

Artistic and Cultural Education in France
The Policy of the Ministry of National Education
April 2010

In January 2005, the Ministry of National Education (MEN) published guidelines presenting the objectives for artistic and cultural education (EAC) in the following terms:

General objectives for artistic and cultural education

Artistic and cultural education is designed to contribute to the intellectual development and awareness of children and youth in general. Its purpose is to help them acquire specific competences in the artistic fields which are taught; it plays an essential role in understanding and appreciating the diversity of cultures and artistic forms. It contributes to character building and is a decisive factor in the affirmation of each person's cultural identity.

Artistic and cultural education enhances the cultural dimension of the curricula as a whole; it enables competences to be acquired on an interchangeable basis which can be called upon in other spheres of apprenticeship. It helps in the learning of languages, notably the French language, by developing analytical capacities and those of expression. It thus reinforces choices and judgements, helps to form lucid and enlightened minds, and contributes to the development of civil and social life

In this context, artistic and cultural education brings together and even surpasses the teaching of the arts as such, which, in schools, are the responsibility of National Education. It covers the entire range of arts and culture known as common heritage, both patrimonial and contemporary, which amply represent all human culture. Finally, it contributes to the revival of interest in cultural institutions.¹

Through this 2005 circular, the French State reaffirmed that the acquisition of artistic and cultural education, rich and well balanced, was **necessary in order to achieve success** under the best conditions **in a scholastic and professional environment**.

Courses, cultural actions, partnerships

French educational policy has included artistic training among its objectives for more than a century. In this connexion, two compulsory types of instruction are currently – and have been since a very long time – taught to all students during the entire compulsory education period (called CITE 1 & 2, primary and lower secondary schools). At the Lycée (CITE 3, upper secondary schools) these subjects are no longer compulsory but can be chosen by the students. Furthermore, new types of instruction are proposed. For example: cinema, dance, design, history of the arts and theatre.

Since the end of the 1980s, a number of complementary teaching activities has progressively been developed. Relying to a large extent on initiatives taken by schools and establishments, they find support in the increasing development of structured partnerships between the Ministry of National Education (MEN) and the Ministry of Culture and Communication (MCC) on the one hand, and on the other, an important cooperation from cultural institutions

¹ Circular from the Ministry of National Education N° 2005-014 dated 3/1/2005.

(museums, archives, concert halls, theatres, etc.) and artists such as the professionals who work in this milieu.

Thus, globally speaking, it is this combined effort to articulate formal and informal education, on which French public policy for artistic and cultural education is based today. This policy was reaffirmed in 2008, associating the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Culture and Communication with other ministerial sectors on the one hand, and, on the other, regional public bodies which increasingly play a role in the animation and development of cultural life throughout the entire country.²

The development of artistic and cultural education is thus today a preoccupation for most of the actors in education and culture, that is to say:

- Establishments concerned with general and professional training dependent on the Ministry of Education and Higher Education: schools of all categories, universities, higher education establishments, etc.
- Schools teaching specialised artistic subjects dependent on the Ministry of Culture and Communication: conservatoires for music, dance and dramatic art, schools of higher education;
- Institutions and organisations engaged in cultural activities under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and regional bodies;
- Various Associations recognised by public authorities;
- Teachers, artists, those engaged professionally in cultural activities.

Since 2007, three priorities for public action

- *Teaching the history of the arts to all students*

A new type of compulsory teaching for all levels of education, it aims to transmit a patrimonial heritage by focusing attention on numerous works of art in different fields (environmental arts, linguistic arts, everyday art, experimenting with sound, live theatricals, visual arts). This teaching is dependent neither on specific time schedules nor on specialized teachers: it is woven into the different disciplines (sciences, human sciences), in the forefront of which figure the plastic arts, music and history. Its implementation will benefit from traditional partnerships which support artistic and cultural education activities.

This new type of teaching has been progressively put into place in primary schools since the beginning of the 2008 academic year and in lower and upper secondary schools since the beginning of the 2009 academic year.

Examinations at the end of compulsory schooling (Diplôme national du brevet/School Leaving Certificate) and entry into higher education (Baccalauréat/A level) are in the process of integrating this new type of teaching according to the stipulated guidelines.

- *Developing artistic activities both within and outside school*

This implies considerably increasing offers for artistic activities beyond those traditionally proposed for primary, lower and upper secondary schools, as well as lycées (notably, choirs and different kinds of workshops) and conservatoires. This development should apply to the different fields of artistic creation and aim to include a larger range of school children than is currently the case today, notably those from socially underprivileged categories. To cater for this, two formulas are foreseen:

² Since 2003, the French Constitution has brought into effect the « decentralised organisation » of the Republic.

- Classes with adjusted timetables (essentially to allow for music, dance, and theatrical activities) to enable students to participate in artistic training programmes as well as general education under the best possible conditions; such classes depend on coordinated partnerships between a given school and a conservatoire de music/dance/dramatic art (under the tutelage of the Ministry of Culture and Communication and regional bodies).
- An educational accompaniment which, within artistic curricula time, offers students who so wish the possibility to practice an art with a specialised teacher and/or a professional and/or specialised artist in the artistic field concerned; this particular case in point calls for **original creative steps** in which **the students can reinforce their savoir-faire**. This complementary educative offer is particularly beneficial in socially underprivileged zones or geographically isolated areas.

- *Artistic and cultural education*

When artistic education is built around the various aspects of a given artistic field (history, aesthetics, techniques, languages, practices, etc), cultural education, for its part, relies on the institutions which enable art and culture to develop in everyday life throughout the country. By contact with **works of art, artists and cultural institutions**, a chance is provided to bring each student into contact with the places of culture in his particular area in order that he/she may become familiar with them, understand how they work, and finally be bold enough to seek benefit from them.

Public French policies today endeavour to adapt, in the best interests of all concerned, the training so that it ensures the success of its students, two aspects which do not cease to interact with one another.

Framework for managing artistic and cultural education

If teaching of the arts today remains the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of National Education³, all the other components of artistic and cultural education profit from structured partnerships between numerous actors.

- At the national level: inter-ministerial cooperation associating essentially the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture and Communication.
- At the regional level: cooperation among the Rectorates (administrative regions of national education) the regional offices for cultural affairs (administrative sectors under the Ministry of Culture and Communication) and territorial bodies (local communities, counties, regions).
- At the local level: joint work by a teacher (or other categories of staff in national education) and an artist or professional working in culture (comedians, stage managers, choreographers, musicians, specialists in the plastic arts, etc). In order to programme and render this local collaboration sustainable, each school must outline a specific project concerning artistic and cultural education and make it fit in with the general project which illustrates its training policy. Each project thus defines the objectives to be strived for in harmony with the specificities of the region concerned and engages the means, notably partnerships, which will assist in its implementation.

³ They are the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education, with some exceptions concerning specialised interventions for primary schools (called CITE 1); classes with adjustable timetables in some primary and lower secondary schools (CITE 1 & 2) and a certain number of artistic classes in upper secondary schools (lycées) (CITE 3).

Diverse and numerous digital resources

The web site www.education.arts.culture.fr is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Communication to accompany the development of artistic and cultural education through an informative introduction to new teaching methods for the history of the arts. It is first and foremost destined for teachers, offering them the possibility to be guided towards a whole range of information and resources for class work in schools of all categories, primary, lower and upper secondary, as well as lycées.

With the objective of developing education in cinematography and iconography for the students, film shows will shortly be proposed for each lycée. Furthermore, the Ministries concerned are studying the possibility of retransmitting to various schools, and under excellent conditions of diffusion, creations (musicals, operas, dancing, theatrical productions etc) produced by major French cultural enterprises.

Finally, numerous websites, either emanating from national authorities or developed by regional actors, propose a vast variety of complementary resources which are increasingly in demand by teachers and students alike.

For more information on artistic education and the French education system:

- The Ministry of National Education's Website:
<http://www.education.gouv.fr/cid20725/education-artistique-et-culturelle.html>
- Eduscol, the website for professionals in Education:
<http://eduscol.education.fr/cid46779/education-artistique-culturelle.html>