins, 2017, p.3).

Best known in North Europe than in Italy, the Community Art (CA) and Community Music (CM) models constitutes a new pedagogical approach, as a framework for progress towards an arts-rich culture of learning in every school and local communities. Through the CA and CM approach can individualize strategies to support innovation, collaboration, change school-wide, across Reggio Emilia City. The activities – part of the research project Art and Beyond. Mus-e for an inclusive
and educating community - are opened to all children and parents and members of local community.

Teachers and pedagogues have a special responsibility to make sure that all children have an opportunity to come into close contact with art and culture every day. At a fundamental level, cultural and practical experiences shape us as human beings, strengthen our ability to learn, and cultivate us as democratic citizens.

To achieve this goal, the research process - since in progress - is focused on five main questions:

- How we create an optimal framework for children to encounter art and culture in their everyday lives?
- Why children's relation with art and culture strengthen democracy?
- Why art and culture should be an integrated part of pre-school and school and all subjects taught in general-education schools - and should be conceived more broadly in teacher education programmes?
- Why an everyday interaction with art and culture in school or day-care has a positive effect on societal development and socio-economic conditions?
- How people can best collaborate in practice when teachers, pedagogues, artists, and cultural mediators are blazing new trails together?

Interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with teachers and artists of the schools involved, currently have highlighted interesting summaries to build the arts activities in schools. For examples, many of the teachers argue that throughout the 20th Century, children’s culture mediators have observed that children are champions in creating decisive transformation of themselves through play and time spent together: the authentic encounters with art and artists can support this process because experience authenticity can be seen and heard by the all people. It can be felt and noticed by the participants. For a certain time it rules over body and soul, space, conduct and feeling. Forward in your seat, back in your chair, under the carpet, on your feet, run, jump, cheer, laugh, giggle, cry and hold your breath. The wonder, the scepticism, the waiting, the disgust, the sneer, the enthusiasm, the surrender. That is what makes an experience authentic. Art’s activities has to promote authentic experiences: theoretical basis for understanding phenomenon is still the practical/musical subjects and their theories about the sensitive path to knowledge, recognition and experience in which this field is included and it is still the theories about the importance of practical/musical subjects in our daily lives and in our relation with art that give us the tools to understand the scope of the significance of this dimension in our lives.

The perception of the teachers is that the classic educational ideal is being phased out. If a new one, which is more in line with our times, has to be created, it will be oriented to the ideal of citizenship, and mainly cultural citizenship, better. From this perspective, culture covers both artistic forms of expression and the life patterns we live by. Culture is defined as the execution of art and culture both for and with children, but especially by children. An important intermediate goal of artistic activities with children is that we continuously support possibilities to develop the
competences necessary to master a cultural citizenship. The children’s relation to art and culture has a key role in this endeavour (Mayesky, 2008).

The Italian arts education system needs, also, a reform of teacher training, aiming to strengthen the competence of each teacher as regards understanding the meaning of aesthetics, since it is crucial for teachers to be able to pass this knowledge onto their students. It could be important to implement offers and funds that can be used from the primary school teacher to active practice of art in the lecture with particular attention at the laboratories. This can be a first small, simple, yet important step if a teacher or an enthusiast is familiar with the possibilities of giving children the opportunity to come in close contact with art, enrich the lessons and relieve the pressure on teachers.

About the different arts, teachers, artistis and pedagogues agree that practical/musical subjects must be mainstreamed into the schools (Holdhus, 2018), i.e. integrated into the different subjects. One of the great potential aspects of practical/musical subjects is that they can fit into many contexts because they are so closely related with abilities such as creativity and innovation. Art has a transfer effect because it influences one’s learning potential in other subjects. For example, the principles in music and mathematics are closely related as in the case of Renaissance art and mathematics with the golden ratio, the perspective etc. Access to practical/musical subjects can therefore give children the key to school subjects - obviously, with the culture they seek out as a point of reference. For they certainly are on the aesthetic plane when they listen to rap music, for example, which has both a musical, vocal and lyric dimension and which can easily be used as an approach towards understanding the lyric’s poetry better and the tradition of combining music with lyrics, which goes far back in human’s history. This approach is a fantastic way to open entirely new universes to children and youths, if only conveyed to them in the right way. Some statistical data results has concluded that the children who received good and ample training in music, drama, dancing and visual arts performed better than other children and some of them showed greater commitment in voluntary social work, they completed higher levels of education, got better jobs and had more friends in addition to having numerous active and passive art experiences.

About creativity, recent studies expose there are probable relations between being creative as a child and being creative as an adult (Mayesky, 2008). Thus, children who score high in a creativity test would most likely develop into adults who dare think differently, use their imagination and take chances. The study, based on new international research, deals with preschool children.

The most extensive survey on the quality and effect of education in aesthetic subjects is led by professor Anne Bamford, University of the Arts, London, who in 2006 pointed out that education in practical/ musical subjects must be good, otherwise it will do more harm than good. One UNESCO’s survey which has covered more than 60 countries concludes that good education in artistic subjects promotes children’s language literacy, amongst other things, and children in countries where the schools have a lot of artistic subjects in their curricula do best in mathematics, reading and

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5 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/919unesco1.pdf
natural science subjects, i.e. exactly the subjects which are the object of high-profiled PISA surveys. Here, we have caught a phenomenon which is often referred to as the transfer effect, i.e. the possible positive effect that learning within one subject has on the learning in another subject. One example: By singing, dancing or playing an instrument the child learns not only singing, dancing and music but also some mathematics because the child is training physical and emotional understanding of note duration and intervals, i.e. fractions. Drama, dancing, visual arts and music can develop and reinforce happiness, creativity, imagination, flow, abstract thinking, concentration, emotional intelligence, character formation and other basic elements of good life.

These qualities are completely irreplaceable in the child’s socialisation and learning because all other learning is based on them. This is also true for the desire to learn itself. Each of the subjects individually contributes with subject-specific transfer qualities. Art must not be considered only as an experience in itself, but rather it must be related to the psychology of individuals and to the socio-cultural realities from which it springs: the ultimate goal of the child's creative activity should not be the artefacts he realizes, but rather the ability to observe, the mnemonic skills and imagination, that art helps to develop and which give the individual good critical and problem-solving skills for him - herself and for the community in which he/her is included (Dewey 1934).

4. Artist in school educational system

«A teaching artist is a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator, who engages people in learning experiences in, through and about the arts» (Booth, 2009).

Many art teachers originally train as artists. Consequently, many art teachers experience contradictions in their career development that seriously impact the construction of their professional identity as both art teachers and artists. Many find that the demands and rewards of public school teaching can mitigate against the art teacher’s development as an artist. Because of this role conflict, over time, some art teachers leave teaching to become professional artists, while others give up their personal artistic production during their teaching careers. Inevitably, there are some individuals who balance both careers of artist and teacher, and others who have integrated artistic behavior as a model for teaching. The meeting with artist and teacher in the school is an important impact factor to have successful education art’s activity. The educational system must not only ensure that all teachers have the necessary competences, but also to al- low teachers to meet artists and get the artists to go to the school and cooperate with teachers on a creative lesson plan, which is not considered a break from everyday life but gives children new competences in new areas: teachers are familiar with the educational targets and methods whereas artists know the essence of art and culture. Moreover, for the children it is an advantage to meet professionals other than teachers in educational contexts because this way the children get to know the essence of art and culture.

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According to American Association of Teaching Artist\(^7\), the role of the teaching artist is an integral part of the overarching arts education constellation, which includes:

- short and long-term school and after-school residencies
- arts experiences, including in-school performances by professional artists, as well as field trips to studios, galleries, museums, and performances.
- integrating the arts throughout the curriculum as a way of engaging all types of intelligence's in the learning process.
- arts education standards backed up by ongoing curriculum-based arts instruction in pre-K-12.
- discipline-specific learning in the arts: visual art, dance, theater, music, poetry, etc.
- higher education and on-going development for the professional artist, as well as the professional artist who is also a teaching artist.
- lifelong learning in the arts through community arts events, classes and workshops.

Successful teaching artists help provide a tangible link between the creative process and all kinds of learning, and they make manifest in classroom and community settings the human drive to survive by making meaning of the world: teaching artists today are a crucial resource for the future of arts education, the arts in general, and the overall process of learning.

**Conclusion**

Art and culture are some of the aspects that characterise our way of thinking and our behaviour something that children photograph as quickly as a lightning and that plays an important role for their ability to express themselves as people and learn to become part of communities with others. The conscious pedagogical educational process that shapes children throughout their growth starts as yearly since the nursery and later at school. Children’s institutions and schools are a daily arena where all children go about. It is here that they spend most of the hours they are awake and most refreshed, and it is here that we have the best opportunities to ensure that all children in Italy will receive the necessary artistic and cultural ballast. A specific Art Programme (in formal, informal or non-formal context), is an excellent opportunity for children to meet artists in their everyday lives and gain insight into artistic and creative processes.

Art is connected in a fundamental way to a human being’s inherent desire to play, that help us to play our way towards acquiring social skills. Playing is learning how to get on with other people. Art also allows adults to continue to play because it puts people in a conceptual space, in an creative space that is all about empathy and the ability to empathise, about basic social skills. This applies to all of social life, because when it possible to manage to work together, discord and conflicts will not arise. It is important that we insist on mediating the quality in art so that children and youths have alternatives to choose the quality of them life: it is important to provide children and youths with some quality art in order to give them a chance to be moved by their

\(^7\) https://www.teachingartists.com/whatisaTeachingArtists.htm
experience. As those who are passionate about art know, art can fundamentally change your life. If the child can experiment major sublime artistic experiences, this can change the course of life. When children are in close contact with art and culture in everyday life, they have a better chance to develop several important competences both in relation to their personal development and in order to be able to participate in active way in democratic society as competent citizens.
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