

FROM MARGINS TO MASTERPIECES:

Charting Pathways to Strengthen
Arts in Global Public Education

By: Heddy Lahmann, PhD



TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
FOREWORDS	11
PREFACE	19
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	23
LIST OF FIGURES	26
ACRONYMS	27
INTRODUCTION	31
Rationale	32
Research Questions	34
Key Terms	34
Methods	36
Desk review	36
Interviews	37
Surveys	39
Participant Observations: UNESCO Events	41
Limitations	42
Organization of report	43
Background Literature	44
Policy/practice gaps and trends in arts education	44
Standardized Testing, PISA, and the “age of accountability”	45
Creative thinking and the creativity agenda	46
Examining the evidence on arts education: Insights and limitations	48
1. PROBLEM ANALYSIS: UNDERLYING CAUSES FOR THE EXCLUSION/ MARGINALIZATION OF ARTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS	51
1.1 Funding Problems	54
1.2 Hyperfocus on Standardized Testing	60
1.3 Misaligned Policy and Practice	64
1.4 Teacher Training Shortcomings	68
1.5 Low Valuation of the Arts	70
Problem Analysis Discussion	74
2. DRIVERS/LEVERS OF CHANGE: EXPLORING PROMISING PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE INCLUSION OF ARTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEMS	78
2.1 Local Levers: Cultivating Demand from the Bottom-Up	80
2.2 Regional Levers: Top-Down and Middle-Out Approaches to Stimulating Demand	83

2.3 Global Levers:

Leveraging a Global Ecosystem for Research, Best Practices, and Advocacy	86
2.A. Promising Rationales for Integrating Arts Education into Public Schools	88
2.A.1. Citizenship and Social Cohesion Rationales	91
2.A.2. Psychosocial and Mental Health Rationales	93
2.A.3. Future Employment Rationales: 21st Century Skills	94
2.A.4. Academic Outcome Rationales	96
Levers of Change Discussion	98

3. GLOBAL ADVOCACY AND STRATEGY: OPPORTUNITIES AND MOMENTUM 101

3.1 UNESCO's Global Arts Education Advocacy	102
3.2 Strategic Links Between Culture and Arts Education in UNESCO's New Framework	103
3.3 Enhancing Creative Economies and Industries Through Education	107
3.A. Advocates and Frontrunners	109
3.A.1. The Influence of Intergovernmental Organizations	109
3.A.2. Strategic Platforms for Arts Education Advocacy	111
3.A.3. Arts Education Networks	112
3.A.4. Advancing Advocacy Through High-Profile Champions for Arts Education	113
Global Advocacy Discussion	115

4. GLOBAL SUCCESS STORIES: NATIONAL MODELS

INTEGRATING ARTS EDUCATION 116

4.1 Models Stemming from Government Bodies:	
Facilitating Collaboration, Partnership, and Cultural Plans	118
Chile: Investment and Ministerial Collaboration	118
Cuba: An Enduring Investment to Arts and Education	119
Finland: An Inclusive and Child-Centered Infrastructure	120
Ireland: Collaborative Investment in Creative Schools	120
Portugal: A Collaborative and Flexible Approach to Partnership	121
Singapore: Centralized Policy Establishing Arts Education as a Priority	122
South Korea: A Model for Collaboration and Innovation	122
Complementary Case: El Sistema - Venezuela and Global Adaptations	123
4.2 Models Stemming from Arts Organizations:	
Partnering to Build Curricula, Teacher Skills, and Deliver Quality Content	124
Art of Music Foundation – Kenya	124
ASSITEJ – South Africa	124
Carnegie Hall – United States	125
CLAYSS – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru	126
ConArte – Mexico	126
Crear Vale la Pena – Argentina	127

En Sus Zapatos: Un Espacio de Empatía Activa – Spain	127
L’Orchestre à l’École – France	128
Madrasati – Jordan.....	128
Méér Muziek in de Klas – Netherlands and Dutch Caribbean	129
NalandaWay Foundation – India	130
PLANEA – Spain	130
Slam Out Loud – India	131
National Models Discussion.....	132
CONCLUSION	134
Summary of Findings.....	135
Research Question 1: Problem Analysis	135
Research Question 2: Levers of Change	136
Research Question 3: Global Advocacy.....	137
Research Question 4: Existing Models.....	137
Discussion and Recommendations.....	139
REFERENCES	144
APPENDICES	154
Appendix A. Participating Organizations and Regions.....	154
Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol.....	161
Appendix C. Codebook	162
Appendix D. Survey Protocol	168

SUGGESTED CITATION

Lahmann, H. (2025). *From Margins to Masterpieces: Charting Pathways to Strengthen Arts in Global Public Education*. Community Arts Network.



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This report is meant for policymakers and funders, but also for educators, teaching artists, advocates, and researchers who are looking for language, models, evidence, and allies. It is meant to be a resource, a reference, and a reminder that arts education is not just a luxury for some children, it is a necessity for all children.

Heddy Lahmann



Image Source: Escuela de Teatro Musical de Petare

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts education is widely recognized as a critical component of holistic learning, yet it is largely underfunded, undervalued, and inconsistently implemented in public school systems. Even in settings where arts education is included in policy, the commitment is often more symbolic than substantive. Systemic barriers ranging from financial constraints to the dominance of standardized testing, have led to the marginalization of arts education in public systems.

This report, *From Margins to Masterpieces: Charting Pathways to Strengthen Arts in Global Public Education*, outlines barriers, identifies levers of change, and presents strategic recommendations for integrating and strengthening arts education across public systems. Based on interviews, surveys, and case studies, it offers a roadmap for action.

1. Problem Analysis: Barriers to Arts in Public Education

The marginalization of arts education is driven by several interconnected challenges:

Funding Shortfalls: Arts education often receives limited or inconsistent funding. Short-term, project-based funding models further hinder sustainability.

The Influence of Standardized Testing: The dominance of standardized assessments reinforces a test-driven approach that sidelines arts education and prioritizes subjects with easily measurable outcomes.

Policy Gaps and Weak Implementation: In contexts where national policies address arts education, practical implementation is often limited. Support is undermined by weak enforcement mechanisms and competing priorities.

Deficient Teacher Training: Poor pre- and in-service teacher training for arts education leads to inconsistent and low-quality instruction.

Low Societal Valuation of the Arts: Widespread perceptions that arts education is non-essential affect policy decisions, school priorities, and parental support. This mindset reinforces underinvestment and weak demand, limiting access to quality programming.

2. Drivers/Levers of Change: Pathways to Strengthen Arts Education

Addressing these challenges requires targeted action at multiple levels, local, regional, and global:

Local: Cultivating Bottom-Up Demand

Schools and communities drive demand through high-quality, visible arts programming.

Engaging students, parents, educators, local leaders, and lawmakers through performances, exhibitions, and hands-on creative experiences shifts attitudes toward arts education and builds broader buy-in.

Regional: Strengthening Partnerships and Infrastructure

Government investment in developing technical frameworks improves alignment and implementation.

Public-civil society partnerships and public-private partnerships that facilitate collaboration between schools, artists, and institutions support responsive, accessible, and sustainable arts education programming

Global: Research, Advocacy, and Best Practices

International research, frameworks, and sharing best practices across countries and regions supports the adaptation and scalability of successful models.

3. Global Advocacy: Opportunities and Momentum

UNESCO continues to play a pivotal role in global advocacy, advancing key frameworks and shaping policy through knowledge-exchange and convenings.

The OECD's creativity agenda has elevated creative thinking as a core learning outcome, shaping education priorities and influencing how governments value creativity

Growing investment in cultural and creative industries through platforms like the G20 and TVET create new entry points for advocating arts education as essential to workforce readiness and economic development.

Cross-sector partnerships and coalitions enable knowledge-sharing, investment, and policy influence at scale.

High-profile champions, including artists and public figures, can elevate visibility and political will, especially when aligned with broader advocacy efforts.

4. Factors for Scalable and Sustainable Arts Education

Successful national models highlight key structural and policy mechanisms that support long-term, high-quality arts education:

Collaboration Between Education and Cultural Ministries: Strengthening inter-ministerial partnerships ensures that arts education receives consistent funding and policy support.

Intermediary Agencies to Bridge Policymakers and Schools: Organizations that connect government agencies, educators, and arts professionals improve the practical implementation of arts policies.

Investment in Technical Support and Innovation: Providing technical support for the development and delivery of innovative curricula, expands access to arts education, particularly in underserved communities.

Teacher Training and Professional Development: Expanding pre-service and in-service training ensures that educators are equipped to deliver high-quality arts instruction, supporting student engagement and learning outcomes.

Cultural “Hub” Schools in Underserved Areas: Establishing schools to serve as regional centers for arts education in rural areas fosters local demand, access, and supports peer learning in communities with limited resources

Public-Civil Society and Public-Private Partnerships: Strong partnerships across governments, schools, cultural institutions, NGOs, and the private sector undergird the implementation and sustainability of scalable, high-quality arts education.

Recommended Actions for Strengthening Arts Education

To secure the future of arts education globally, stakeholders must take the following actions:

1. Enhance Institutional Infrastructure and Partnerships

- Foster cross-sector partnerships between schools, cultural organizations, community groups, and government ministries/departments to support the design and delivery of high-quality arts education
- Invest in exemplary schools and resource hubs, enabling them to engage in outreach and peer learning with other schools and communities
- Support intermediary organizations that connect government, educators, artists, and community members to translate policy into practice.
- Leverage digital tools to expand arts education innovation and access, especially in remote or under-resourced areas.

2. Strengthen National Frameworks and Technical Implementation

- Develop and strengthen national arts education frameworks including curriculum guidance, cultural plans, and assessment models.
- Provide targeted technical support to education ministries/departments and local authorities to develop, adapt, and implement national frameworks aligned with arts education goals.

3. Establish Sustainable and Equitable Funding Models

- Embed arts education funding into national education budgets rather than relying on temporary, project-based models.
- Prioritize investments that expand access in underserved regions and communities.

4. Strengthen Policy and Governance for Accountability

- Implement clear policy frameworks with enforcement mechanisms to ensure arts education remains a priority.
- Foster inter-ministerial collaboration between education and culture departments to align goals, resources and implementation.

5. Expand Teacher Training and Professional Development

- Invest in pre-service and in-service training programs to prepare educators with confidence and skills needed to deliver quality arts instruction.
- Strengthen collaborations between teacher training institutions and arts organizations to create specialized training pathways.

6. Strengthen Grassroots Advocacy Through Community Arts Experiences

- Create opportunities for parents and caregivers to participate in school-based arts events, building local buy-in through experiential evidence.
- Embed performances, festivals, and exhibitions into programming to demonstrate the intrinsic value of the arts and build broader support.

7. Leverage Momentum Around Creative Economies, Arts for Health, and STEAM

- Align advocacy with global investments and growing demand for creativity across industries by positioning arts education as a contributor of 21st-century skills and critical thinking.
- Leverage growing evidence on the arts–health connection to position arts education as essential to student well-being and holistic schooling.
- Utilize TVET and STEAM initiatives to expand arts education's relevance and reach.

8. Enhance International Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

- Strengthen multilateral forums and cross-country networks that facilitate knowledge-exchange of effective models and advocacy strategies.
- Continue building and sharing rigorous evidence and shared frameworks to support advocacy, evaluation, adaptation, and long-term integration.
- Develop conceptual frameworks, such as a theory of change for arts education, to clarify outcomes and align efforts across stakeholders.
- Ensure the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge systems, underrepresented regions, and diverse voices in global forums through deliberate structural efforts.
- Encourage peer learning of successful national models tailored to diverse governance and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION



Arts education fosters creativity, cultural literacy, and future workforce skills. Despite persistent challenges, growing global advocacy, strategic policy initiatives, and scalable national models provide a strong foundation for revitalizing arts education in public school systems. By addressing systemic barriers and leveraging local, regional, and global levers of change, arts education can be revitalized and expanded. This requires advocacy strategies that clearly communicate why arts education matters, drawing on both values-based and evidence-based rationales that resonate across diverse contexts.

This report offers a roadmap for advancing arts education globally, advocating for a future where every child has access to the transformative power of the arts.

FOREWORD 1

WHY THIS REPORT?

The idea behind this study was sparked back in 2022 when I worked with the Community Arts Lab (CAL)/ Porticus. CAL is a grantmaking unit within Porticus that supports organizations and initiatives applying arts for social impact, which includes those focused on arts education. In our programmatic work, my colleague, Iwanna Swart, and I realized that the marginalization of arts education (and arts in general) was a concerning global trend that required a collective and systemic response.

Public education is the world's biggest engine for shaping young minds and the development of children. So, changes in these education systems can have profound, long term impact at scale globally – for the developmental outcomes of future generations of learners and those who value and integrate the arts in their communities. And while the effects of the steady decline of arts education in public schools in recent decades are evident, it has been going largely unnoticed or addressed publicly – rarely making headlines or sparking debate.

But, amidst this obscured scenario unfolding in public education systems, we found real sparks of inspiration, examples of achievement against the odds. We saw organizations operating in the most difficult conditions and with minimal resources, develop creative, context-adaptable, models to successfully bring back arts education at scale to national systems. **We were motivated to spotlight these models** created by impassioned champions of arts in education who did not wait for circumstances such as funding, resources, capacity, or policy to become favorable. And in the process, they become a beacon for positive possibilities and even resistance.

Beyond its immediate goals, this study and report was co-commissioned by CAL/ Porticus and the Community Arts Network (CAN) as part of a larger shared objective to reposition the arts, with its fundamental and transformative role in society.

This piece of work was led by Dr. Heddy Lahmann, who embarked on this critical learning journey with us and has become a team member and a friend in the process. Dr. Lahmann has enriched this report with her creatively combined character as an artist and a respected researcher in International Education. This is unique and has, in turn, enriched the journey.

THE PROCESS

This study would not have been possible without the many members of CAN – organizations and individuals - who generously provided their time, effort, knowledge,

resources and network access. We are infinitely grateful to each of them. One learning of this process is the potential and power of a network to strengthen such a report.

Our aim is for this report to serve as a tool, a reference, an inspiration and a roadmap for action to all working in and for arts education specifically, and the arts, in general. Although its focus is on education, **this study's findings mirror the case for arts in general, providing a solid basis for an advocacy framework for championing the arts in society.**

THE MOST POTENT ADVOCATE FOR ARTS

One of the biggest challenges to arts education in public schools is how the arts are regarded by various stakeholders. The report's findings outline how this contributes to arts education's marginalization and its recommendations propose advocacy as one of the most critical strategies for turning the tide. **And the most powerful argument for the arts? Experiencing them.** This is one of the strongest aspects in advocacy for the arts – reflected in the report's recommendations – that I have also learned through my work in this sector: arts is an experience. We need to create opportunities for experimenting with the arts. Time and again, we have seen objectors, resisters and critics – such as teachers, parents, even funders – transformed into believers and advocates after witnessing the impact firsthand. As one primary school generalist teacher told us,

“I never imagined myself teaching arts and I was doubtful and hesitant in the start, but when I did, arts made me rediscover my vocation as a teacher.”

OUR ROLE AS COMMISSIONERS OF THIS REPORT

So, how do we create more opportunities for these transformative experiences? As commissioners of this report and informed by the report's recommendations, I clearly see a role for philanthropy in this “roadmap” supporting experimental scalable models, innovation and best practices. It can help fill the gaps in research and impact measurement, mobilize knowledge and learnings and support catalytic activities for policy development and narrative change.

The Community Arts Lab/Porticus has been a pioneer in this space, contributing significantly by providing support in all these areas. And there are other stakeholders such as government officials, policymakers, educationists and administrators who have also played a part. But the challenges remain vast, and we need others to join the effort!

Also as a network, I believe CAN and other networks can play a crucial role in amplifying voices from the field through storytelling that promotes best practices, successes and

community impact, mobilizing expertise, resources and knowledge sharing through connections, and providing spaces for experimenting the arts.

A FINAL NOTE

As proud as I am of this piece of work, I am also stunned by the absurdity that we even need to “**defend the arts**” and invest huge effort to prove their worth in comparison with other sectors. Often, when making the case for arts’ value, it is like to benefits for other sectors – academia, economics, health – focusing on “extrinsic values” or indirect entries like creativity rather than its own intrinsic value. **This debate connects to fundamental questions about what education should be about, and what kind of society we want to build.**

We have historically struggled with these questions, often employed to serve dominant ideologies, purposely ignoring the complexity and interrelatedness of human nature – the emotional, spiritual, rational, physical and beyond. **While acknowledging this complexity will help the arts find their rightful place, I believe that the arts are the very vehicle to take us in that direction.**

The arts are not a luxury. They are a necessity for full human development – a vital force for a more creative, compassionate future. This report stands as both a testament and a toolkit for everyone ready to join that mission.

With determination and joy,

Samar Bandak,

on behalf of the Community Arts Lab/Porticus and
Community Arts Network teams

Managing Director, Co-Lead

[Community Arts Network](#)

FOREWORD 2

In an era where education is often examined for its alignment with workforce demands and standardized metrics, Arts Education remains a vital yet frequently overlooked component of holistic learning. The report *From Margins to Masterpieces: Charting Pathways to Strengthen Arts in Global Public Education* arrives at a critical juncture, urging us to reflect on and revalue the role of the arts in our schools.

This transformative manuscript brilliantly illuminates the multifaceted barriers that undeniably inhibit the growth and sustainability of Arts Education within public education systems worldwide. From chronic funding shortfalls and the stifling pressures of standardized testing to the societal undervaluation of the arts, the author has meticulously woven together a compelling narrative that highlights these challenges and underscores the necessity of the arts as a fundamental pillar of modern education.

Reflecting on my experiences within educational institutions and organizations, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact the arts can have on student engagement, creativity, and overall well-being. The evidence presented in this report reinforces that Arts Education enriches minds, fosters innovative thinking, and cultivates emotional intelligence—indispensable skills in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. This report serves as a clarion call for educators, policymakers, and communities to advocate for and implement strategic initiatives prioritizing the arts.

The pathways outlined in the report are not merely theoretical assertions but well-researched, actionable insights that can drive significant change at local, regional, and global levels. The emphasis on grassroots engagement is particularly noteworthy, acknowledging that sustainable transformation often begins within our communities. Equally commendable is the advocacy for stronger collaborations among educational and cultural institutions, reinforcing a shared responsibility for fostering an environment where the arts can flourish.

Recognizing global advocacy as a catalyst for meaningful policy shifts is imperative. With UNESCO and the creative economies contributing to this evolving conversation, the integration of Arts Education within the broader context of workforce development and sustainable progress becomes increasingly evident. This alignment not only underscores the instrumental role of the arts in society but also presents a compelling case for renewed investment from various stakeholders, including governments, private enterprises, and philanthropic organizations.

We must act now to ensure a future where the arts are valued as essential to education.

Increased funding, improved policy frameworks, and a concerted effort to embed the arts into core curricula can redefine the trajectory of education worldwide. The arts are not an extracurricular luxury but a necessity for cultivating a well-rounded, forward-thinking generation prepared to tackle the challenges of the future. I urge policymakers, educators, donors, and community leaders to support initiatives that elevate the role of Arts Education, ensuring that creativity and cultural expression remain integral to learning environments globally.

As we analyze this report, it is imperative to acknowledge that its recommendations transcend mere theoretical discourse; they articulate a bold vision for transformative action. The call for collaboration, community engagement, and policy alignment highlights our shared responsibility to cultivate creativity and critical thinking in future leaders.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the Community Arts Network (CAN) for assigning Dr Heddy Lahmann to undertake this remarkable research and for granting me the privilege of reviewing this exceptional manuscript. I also wish to acknowledge all contributors, researchers, and advocates who continue to champion the cause of Arts Education. Their unwavering dedication to this field is commendable, and this report stands as a testament to the power of sustained commitment in advancing the arts in education.

Let us embrace the challenge posed in this report and work collaboratively toward a future where the arts are no longer marginalized but celebrated as a cornerstone of comprehensive education.

Dr. Christiana Deliewen Afrikaner,

Arts activist and researcher from Namibia,
Country representative of International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching

FOREWORD 3

The arts have always been at the heart of human expression, shaping our identities, enriching our lives, and connecting us to one another across cultures and generations. The power of arts education lies not only in its ability to develop creativity and imagination but also in the essential skills and qualities it cultivates - creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and resilience. In today's rapidly evolving world, where adaptability and innovation are more crucial than ever, ensuring every child has access to high-quality arts education in compulsory schooling is not an option; it is a necessity.

Dr. Heddy Lahmann's report, *From Margins to Masterpieces: Charting Pathways to Strengthen Arts in Global Public Education*, supported by the Community Arts Network and Porticus, comes at a pivotal moment. As the world grapples with economic shifts, technological advancements, and profound social changes, education systems must evolve to meet new demands. UNESCO's Global Framework on Culture and Arts Education has provided a renewed focus on the role of the arts in education, setting out principles and strategies that call for action at all levels. This report adds to that momentum, providing vital insights, practical recommendations, and compelling evidence of what works - and what is needed - to integrate the arts meaningfully into education systems worldwide.

At the core of this report is a fundamental truth: arts education is essential for equipping students with the skills and dispositions to flourish both now and in the future. It is not simply about fostering artistic talent - though that in itself is valuable - but about nurturing well-rounded, resilient individuals capable of navigating the complexities of life and work. The arts are at the centre of the creative industries, one of the fastest-growing sectors globally, contributing significantly to national economies, productivity, and innovation. Countries that invest in arts education are not only supporting cultural enrichment but also strengthening their workforce's ability to think creatively, solve problems, and generate new ideas that drive social and economic progress.

Beyond the economic benefits, arts education contributes profoundly to personal and collective well-being. Engagement in the arts has been shown to reduce stress, enhance emotional intelligence, and improve mental health. It fosters a sense of belonging, identity, and social cohesion, which is particularly important in times of uncertainty, unrest, and change (King, 2024). A society rich in artistic and cultural opportunities is a society that thrives, one where individuals feel empowered to express themselves and engage with the world in meaningful ways.

For arts education to fulfil its potential, it must be supported by strong policies and collaboration between the education sector and the arts and cultural sectors. This report underscores the need for systemic cooperation to ensure arts education is

embedded as a core component of schooling. Governments, educators, policymakers, artists, and cultural institutions must work together to develop policies and frameworks that guarantee equitable access to high-quality arts education for all students, regardless of their background or location.

A crucial element highlighted in this report is the role of teacher education and professional development. I make a particular plea for sustained and strengthened support for arts education within teacher education and professional development. We cannot expect high-quality arts education without investing in those who deliver it. High-quality arts education requires teachers who are confident, skilled, and well-equipped to integrate the arts into their teaching practice. Yet, in many education systems, arts training for teachers has been significantly reduced or eliminated altogether. If we are to make lasting change, investment in teacher training is non-negotiable. We must provide educators with the knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver inspiring and effective arts education in every classroom. Let this report be the catalyst for a renewed commitment to teacher training, ensuring educators are equipped to provide rich, meaningful arts learning experiences for all students.

The timeliness of this report cannot be overstated. At a moment when global education policies are being reshaped and new priorities are emerging, *From Margins to Masterpieces* serves as both a call to action and a roadmap for change. It is also a testament to the power of diverse collaborations, including bringing together researchers, educators, policymakers, and cultural leaders who share a deep commitment to ensuring all children experience the transformative power of the arts. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to this report. Their generosity in sharing their time, expertise, and insights reflects the passion and urgency of this cause. It is because of their unwavering belief in the importance of arts education that we have such a compelling and comprehensive body of research to inform future efforts.

This report must not simply be read - it must be acted upon. I hope that it energizes and inspires those charged with delivering arts education at all levels to redouble their efforts, advocate with determination, and implement bold, systemic changes. The need for arts education has never been greater, and the time for action is now. Let us work together to move arts education from the margins to its rightful place at the centre of learning—so that every child, no matter where they are in the world, can access the joy, the power, and the lifelong benefits of the arts.

Professor Anne Bamford OBE,

Director of the International Research Agency,
President of the Education Inspiring Peace Laboratory

As we analyze this report, it is imperative to acknowledge that its recommendations transcend mere theoretical discourse; they articulate a bold vision for transformative action... We must act now to ensure a future where the arts are valued as essential to education

Christiana Deliewen Afrikaner

The timeliness of this report cannot be overstated. At a moment when global education policies are being reshaped and new priorities are emerging, *From Margins to Masterpieces* serves as both a call to action and a roadmap for change... The need for arts education has never been greater, and the time for action is now

Professor Anne Bamford



Image Source: Saturday Art Class

PREFACE

I come to this work as a researcher, and educator, an artist, and a parent with a child in public education. I am also a believer in the transformative power of the arts. The arts have powerfully shaped my life. I wouldn't be the person I am today without them, and I know the same is true for so many others.

My family moved when I was 11. Shortly thereafter I found myself in a drama classroom at a new school with the terrifying assignment to do a solo skit for a room full of my (pre)pubescent peers. To my astonishment, my classmates erupted in laughter and applause. For a shy kid – this was a big deal. I found a space where I could share my voice that I didn't know I had. I felt seen and heard and valued, and made friends and connections that I didn't know I could make. Things that meant a lot to me then. And of course, they still do.

Those early public-school experiences with arts education set me on a path that included professional acting, work as a teaching artist, and later, research on arts with young people affected by crisis and conflict. In 2016, I did my dissertation research on an arts education program in Afghanistan where I saw first-hand the power of the arts to create moments of connection, understanding, humanity, and laughter across deep divides in a country entrenched in decades of war.

The arts are uniquely adept at connecting us to our own humanity, and to the humanity of others. They create opportunities for learning, expression, and connection that are difficult to put into words or to quantify because they are visceral, imaginative, and operate “outside the box.” The arts belong to all of us, and all children should have the opportunity to experience quality arts education in school.

And yet the arts are being marginalized and stripped out of education systems. They are treated like more of a luxury than a necessity. I have seen the arts programs and classes that I benefitted from in public school stripped down or altogether eliminated.

I was thrilled when the Community Arts Lab/Porticus and Community Arts Network approached me with the proposal to lead this study, which essentially asks, why are the arts marginalized in so many public education systems, and what can we do about it? I am so pleased to share the findings contained within this report which are the result of two years of research, and for my own part, also represent three decades of personal conviction that arts education matters.

WHAT THIS REPORT AIMS TO DO

This report draws on 53 interviews and 95 surveys with educators, policymakers, advocates, funders, and artists across 55 countries to try and paint a global picture.

It investigates barriers, breakthroughs, and why, despite widespread knowledge of its value, arts education still struggles for legitimacy in too many schools.

It highlights promising national models, advocacy strategies, rationales, and scalable efforts that are already shifting the landscape and reinvigorating the arts in education systems. It draws attention to momentum at the global level, from UNESCO frameworks to creative industries. It also spotlights the role of parents, teachers, students, and local arts organizations to stimulate demand from the ground up.

This research was commissioned by the Community Arts Lab/Porticus and Community Arts Network. I am grateful for their trust and partnership. Over the course of the study, I reviewed policy documents and program evaluations, attended UNESCO conferences and global convenings, and conducted dozens of conversations, some structured, some spontaneous, with people doing the hard, daily work of keeping arts education alive in classrooms, government ministries/departments, NGOs, and communities.

We were especially intentional about including perspectives from the Global South and from those working outside of formal institutions. **Many of the most creative and sustainable efforts to strengthen arts education are happening not from the top-down, but at the margins, often with limited resources but with tremendous resolve.**

SOME FAVORITE FINDINGS

There were many. But here is one: Across continents and contexts, people kept talking about parents and caregivers, not just as decision-makers, but as storytellers and gatekeepers of value. If parents never experienced the arts themselves, how could we expect them to advocate for the arts in schools? **What might shift if we provided parents and communities more opportunities to witness the impact of arts education on their children's lives?**

Another was the notion that **the challenge of sustaining arts education starts and ends with how it is (or is not) valued within societies.** From lack of funding to poor teacher training, all challenges loop back to broader narratives that deem the arts as non-essential. Disrupting the cycle requires pulling all possible levers in terms of policy, funding, partnerships, and frameworks. Perhaps most importantly, however, real change requires shifting hearts and minds.

WHO THIS REPORT IS FOR

This report is meant for policymakers and funders, but also for educators, teaching artists, advocates, and researchers who are looking for language, models, evidence, and allies. It is meant to be a resource, a reference, and a reminder that arts education is not just a luxury for some children, it is a necessity for all children.

GRATITUDE AND A CALL TO ACTION

I am profoundly grateful to all those who shared their insights, time, and passion with me. Your belief and dedication to this work and to young people sits at the heart of every page.

I hope this report will be a tool that can be put to use, to support educators and arts organizations, advocate for better policies and practices, to build arguments, and spark conversations. I hope it will be something that you send to a colleague, a parent, a principal, or a policymaker. Most of all, I hope it will be a prompt to keep going.

Heddy Lahmann,

Professor of International Education,
New York University



This study's findings mirror the case for arts in general, providing a solid basis for an advocacy framework for championing the arts in society.

Community Arts Network team



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the generous contributions of countless people and institutions. The author would like to acknowledge their support and thank them for their time and efforts in enriching this study.

First, the author would like to thank the Community Arts Network (CAN) in collaboration with its partner Porticus/the Community Arts Lab (CAL) who commissioned this study and connected the author to the vast network of creators that these organizations bring together. Immense gratitude goes to Werner Bachstein, Anis Barnat, and especially to the incomparable Samar Bandak, who has offered unwavering support, enthusiasm, and thought partnership to the creation of this report. Thank you also to CAN team members Christina Desinioti, Shruthi Vijayan, Yazmany Arboleda, Grant Clark, Pernilla Eriksson, Leonie Gavrias, Csaba Mányai and CAL team members Iwanna Swart, Vania Cescon and Ena Pervan.

Abundant thanks to the reviewers, Christiana Afrikaner and Anne Bamford, whose expertise and thoughtful feedback helped shape this report, and whose forewords add depth and perspective to the final product.

Thank you to the individuals who generously participated in interviews, including Haifa Al Najar, Emily Akuno, Sagal Ali, Sameen Almas, Adwoa Amoah, Michael Anderson, Claudio Anjos, Ato Annan, Natalia Armijos, Sriram Ayer, Paola Leoncini Bartoli, Pablo Daniel Buján Matas, Gerard Bester, Werner Bachstein, Eric Booth, Emma Brouwer, Ralph Buck, Alejandra Catibiela, Man Cheung, João Costa, Roz De Vile, Pablo Rojas Durán, Michael Finnernan, Jessica Hamlin, Yvette Hardie, Tomokazu Hirata, Rachael Jacobs, Nobukazu Kawai, Sahar Khalil, Kwok Kian-Woon, Soyeon Kim, Yasuyo Kobayashi, Hanna Koskimies, Jigyasa Labroo, Cathy Lasam-Ballo, Linda Lees, Bo Wah Leung, Helena Jue Li, Bill Lucas, Marjo Mäenpää, Maria Menendez, Mohammad Momani, Peter O'Connor, David O'Fallon, Joan Parr, Hélder Pais, Michael Phillips, Jeff M. Poulin, Clara Reyes, Maninder Sarkaria, Jelena Sekulovic, Deepika Sharma, Kazunari Shitami, Mohammad Smadi, Tala Sweis, Nieves Tapia, Sanja Tasić, Teresa Torres De Eça, Aleksí Valta, Marianina Van Deventer, Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin, Moses Watatua, Jantien Westerfeld, Ellen Winner, Hyejin Yang, and William Yip.

Thank you to Anis Barnat, Tariq Jundi, and Mania Mubaslat for translation support.

Thank you to individuals associated with the following institutions/arts organizations that completed the survey including: Africa Arts Association, Asociația Superar, Associação Moçambicana para a Educação em Artes Musicais, ABEM Brazilian Association of Musical Education, Accion por la Musica, Africa Arts Association, Antioch Charter Academy, Art

and Dream Studio, Art of Music Foundation, ASSITEJ South Africa, Azim Premji University, Bari Conservatory, Big MAMA Productions, Bikalpa Arts Center, Brainstorm Productions Play Ltd., Brass for Africa, Bright Future Arts Foundation, Brooklyn College, Bursa Uludag University, Center for Artistry and Scholarship, ChezaCheza, Chicago Public Schools Department of Arts Education, Civic Association Superar Slovakia, College of Music and Drama at Sudan University of Science and Technology, Connecting the Dots in Music, Crear Vale La Pena, Daystar University, Department of Education – Catanduanes, Dozan World, El Sistema Kenya, El Sistema Luxembourg, Elder Conservatorium of Music, ExChange, Fairfax County Public Schools, Funda Community College Arts Centre, Galway Art Academy, George Mason University, Helwan University, Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Sul / Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Artes Visuais, Joshibi University of Art and Design, Kanagawa Prefectural Sagami Koyokan High School, Kenya Institute of Puppet Theatre, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, Kenyatta University, Kings College, Auckland University of Technology, Kulturtanken Arts for Young Audiences, Madrasati Initiative, Makerere University Kampala, Mather Site Art, McGill University, Mebo Theatre Documentaries LTD. Uganda, Mexican Institute of Arts Education IMASE, MINDPOP, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education - New Zealand/Sistema Whangarei -Toi Akorangi, Museum of Egyptian Modern Art, NalandaWay Foundation, October University for Modern Sciences and Arts, Orchestre à l'École, Pedagogías Invisibles, Rehearsal for Life, Inc., Rhythmic Music Conservatory, San Diego Youth Symphony, Seanse Art Center, Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras, Seminole County Public Schools, Singapore Drama Educators Association, StageWrite, Talanta Tano, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Teaching for Artistic Behavior, Inc., The Creative Future LLC, The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative (FATC), The Lewis Prize for Music, The Neo-Political Cowgirls, Tinkuy Encuentros Arte Educación, Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA)/Exeter University, Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina/ Secretaria Estadual de Educação de Santa Catarina, University of Adelaide, University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh City, University of Botswana, University of Cape Coast, University of Colorado Denver, University of Auckland, University of Zimbabwe, Volda University College, and York University. Thanks also to Patricia Abdelnour, Margaret Appleby, Sherry Edwards, Dr. Samar Yossry Faramawy, Khaled Gamal, Sabrina Klein, Elisa May, Jeff Raz, Lisa Robb, Somaya Sobhy Hussien Sorour, Dana Squired, and Dr. Kamal Yousif.

Thanks also to Patricia Abdelnour, Margaret Appleby, Sherry Edwards, Dr. Samar Yossry Faramawy, Khaled Gamal, Sabrina Klein, Elisa May, Jeff Raz, Lisa Robb, Somaya Sobhy Hussien Sorour, Dana Squired, and Dr. Kamal Yousif.

The author is immensely grateful to the input from individuals and organizations who generously contributed suggestions for contacts and resources including Christiana Afrikaner, Eric Booth, Ralph Buck, Allison James, Madeleine McGirk, Teresa Torres De Eça, among many others.

The author thanks her colleagues, friends, and family, who have provided invaluable input and support; especially her husband, Darrill, and her daughter, Maisie, whose imagination, questions, and sense of wonder are a daily reminder of why access to the arts matters so much.

Finally, the author would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of her research assistant, Megan Smith, a gifted researcher, teacher, and artist, without whom this report would not exist.

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: <i>Most Frequently Occurring Words in Interviews</i>	38
FIGURE 2: <i>Research Participants Affiliations/Roles</i>	39
FIGURE 3: <i>Map of Countries Represented in Data</i>	40
FIGURE 4: <i>Regional Representation Across Data from Surveys and Interviews</i>	41
FIGURE 5: <i>Top Obstacles to Arts Education</i>	52
FIGURE 6: <i>Obstacles to Arts in Public Education Systems</i>	52
FIGURE 7: <i>Key Drivers of Change</i>	79
FIGURE 8: <i>Driving Needs for Inclusion of Arts in Public Education Systems</i>	80
FIGURE 9: <i>Promising Rationales</i>	88
FIGURE 10: <i>Status of Global Advocacy for Arts Education</i>	102
FIGURE 11: <i>Frontrunners Shaping Arts Education Advocacy</i>	109
FIGURE 12: <i>Key Features Within National Models</i>	117
FIGURE 13: <i>Assets that Support Scalable Arts Education Programming</i>	118

ACRONYMS

AfrAA	Africa Arts Association
ASSITEJ	International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People
CAF	Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
CAN	Community Arts Network
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCE	Creativity, Culture and Education
CLAYSS	Latin American Center for Service Learning
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CVLP	Crear Vale la Pena
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FLACSO	Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales
G20	Group of 20
HADE	Helena Academy of Drama and English
HICs	High-income countries
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
IDEA	International Drama/Theatre and Education Association
InSEA	The International Society for Education Through Art
ISME	International Society for Music Education
ITAC	International Teaching Artist Collaborative

KACES	Korea Arts & Culture Education Service
KNYO	National Youth Orchestra of Kenya
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LICs	Low-income countries
LMICs	Low- and middle-income countries
LTTA	Learning through the arts
MMidK	Méér Muziek in de Klas
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAC-AEP	National Arts Council- Arts Education Program
NIE	National Institute of Education
OECD	Organisation of Co-operation and Development
OEI	Organisation of Ibero-American States
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PNA	Plano Nacional das Artes
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
SOL	Slam Out Loud
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNITWIN	University Twinning and Networking Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAAE	World Alliance for Arts Education
WDA	World Dance Alliance
WHO	World Health Organization
WMI	Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute
YOLA	Youth Orchestra Los Angeles

WHY ARTS?

"[Arts education is] critical for human development, and especially in the times we are living, the time of fake news, the time of attacks on democracy...The arts wake us up. They make us see alternatives—that we are not sentenced to just whatever someone presents to us as the ultimate truth. And, and so in times in which we see this rise of populism, this rise of attacks on democracy, the growth of hate speech, of new types of segregation, of radicalism, the arts can play a major role."

Minister João Costa (Portugal)

"Arts has a lot to do with local identities, local culture, and provides kids the possibility to recognize and value their own identity... Even in very extreme situations...you cannot get that from mathematics or social sciences alone."

Nieves Tapia (Latin America)



Image Source: Centre for Arts and Social Transformation, University of Auckland

In the context of education, the arts are increasingly recognized as important to supporting students' mental health and broader developmental outcomes.

"Education is a journey towards the inner part of the self, the outer part of the self, the other, the world, and the universe. This can be achieved [through the arts] if we want our students to be happy human beings to celebrate our shared humanity...through transforming our schools to being art centers, to be in places where people celebrate life with people, celebrate dialogues, celebrate silence, celebrate music, celebrate through history."

Minister Haifa Al Najjar (Jordan)



Image Source: Saturday Art Class

INTRODUCTION



Image Source: Asociația Superar (Romania); Photo Credit - Superar Romania

Rationale

Arts education is included in most national education policies globally. Yet the provision of arts education in government-funded, or “public,” school systems varies widely. Policymakers and decisionmakers tend to place arts education in the category of “nice to have” versus “must have,” leaving the arts in a precarious position within education systems.

There is a perceived decline in the prioritization and provision of quality arts education in public schools across global settings (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2024; Lillidahl, 2021; O’Neill & Schmidt 2017; Winner et al., 2013). Numerous trends can be attributed to a deprioritization of arts education, such as rising pressures associated with standardized testing, a global focus on STEM and technological innovation, weak policy, weak teacher development, a dearth of qualified teachers, and a lack of evidence that links the arts to the kinds of economic measures that are such a driving force in the education sector (Aróstegui, 2016, Heilig et al., 2010; Weltsek et al. 2014; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008; WAAE Executive Council, 2023).

While national policies may indicate that they prioritize and value arts education, policy rhetoric is frequently unsupported with funds or resources (Addo & Adu, 2022; Bamford, 2006; Dias et al., 2017; Ewing, 2020; Pang & Lucker, 2010; Smith, 2009). Funding cuts and reduced teaching time leads to less exposure to the arts. Less exposure to the arts leads to fewer students studying the arts, engaging with the arts in their own lives, and/or having interest in becoming arts educators themselves. The quality of arts education provided in public schools is also in question, as there is a shortage of arts specialist teachers, an increase in the practice of utilizing generalists to teach arts classes, and many current teachers with minimal exposure to arts education in their own schooling (Cunha de Araujo, 2018; Smith, 2009).

Yet researchers, educators, and advocates point to the importance of safeguarding and inclusion of arts education in public education systems, including its vital role in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4): Quality education for all that provides the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. These arguments are underscored by connections to the arts to the experience of being human: in facilitating experiential, playful, and visceral learning in ways that other subjects and skills cannot. The arts are often connected to whole child development, including creative, untethered thinking and expression that can lead to new narratives, innovation, and transformative social change. The arts also support empathetic perspective-taking and bridging social divides by creating space for individuals to put themselves in someone else’s shoes. The arts are linked to building resilience in individuals and communities, and supporting peaceful, thriving democracies (Cohen et al., 2021; Kuttner, 2015; Lahmann; 2024; UNESCO, 2006; Vuyk, 2010; Wagner, 2022; Workman, 2017).

In an effort to better understand the bottle necks, levers of change, and existing opportunities for arts education in global public education systems, the Community Arts Network in collaboration with its partner Porticus/the Community Arts Lab commissioned this study to inform initiatives and partnerships surrounding arts for transformative social impact. This study draws on data from 53 in-depth qualitative interviews and 95 survey responses from global stakeholders from across 55 countries to examine: ***What are key drivers behind the marginalization of arts education in government-funded schools, and best practices for revitalizing arts education across global settings?*** (See Appendix A for all participating organizations and regions). Focusing on public school systems, this study aims to understand barriers and pathways to providing arts education with capacity to reach a high proportion of young people. Thus, arts education discussed in this report primarily takes the form of formal classroom teaching and curricula in government-funded schools, as well as nonformal after-school education programming sanctioned by national government ministries/departments.

Throughout this report, the term "public schools" refers to government-funded education systems. However, education is not uniform. While this report uses a broad lens to examine arts education, it is important to note that arts education implementation differs in primary versus secondary levels, as well as among different art forms (e.g., music, visual arts, and drama, etc.). These distinctions can influence ways that arts education is structured, funded, and delivered within systems.

Research Questions

This study begins by examining underlying causes for the marginalization of arts education as conceived by arts education scholars, practitioners, advocates, funders, and policymakers (Research Question 1). It then explores promising practices and potential levers of change in terms of key narratives, rationales, and innovations (Research Questions 2, 2a). This study then features examples of programs and/or organizations that demonstrate best practices in sustainable and/or scalable partnerships with government ministries and education departments (Research Question 3). Finally, this research interrogates the current ecosystem for arts education advocacy including strategies and areas of opportunity (Research Questions 4, 4a). To that end, this study seeks to answer the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: Problem analysis: What are some of the underlying causes for the exclusion or marginalization of arts within public education systems globally? How, if at all, are these causes related?

RQ2: Drivers /levers of change: What are promising practices and potential levers of change at the global, regional, or local level for the inclusion, promotion, and consideration of arts education as fundamental for whole child development¹ within public education systems?

RQ2a: What are some of the most promising rationales for integrating arts education to improve whole child development outcomes including academic learning, psychosocial support, social emotional learning, and/or future employment?

RQ3: Global Advocacy: What is the status of global advocacy and strategy initiatives for arts education? Where are there global/regional opportunities or momentum?

RQ3a: Who are advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders in this area?

RQ4: Existing models: What are examples of national models that successfully include and promote arts within their public education systems? What factors contribute to their success?

Key Terms

Arts: This study uses the term “the arts” to include a broad range of artistic disciplines underlying the teaching and learning of various art forms within public education systems. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, media arts, and design and craft.

Arts education: This study uses the term “arts education” to refer to any explicit teaching and learning of various art forms that takes place within public education systems. Here the term arts education incorporates structured teaching and learning in arts disciplines, as well as the integration of arts-based learning activities into the teaching and learning of other subject matter.

Developed and developing countries: Recognizing the overly simplistic binaries classifications associated of these terms, this study uses these terms as they relate to statements and recommendations from participants, as well as ways they are commonly used with reference to intergovernmental organizations and frameworks.

- “Developing” countries historically refers to low and middle-income countries.
- “Developed” countries commonly refers to industrialized or high-income countries.

Formal education: refers to schooling that takes place within a structured and systematic instruction that takes place within an institutional framework, such as schools, colleges, and universities. It follows a set curriculum, is delivered by trained educators, and leads to recognized certifications or degrees.

Global North and Global South: This study uses these terms to describe the sample and the representation of participants from countries associated with the Global North and Global South.

These terms, popularized in the 1980’s, divided the world according to a measure of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita into a developed Global North and a developing Global South. Global South countries broadly include most of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, and share a history of colonial rule. While these terms are subject to criticism as the world does not divide neatly into these two categories, they are still frequently used to indicate broad economic divisions tied to colonial legacies (Comfort, 2024; Council on Foreign Relations, 2024). Recognizing the imperfection of these terms, this study largely relies on terminology describing income levels (low- middle- and high-income countries) when reflecting on levels of economic development throughout the narrative.

High-income countries (HICs): are classified as having the highest economic strength, with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$14,005 USD or more. Recognized as developed nations by the United Nations, HICs predominantly comprise countries from the “Global North” (World Population Review, 2023).

Low-income countries (LICs): have the lowest gross national income (GNI) per capita globally. Recent estimates indicate that LICs have a GNI per capita of \$1,145 USD or less. (World Population Review, 2022)

Middle-income countries (MICs): include both lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies. Lower-middle-income economies have a Gross National Income (GNI)

Nonformal education: refers to organized learning activities that take place outside of the formal school system. This could include extracurricular or after-school activities, or other structured learning such as vocational training or literacy classes. “The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative, and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals” (UNESCO, 2024).

Public education / public schools: include publicly-funded school systems that are universally accessible and government-regulated. These systems typically include primary and secondary education, as well as early childhood and tertiary education in some cases.

Whole child development: is conceived as a holistic network of support that brings together schools, families, and communities to cultivate a child's overall well-being: socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and creatively. Beyond personal development, it also empowers children to become engaged citizens and lifelong learners. incorporates concepts such as academic knowledge, social and emotional competencies, and life skills (ACER, 2020; Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child, 2021).

Methods

Data for this study were gathered through a desk review, semi-structured interviews, and surveys. Participant observations at relevant UNESCO events including the MultiStakeholder Dialogue on Culture and Arts Education (Paris 2023), and the World Conference on Culture and Arts Education (Abu Dhabi 2024) also informed findings in the report.

Desk review

Beginning with a review of thematically relevant materials, articles, reports, websites, and other materials, the desk review informed the development and framing of the interviews and surveys that followed. The desk review included materials published in English between January 2000 and June 2022. The author began with a review of documents provided by CAN, CAL, and Porticus. The author then searched academic databases including ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and PAIS International using search terms aligned to the research questions. The author reviewed the citation lists of the

most topically relevant academic and grey literature and conducted cited reference searches in Google Scholar to identify further sources. The author also conducted general searches on Google for organizations, events, individuals, and networks that were the most frequently cited among the most relevant documents. In total, 120 relevant documents were included in the initial desk review. An additional 100 documents including publications from 2023 to 2025 were reviewed based on recommendations and materials shared by interviewees and survey respondents. Most documents and materials reviewed for this study were limited to those that were available in English, except for a few materials shared by interviewees which were published in other languages and reviewed with the support of online translation tools including Google Translate and AI. The author coded all documents and materials according to their relevance to the research questions and key themes as they emerged.

Interviews

Drawing from the initial desk review findings, the author developed a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B). The author conducted 53 semi-structured interviews with key informants. Interviews were primarily conducted over Zoom, and a few in-person. Interviewees included government representatives, independent experts, leadership representatives for arts education nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), advocacy groups, donor organizations, educators, scholars, and other relevant representatives. Interviewees spanned across global regions, including, East Africa, West Africa, South Africa, MENA, North America, Central America and the Caribbean, South America, Europe, Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Oceania, and Global. Most interviews were conducted in English, apart from two conducted in Spanish and one conducted in Arabic with the support of a translator.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Interviewees were given the option to use their own names, participate anonymously, or require that any of their responses be anonymized or struck from record. A codebook was developed to analyze themes and patterns linking to each of the research questions (Appendix C). Interview transcriptions were coded and analyzed using qualitative analysis software, NVivo version 12.

FIGURE 1: *Most Frequently Occurring Words in Interviews*



Surveys

The author developed a survey to expand geographic representation and used purposive sampling to gather input from a diverse range of stakeholders, with a particular focus on localized arts organizations. The survey protocol was developed in light of the original desk review findings and initial findings from the first 25 interviews that the author conducted (Appendix D). The survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics software. Survey data was analyzed in Qualtrics for demographic trends, patterns, and themes. 95 respondents completed the survey, including the same profiles and geographic regions described above. Survey questions were written and completed in English, except for one response completed in Spanish and one in French.

FIGURE 2: *Research Participants Affiliations/Roles*

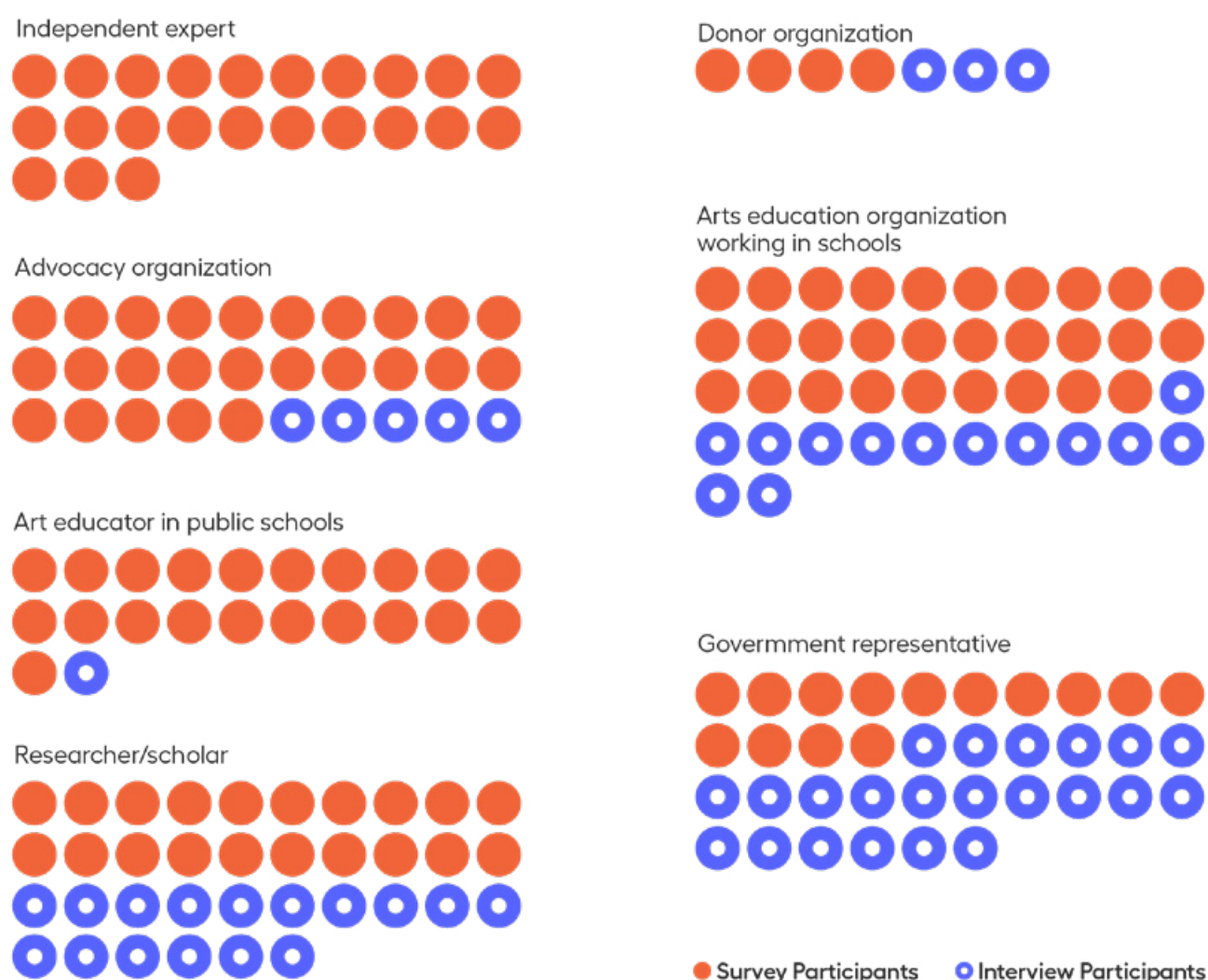
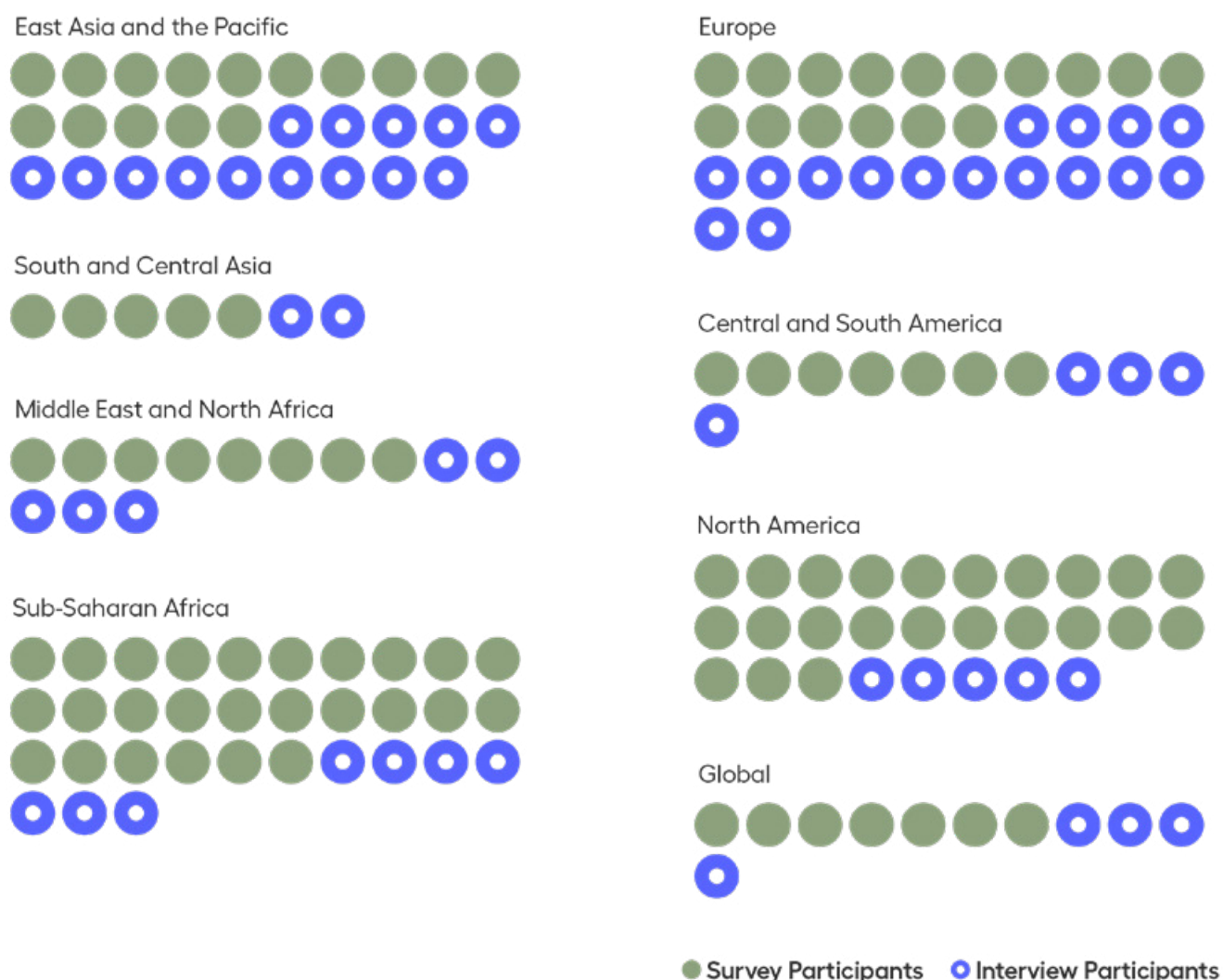




FIGURE 4: *Regional Representation Across Data from Surveys and Interviews*

Participant Observations: UNESCO Events

The author participated with the Community Arts Network in the UNESCO Multistakeholder Dialogue on Culture and Arts Education in Paris in May 2023 and the World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi in February 2024. The UNESCO Multistakeholder Dialogue on Culture and Arts Education brought together global stakeholders to participate in panels and discussions aimed at gathering input to feed into UNESCO's new Framework, which was then launched at the World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in Abu Dhabi. Participation in these events involved attending and observing panels and events, co-facilitating a side event, moderating a thematic session, intervening during a thematic session, and interacting with participants.

Limitations

There are important study limitations to consider.

The study aims to capture a global story about the state of arts education. While the data captured in this study represents a wide breadth of countries and perspectives, it is primarily qualitative in nature and derived from a limited, non-representative sample. Therefore, it does not allow for generalizability across groups or settings. While the findings highlight some disparities and distinctions between regions and economies, the scope of the study does not allow for comprehensive comparisons across regions or economic strata. Moreover, while the qualitative findings in this report provide rich insights on common themes, they cannot establish cause-and-effect relationships.

This study maintained a higher-level vantage point, focusing on community, national, regional, and international levels to inform global recommendations. As such, it did not include direct input from individuals representing all stakeholder groups, such as parents, young people, or industry leaders, whose perspectives could have enhanced insights into local realities. Importantly however, the study deliberately included grassroots organizations that work closely with these groups, with the intention of providing indirect insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Another important consideration is the prominence of certain voices and ideologies in shaping global arts education discourse. Global policy, research, and advocacy surrounding arts education is dominated by governments and voices from high-income countries. Accordingly, the data captured through this research represents narratives and ideologies either stemming directly from Global North countries, or those that may have been shaped by their influence.

The positionality of the author as an American, based in the US, a high-income country in the Global North, introduces further bias in terms of access and awareness of evidence and practices in Global South countries. Deliberate efforts were made to capture knowledge and perspectives from Global South countries. The author relied on recommendations and snowball sampling of a wide network of arts education stakeholders, including connected to the Community Arts Network, Porticus, the International Teaching Artist Collaborative, UNESCO, the World Alliance for Arts Education, and personal networks.

Organization of report

This report begins with a review of key background literature surrounding arts education in global policy and public education systems. This section covers literature on policies and practices in public education, standardized testing and accountability, global attention to creativity and creative industries, and concludes with a discussion of the evidence on arts education.

The findings section is organized around each of the research questions above. It begins with an analysis of the **problem** (RQ1) underlying the marginalization of arts education followed by an exploration of potential **levers of change** (RQ2) and **promising rationales** (RQ2a) that support the promotion of arts education in public education systems. It then examines the status of **global advocacy** (RQ3) as well as key advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders, and finally describes **existing models** (RQ4) that successfully integrate arts education into public systems.

The conclusion of the report summarizes key findings and makes a number of recommendations for revitalizing arts education in public systems.



Background Literature

Arts education in public school systems is shaped by a complex interplay of policy rhetoric, funding structures, assessment frameworks, and shifting educational priorities. While many national policies formally acknowledge the value of arts education, these commitments are often undercut by resource limitations and accountability measures that prioritize standardized testing. Over the past two decades, trends such as the rise of global education assessments, increased focus on STEM fields, and the outsourcing of arts instruction have contributed to the marginalization of arts education in schools. At the same time, a growing global discourse on creativity and innovation has positioned creative thinking as a critical skill for the 21st century, leading to renewed interest in its role within education.

This background literature examines several key dimensions of arts education within public schooling. It explores the gap between policy intentions and actual practice in arts education, the effects of standardization and accountability measures on arts programs, and the evolving creativity agenda in education. It also surveys the current state of empirical research on the benefits and challenges of arts education in public schools.

Policy/practice gaps and trends in arts education

While national policies may indicate that they prioritize and value arts education, policy rhetoric is frequently unsupported with funds or resources (Addo & Adu, 2022; Bamford, 2006; Dias et al., 2017; Ewing, 2020; Pang & Lucker, 2010; Smith, 2009). Outcomes associated with arts education are not generally included in assessments, resulting in reduced resources and time allocated to arts classes and teacher training (Aróstegui, 2016; Juntunen, 2015; Petrie, 2020).

When arts education courses are not required as part of the public curricula, fewer students opt to take arts classes, and the demand for specialized arts courses in secondary schools goes down (Morrison, 2019). This in turn reduces the demand for arts specialization in higher education, which then reduces the supply of arts specialist teachers. For example, studies in Australia, Brazil, and Lebanon highlight this pattern, indicating that there are not enough trained teachers to teach the arts education courses mandated as part of the public primary school curricula (see Hartwig et al., 2017; Hentschke, 2013; Martin et al., 2017). This issue is not unique to these countries, however, and reflects a broader global challenge in maintaining a robust pipeline of arts educators.

Two decades of marginalizing arts education means that there are fewer teachers who had access to the arts during their own schooling (Smith, 2009). Some countries have eliminated arts specialist teachers altogether, opting instead for generalist teachers to teach arts classes in primary schools. For example, in South Africa, Canada, and Australia, generalist teachers at the primary school-level are tasked with teaching arts curricula that may require or would benefit from specialized knowledge in various art forms. Generalist teachers without knowledge or experience with a particular arts discipline report feeling ill-equipped to teach arts education curricula. A paucity of teachers who feel knowledgeable and confident in delivering arts curricula has implications for the quality of arts education provided in public schools and for students' long-term engagement and interest in the arts (Ewing, 2020; Vermeulen, 2011; Winner et al., 2013). Requirements and expectations for teacher training may also differ by art form. Music teachers, for example, are more likely to undergo specialist training than drama or visual arts teachers, particularly at the secondary level. These variations shape both the quality and availability of instruction across settings.

Public schools increasingly outsource arts education. Schools may bring in teaching artists from local art institutions to teach short-term courses or allow students to complete credits through an outside organization. Benefits of outsourcing include reducing costs as well as student interaction with working artists and local arts organizations. Yet the drawbacks are that outsourcing reduces accountability and investment in arts learning, both on the part of the teaching artists and school administrations. Schools who do not employ their own full-time teachers have less investment in and oversight of arts learning, and outside teaching artists or organizations have less investment in or knowledge of the needs of the students and school. These types of programs may also be vulnerable to funding cuts (Chapman, 2000; O'Neill & Schmidt, 2017).

The persistent gap between policy rhetoric and implementation contributes to a cycle of declining access, reduced teacher capacity, and weakened institutional investment in arts education. As schools increasingly rely on short-term solutions, the long-term sustainability and quality of arts education remain at risk, further marginalizing its role in public school systems.

Standardized Testing, PISA, and the “age of accountability”

A surge in international studies and assessments which provide clear and direct comparisons on educational outcomes between countries has stimulated an era of international accountability, comparison, and competition. Rapid advancements in technology have changed the way policymakers think about the skills and competencies required for employability and competitiveness in the global market, and global education discourse has put a greater focus on accountability and economic

measures. Corporate performance indicators are being applied to monitor education systems and treat them more like businesses. This shift is characterized by what some education scholars and practitioners refer to as “the age of accountability,” and “the commodification of education” (Anderson, 2016; Hopmann, 2008; Vuyk, 2010).

For example, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), created by OECD, provides comparative data on the compulsory education of 15-year-olds in the areas of reading, math, and science. PISA’s results, published every three years, drive education policy at national levels. Top-performing countries who consistently appear at the top of PISA ranking market their education “brands” and practices to others, while lower performing countries work to align their education policies and practices to those with higher rankings. This contributes to rising standardization and homogenization across education curricula worldwide (Zhao & Gearin, 2016).

National governments promote a teach-to-the-test approach to expedite improvements on national standardized assessments and PISA scores. In turn, they dedicate fewer funds and resources to cultivating cultural and social values in schools (Hopmann, 2008). Frequent standardized testing and assessments coupled with fewer creative, physical, and project-based learning opportunities contribute to pressure and stress for students and teachers, without an outlet (Zhao & Gearin, 2016). Critics argue that prioritizing PISA education indicators ultimately marginalizes creativity, physical development, moral development, civic engagement, and student wellbeing (Volante & Fazio, 2017). Global emphasis on improving math, literacy, and science outcomes comes at the expense of time, funds, and expertise in other areas, such as arts education.

The increasing dominance of standardized assessments has reshaped education priorities, often at the expense of creativity and holistic learning. As global competition drives policy decisions, arts education remains sidelined, raising concerns about the long-term impact on student well-being, engagement, and the development of diverse competencies needed for the future.

Creative thinking and the creativity agenda

The global focus on math, science, and literacy outcomes assessed by standardized tests largely revolves around strengthening national economies. Yet economists and policymakers are also increasingly interested in the ways education can build skills linked to entrepreneurship and innovation, such as creative thinking.

The increasing economic influence of the cultural and creative industries is shifting global, national, and subnational education policies and priorities (G20 Culture Working Group, 2023; Lego Foundation 2020 & 2022; Durham Commission 2019; Cuesta, 2022; Hanson & Lubart, 2024; Vincent-Lancrin et al., 2019). Building critical and creative

thinking and skills is a priority for education sectors globally, as advancements in technology have led to the growth of innovative creative industries and opportunities for the development of new creative economies. Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are shifting the landscape of technology and employment options as AI continues to demonstrate its capacity to perform the tasks formerly executed by human beings. Yet advocates and proponents for creativity and creative thinking argue that these skills and capabilities are more resistant to automation, as employers will continue to need individuals who can generate original ideas and think outside of the box to solve complex problems (Chinyowa, 2022; Bakhshi, 2023).

Interest in fostering creativity in education is not necessarily new. For example, the launch of Sputnik I in 1957 led to national policy shifts in the US and other Western countries to name creativity as a priority for schooling. This focus on creativity was in response to the perceived failure of their engineers to think creatively and innovate at the pace of the Soviet Union (Shaheen, 2010; Cropley, 2015). The post-Sputnik era was also marked by a shift toward STEM and away from arts education in schools. So, while creativity gained importance, focus on the arts diminished in school systems.

Renewed momentum surrounding creativity and creative thinking emerged in the 1990's, primarily linked to generating readiness in response to a rapidly changing world (Craft, 2003; Ritter, 2017; Shaheen, 2010). Economic growth and innovation are primary motivators behind the current creativity agenda in education, yet the benefits critical thinking, self-expression, agency, wellbeing, 21st century life skills, social emotional learning; and educational outcomes are also highlighted (Petrie, 2020; Durham Commission, 2019).

PISA prioritized Creative Thinking for its 2022 Innovative Domains assessment, with a subsequent round planned for 2025. PISA defines creative thinking as “the competence to engage productively in the generation, evaluation and improvement of ideas, that can result in original and effective solutions, advances in knowledge and impactful expressions of imagination” (OECD, 2019). OECD’s goal in building this assessment was to promote skills linked to imagination, flexibility, and innovation, qualities that are increasingly emphasized in global education policy. Though not focused solely on the arts, the assessment highlights competencies long cultivated through arts education. This development offers a timely opportunity to underscore the role of arts learning in fostering these increasingly valued abilities within international benchmarks.

While the arts are often described as promoting creativity and creative skills, researchers emphasize that creativity can exist in any aspect of teaching or learning, in any classroom, for any subject. Creativity is not reserved for or exclusive to the arts or to arts education.

As creativity gains prominence in global education policy, its integration remains uneven, often disconnected from arts education. While the creative thinking agenda aligns with economic and technological shifts, ensuring that the arts play a central role in fostering creativity will require intentional policy and investment.

Examining the evidence on arts education: Insights and limitations

Numerous studies and advocates point to a wealth of benefits to arts education. Yet empirical research demonstrating measurable or quantifiable effects on outcomes such as learning, wellbeing, and whole child development are few and far between. There is also a dearth of theory to explain how arts education works to generate effects.

Advocates for arts education in schools frequently tout the many benefits of participating in the arts for learners. A large-scale initiative implemented in public schools in Canada offers evidence of arts education's academic and social-emotional benefits. Rigorous studies of the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) program show that participating students perform as well or better than their peers in traditional classrooms, while also developing stronger confidence, empathy, and engagement (Smithrim & Upitis, 2005; Upitis, 2011). Studies have linked arts education to increases in cognitive abilities, math and English attainment, increased likelihood of earning a degree, greater employability, better health outcomes, improved academic motivation and engagement, improved writing, improved motivation, empathy, compassion, and self-esteem (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017; Goldstein, 2024; Martin et al., 2013; Prior, 2016; Stoelinga et al., 2018). Some studies focusing on the value of learning through the arts, highlight the capacity of arts education to build transferable skills relevant for other academic, vocational, or economic endeavors, such as improving lateral thinking or entrepreneurship (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013).

Promising evidence indicates that STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) curricula enhances innovative thinking, and improved learning and engagement with science concepts (Sousa & Pilecki, 2013). Yet some scholars caution that STEAM puts the arts at the service of the sciences and other disciplines and that artistic content in STEAM initiatives is often weak or inauthentic (Barton & Baguley, 2017; Sanz-Camarero, Ortiz-Revilla, & Greca, 2023).

Some scholars have challenged claims that arts education is demonstrably linked to improved academic outcomes, noting few correlation and causal studies, small sample sizes, inconsistent findings, and large effect sizes (Schneider, & Rohmann, 2021; See & Kokotsaki, 2016; Winner et al., 2013). Indeed, empirical studies investigating causality between arts education and academic or cognitive outcomes are sparse. Much of the

existing research that falls into this category focuses on learning a musical instrument and music education, with strong positive outcomes on academic achievement, IQ, brain plasticity, verbal intelligence, improved executive function, and behavior (see Jaschke, Honing & Scherder, 2018; Schneider, & Rohmann, 2021; Steele, Bailey, Zatorre, & Penhune, 2013; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013).

However, recent impact studies investigating broad and large-scale arts education programming involving institutional partnerships in public schools is shifting the evidence landscape. For example, a randomized control trial investigating the Houston Arts Access Initiative in the United States within 42 elementary and middle schoolers grades 3-8. Results showed significant academic and social emotional learning outcomes, including reductions in disciplinary infractions, improvements in writing achievement, school engagement, college aspirations, compassion, and empathy (Bowen & Kisida, 2022). Another impact evaluation in Chile investigated a collaboration between the Ministry of Education and arts institutions. This quasi-experimental study included 297 secondary school children (ages 14 to 16) who participated in arts workshops provided by the Acciona Program. Results showed significant improvements in academic achievement, including improved grades in language, math, and art as well as significant improvement in creativity and creative behaviors (Egana-delSol, 2023).

While evidence supporting the benefits of arts education continues to grow, gaps remain in establishing clear causal links and theoretical frameworks, and systemic barriers continue to limit its integration into public schooling.

The literature reviewed in this section highlight persistent gaps between policy rhetoric and practice, the impact of standardized testing on educational priorities, the evolving global focus on creativity, and the mixed evidence base for arts education outcomes. While efforts to integrate creative thinking into education are gaining momentum, systemic challenges continue to marginalize arts education in public schools. The following section presents key findings that examine the root causes of this exclusion, as well as the policy, structural, and societal factors that shape the current landscape of arts education.

"...there is no real interest in measuring arts because they are soft skills. And to have comparisons, it's much easier to have hard data. So, I think one reason could be because of the rankings of schools and the rankings of countries, and people do not know how to measure the arts with the same accuracy and data."

Teresa Torres de Eça (Portugal, Global)

"It [arts education] rarely totally disappears because that would be embarrassing—but it is often left in such a depleted state that no one complains about it, and there's not much benefit from it."

Eric Booth (USA)

Two decades of marginalizing arts education means that there are fewer teachers who had access to the arts during their own schooling.



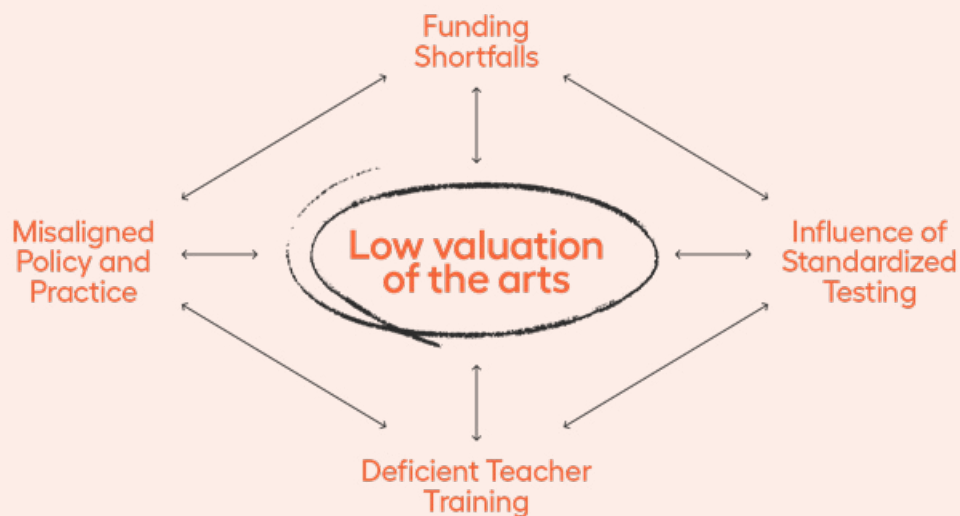
Image Source: ASSITEJ – South Africa

1. PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

Underlying Causes for the Exclusion/
Marginalization of Arts in Public
Education Systems



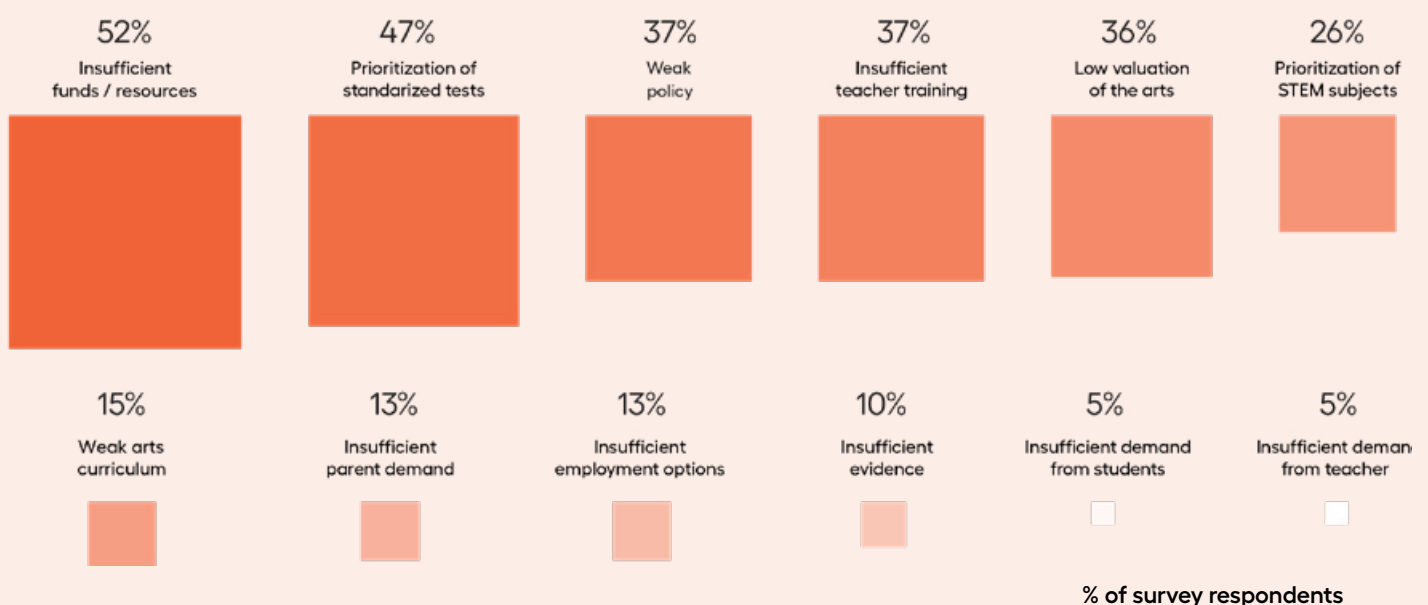
Image Source: Slam Out Loud

FIGURE 5: *Top Obstacles to Arts Education*

This section presents findings in response to research question 1: ***What are some of the underlying causes for the exclusion or marginalization of arts within public education systems globally? How, if at all are these causes related?***

This section is organized according to the top five obstacles to arts education in public schools identified across interviews and survey participants including: (1) Insufficient funds and/or resources to implement arts education in schools; (2) the prioritization of skills and subjects measured by standardized tests, (3) weak policy for arts education, (4) insufficient teacher training; and (5) low appreciation or valuation of the arts. These top obstacles are illustrated in Figure 5 above.

Figure 6 below illustrates the range obstacles to arts education identified by survey respondents. This section focuses on the top five obstacles but also discusses several others from the figure, since these many challenges frequently overlap and intersect.

FIGURE 6: *Obstacles to Arts in Public Education Systems*

% of survey respondents

Investment and funding decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are shaped by multiple factors, with national and international standardized testing practices often ranking among the most influential.



Image Source: El Sistema Greece

1.1 Funding Problems

The most commonly identified obstacle among participants concerned the overall lack of funds and resources allocated for arts education in schools. This obstacle is also well documented in the literature. While this issue was commonly cited by participants across regions and economies, the availability of funds, resources and ways they get utilized are vastly different across high-, middle-, and low-income countries. These realities vary between countries and within countries, particularly along urban and rural divides. Funding is a cross-cutting challenge that is highly dependent on the political climate and shifts according to the priorities of governmental leadership.

Participants cited funding challenges within education at large, noting the particular vulnerability of the arts to funding cuts. Paola Leoncini Bartoli¹ (Global) highlighted funding and the need for sustainable sources as a global problem.

One of the most complex challenges is the difficulty of strengthening sustainable funding for arts education, but also the lack of budgetary planning in this area. We know that the funds allocated to schools to have access to arts education are largely insufficient. Arts is also susceptible to issues related to project-based funding, which is not sustainable, as activities cease with the end of the project.

Leoncini Bartoli championed UNESCO's efforts to create a new Global Framework on Culture and Arts Education to help address systemic challenges, such as a lack of funding, through a common approach across governments involving deliberate coordination between national culture and education sectors. She noted,

The cultural sector remains insufficiently structured across countries at a global level. This requires investment in systemic cooperation across various ministries and national competencies. This is the ambition of the Framework.

UNESCO's new Global Framework on Culture and Arts Education builds on the legacies of the Lisbon Road Map for Arts Education (2006) and the Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education (2010). This is the first time that 'culture' has featured so prominently in UNESCO's mandate surrounding arts education, pointing to the cultural sector as a promising partner in generating solutions for dwindling arts education, and vice versa.

¹Director for Cultural Policies and Development at UNESCO Culture Sector, June 2023

While UNESCO's new Framework aims to enhance sustainable funding solutions, government leadership and policy shifts within countries continue to determine funds allocated to arts education at any given point in time. Shifting policy priorities create uncertainty for arts education in public school systems. Linda Lees² (Scotland) reflected on Scotland's success in developing and promoting creative learning. Yet the energy behind this initiative was undermined by shifting government priorities.

We sat on the cusp of doing something quite amazing. A lot of people were looking at Scotland for its creative learning plan and everything else. Sadly, for a whole lot of different reasons, that momentum, I think, is gone... A change of government resulted in a massive drop in the funding... Every year I worry that the small amount of funding we now get for creative learning is not going to be forthcoming in the next year.

Sustainable funding is a persistent challenge, even in high-income countries where funding for the arts is comparatively robust. Finland, for example, is often touted for its education system and student-centered arts and extracurricular programming. Yet Hanna Koskimies³ (Finland) described cuts to education funding and the culture sector brought on by the new government.

In Finland, now that the new government—how should I put it—if I put it short, there's a lack of money. There's a lot of cutting going on at the moment. And so of course, this also affects the cultural sector. But for science, there is more money given.

Marjo Mäenpää⁴ (Finland) echoed this sentiment, noting early signs of shifting priorities under the new government:

One party leader announced that art is a luxury that not everyone needs, so we can cut funding, and that's a bit scary. It remains to be seen that what happens to art education right now... The State has always supported these things, but funding and far right attitudes are big obstacles. For the first time in my memory in Finland, there is a big discussion about what kind of art is suitable, and what is "good" art.

When political climates shift and budget cuts are deemed necessary, arts education is typically early to the chopping block. While challenges surrounding funding arts education may be common across countries and settings, they are exacerbated in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

²Head of Wider Achievement and Lifelong Learning at the City of Edinburgh Council, March 2023

³Senior Ministerial Advisor for the Ministry of Education and Culture, April 2024

⁴Director of Center for Cultural Policy Research at Cupore, May 2023

For example, India is a middle-income country with a burgeoning economy, yet its resources for the arts are stretched thin in comparison to in a high-income setting like the UK. What might be considered a shortage of funds for arts education in a high-income setting is vastly different to a shortage of funds in middle-income setting, as Jigyasa Labroo⁵ (India) illustrated:

Imagine the size of Great Britain and imagine the size of India-- spending on arts and culture in Great Britain is six times that of India. So, the investment they put into our culture in a country that's so rich in arts—it's just unfortunate that the government doesn't invest into our culture in a country that's so rich in arts. I'm sure whenever any funding gets cut, it's the arts that get cut the most. I speak mostly about post-independence, India, where the focus has really been on employment and technical skills.

Governments employ education systems to improve labor market outcomes for economic growth (OECD, 2024). With fewer resources to invest into the education sector, low- and middle-income countries often focus on building foundational and technical skills, with little investment in arts education (Alexander, 2001; World Population Review, 2022).

Emily Akuno⁶ (Kenya/Global), suggested that unless arts education is connected to economic returns in Africa, it will continue to be omitted as a priority:

African national development agendas do not seem to recognize that the arts are important in building the economy. For us in Africa it is all about building the economy... For most of our national development agendas, the arts do not appear...I really think that is where the gap is.

National development agendas in low-income countries are meant to set a framework for economic growth. They are largely devoid of arts or arts education priorities, reinforcing the narrative that the arts are a “nice to have” rather than a necessity. While this may be unsurprising in that it reflects patterns of devaluation that are common across contexts, failing to invest in the development of the arts and cultural industries in LMICs means that the wealthiest countries maintain the capacity and infrastructure to develop the next generation of artists, creatives, and innovators.

Low-income countries that rely on foreign aid often face pressure from donor institutions to demonstrate economic returns on investment (Daoud, et al., 2017). For example in Ghana, a postcolonial and highly indebted country, development aid has been tied with policy reform requirements that do not prioritize the arts.

⁵ Co-Founder and CEO of Slam Out Loud, February 2023

⁶ Primary Professor of Music at Technical University of Kenya and former ISME President, August 2023

In the 80s and the 90s, when most African countries were going to the Bretton Woods Institutions to get them to loan money and liberate them from the economic debts that they were in, one of the conditionalities was to...fund important areas in education, what they deemed important areas. So then obviously one of the areas that gets thrown out is the art, you know like, 'what are you going to spend money on art education for?'...At that period, art education gets thrown out of schools at all levels except at the tertiary levels.

—Ato Annan⁷ (Ghana)

Annan alluded to the lasting implications of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which the World Bank and International Monetary Fund widely implemented across sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s and 1990s. These programs aimed to stabilize low-income economies through policy reforms tied to loan conditions. Critics argue that SAPs worsened already weak economies and deepened existing inequalities (Bonna, 2021, Pamba 2012). Although the World Bank and IMF no longer employ structural adjustment programs in their original form, many of the same policy priorities and reform conditions continue to influence lending and development frameworks in countries where SAPs were previously implemented (Reimers & Tiburcio, 1993; UNESCO Executive Board, 2021).

Low-income countries face a multitude of economic and social challenges making the arts a “hard sell,” as Sagal Ali⁸ (Somalia), explained:

Education is a luxury in Somalia. It's not an immediate right. It's a privilege, right? Because some areas don't have schools or people live under the poverty line... Now parents may be scraping, you know, the bare minimum to get their kids through school. So, art will be a hard sell.

Armed conflict, climate-related disasters, and food shortages have displaced millions in Somalia. Arts education is not deemed a priority in such constrained settings, where governments struggle to provide basic services for the population. Perhaps the exception is utilizing the arts to support children who have experienced traumatic events, though these efforts typically operate outside of traditional education systems (Hommel & Kaimal, 2023).

Interviewees and survey respondents consistently cited a lack of funds and resources for arts education. The interviewee quotes above are merely a snapshot of the many times and ways that respondents pointed to this issue. It is evident that the funding problem spans geographic and economic settings. While the funding problem may

⁷ Artist/Curator and Co-Director for the Foundation for Contemporary Art, May 2023

⁸ Executive Director Somali Arts Foundation, June 2023

be consistent, it varies substantially according to political will, leadership, and policy. Even under funding constraints, high-income countries are still able to provide a level of resources and access to arts education that far outpaces low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The arts and arts education are a 'harder sell' in LMICs where demands and mandates to grow their economies tend to prioritize foundational and technical skills for employability.

Yet investment and funding decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are shaped by multiple factors, with national and international standardized testing practices often ranking among the most influential.

"There's kind of a global repositioning of schools as factories."

Peter O'Connor (New Zealand)

"[The exam system] is a barrier to creative learning. If our definition of creativity is around curiosity, imagination, open-mindedness."

Joan Parr (Scotland)

"...unless we can rethink how we think about subject areas and standardized testing and what we value as a larger society for our future citizens, arts are always going to be at the fringe."

Jessica Hamlin (USA)

"It's related to politics and assumptions about what is good education and what is the best way to create good education."

Ralph Buck (New Zealand)



1.2 Hyperfocus on Standardized Testing

International and national standardized assessments create a framework for learning priorities, benchmarks, and global competition that primarily emphasize science, math, and literacy outcomes. In the past two decades, the number and frequency of national education assessments has surged, with increasing focus on monitoring outcomes that are reflected on the PISA test (Program for International Student Assessment) (Grek, 2009). The challenge of prioritizing arts education amid widespread pressures to demonstrate learning assessed by standardized tests is common across regions and economies. These pressures appear at various ecological levels: international, national, regional, school, community, and individual.

Pointing to the influential forces of international assessments like PISA, Teresa Torres de Eça⁹ (Portugal, Global) noted that the arts don't fit into frameworks for standardized assessments.

Education has changed a lot. Now it is much more STEM-oriented, science, technologies and mathematics. Also, for example, in Europe, we have the PISA measurements. You cannot measure the arts, or there is no real interest in measuring arts because they are soft skills. And to have comparisons, it's much easier to have hard data. So, I think one reason could be because of the rankings of schools and the rankings of countries, and people do not know how to measure the arts with the same accuracy and data.

As Torres de Eça explains, the arts are more difficult to measure than science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. There also is limited interest in measuring the arts because they do not produce the kind of quantifiable that lend themselves to comparisons and competitive rankings. The global emphasis on economic indicators and outcomes traditionally measured by PISA has intensified national testing and monitoring efforts, and prompting policy shifts toward greater investment in math, science, and literacy, often at the expense of other subjects, including arts education.

Eric Booth¹⁰ (USA) described how demands to demonstrate success with finite resources diminishes the attention to and quality of arts education.

I tend to lump standardized tests and the STEM together as the forces that drive the decisions and finances of schools in directions

⁹ Research Coordinator for Arts, Communities, and Education, former President of InSEA, May 2023

¹⁰ Owner of Everyday Arts, Inc., International Arts Learning Consultant, Freelance Teaching Artist, January 2023

that consistently peripheralize arts learning...Everything else keeps defaulting toward the demands and the pressures on the people who run [the various parts:] the building part, the financial part, the political part, the social—which creates this consistent balkanizing effect. It [arts education] rarely totally disappears because that would be embarrassing—but it is often left in such a depleted state that no one complains about it, and there's not much benefit from it.

Booth noted that schools typically retain arts learning in some form, but often in such a diluted state that the quality and benefits are tenuous. Standardized testing and a global focus on STEM subjects place tremendous pressure on schools, which can invariably undermine attention to and resources for the arts.

The current approach is not working, asserted Dr. Peter O'Connor¹¹ (New Zealand), but global forces are driving the conversation:

There's kind of a global repositioning of schools as factories. At the same time, everyone knows, it ain't working...all of this, which is driven internationally, a drive around STEM, literacy and numeracy, international testing, the destructive work of PISA—all of this is an internationally driven conversation.

O'Connor emphasized how global education discourse is so heavily centered on competitiveness in the global market that schools are increasingly treated like businesses or “factories.” Rapid advancements in technology continue to shift the way policymakers think about the skills and competencies required for employability and competitiveness in the global market. Corporate performance indicators are being applied to monitor education systems and treat them more like businesses (OECD, n.d.; Ra et al., 2019). This shift is characterized by what some education scholars and practitioners refer to as “the age of accountability,” and “the commodification of education” (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2001; Cuban, 2007; Hopmann, 2008).

Policymakers often rely heavily on evaluative tools that prioritize easily measurable and quantifiable outcomes, which can discourage investment in arts and creative learning, as Joan Parr¹² (Scotland) described:

[The exam system] is a barrier to creative learning. If our definition of creativity is around curiosity, imagination, open-mindedness—sitting down for three hours and writing essays isn't proving any of that...I understand that policymakers are massively accountable to everybody.

¹¹Director of the Centre for Arts and Social Transformation Auckland University, May 2023

¹²Head of Creative Learning and Young People at Creative Scotland, February 2023

These directors of education have to answer to parents. There's a lot of paperwork that they have to report on: 'What are you doing?' 'How can you evidence it?' 'What are your KPIs?' 'How many children have passed exams to such-and-such a level in your school?' etc., which makes them very risk averse.

Parr suggested that onerous monitoring and testing requirements not only stifled creative learning, but also made policymakers more risk-averse, especially toward programming that did not easily align with traditional accountability measures. Parr noted that demands for accountability, and the resulting emphasis on monitoring and examinations come from multiple angles.

Echoing this concern, Jessica Hamlin¹³ (USA) pointed to how societal values rooted in testing frameworks continue to marginalize arts education:

We're testing and reading and math. And hopefully, you have some arts too, but there's always going to be value in the way. And so I mean—this is a long time down the road—but unless we can rethink how we think about subject areas and standardized testing and what we value as a larger society for our future citizens, arts are always going to be at the fringe.

Together, these perspectives emphasize how systemic reliance on standardized assessments not only shapes educational priorities but also entrenches the peripheral status of the arts in public schools.

In South Korea, Hyejin Yang and Soyeon Kim¹⁴ explained that, while parents and students may appreciate the benefits of arts education, the pressure of university entrance exams often pushes arts learning to the margins. "[There is a] very competitive entry system to the university. Most of the parents ask their children to study mathematics and English and Korean and scientific subjects to gain more points on the test," noted Kim. Yang continued, "They understand that arts education and arts education activities are important and good, but they are not fully moved to put this in as a priority in their mind." Attention to tested subjects for entrance exams takes precedence. Even when families value the arts in principle, systemic pressures steer their focus toward subjects they perceive as more directly linked to academic and career success.

This focus on tested subjects reflects a larger structural challenge. Benchmarks for success are shaped by standardized tests which govern educational priorities from early schooling through university admissions. Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin¹⁵ (Global)

¹³ Professor and Co-Director of Art + Education at New York University

¹⁴ Korea Arts & Culture Education Service (KACES), March 2023

suggested that the assessment criteria for entry into higher education make it difficult to shift priorities within education systems at primary and secondary levels.

Think of the alignment between higher ed and K12, because that's one of the big problems that prevents things from changing in education. If you say, 'We want a lot of critical thinking and creativity,' but in fact the university entrance exam, or admissions, or courses, don't care about that, it will not happen. Because teachers are very responsible, and they want their students to succeed.

Competition for entry into higher education heavily influences how parents, students, and teachers view the purpose and priorities of education. Vincent-Lancrin noted that pressure on students, combined with teachers' commitment to supporting their success on exams, leaves little room to focus on soft skills such as creativity.

The global turn toward standardized tests has permeated national education systems. These tests typically assess that which is easily measurable, prioritizing math, science, and literacy. These priorities then shape funding, policy, curricula, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, parents, and students. Ultimately, they create a narrow definition of success, one in which arts education is largely overlooked.

¹⁵ Senior Analyst and Deputy Head of Division at the Organisation of Co-operation and Development (OECD), May 2024

1.3 Misaligned Policy and Practice

The hyperfocus on standardized testing does not exist in isolation; it is reinforced by broader policy trends that prioritize subjects most visible in international comparisons. As governments strive to improve their standings on global benchmarks, investments increasingly favor math, science, and technology at the expense of arts education.

Policy prioritizes putting all of the money into going back to basics. How many times have you heard that in your newspapers? ‘Let’s get back to basics,’ ‘let’s improve the standards,’ ‘we’re worried that our students are not as good as the Singapore students in maths’ or whatever it is. So, every government, every province, state, county is going to put their money into what makes their school, or their system look better. And it’s not in having a better arts education. It’s about having better mathematics or science or technology skills. So, it’s a perception thing. And it’s also a money thing. It’s related to politics and assumptions about what is good education and what is the best way to create good education. — Ralph Buck¹⁶ (New Zealand, Global)

International comparisons across education systems drive global policymaking. Buck pointed to a trend of prioritizing “the basics,” focusing on math, science, and technological skills. These skills measured by standardized tests such as PISA carry a great deal of weight in shaping policy because they enable global comparisons. Arts education is generally in a subordinate position to STEM subjects in policymaking, which has implications for allotted time, resources, and funds.

In Hong Kong, for example, policy prescribes a comparably small percentage of time for arts education versus other subjects.

There is a very clear percentage of teaching time allocated to arts education [in Hong Kong]. It’s only 10 to 15 percent. Okay, it may sound very natural or normal when compared with language and science or STEM, or social science, humanities, but arts is really marginalized. Normally in primary and junior secondary they will have one to two lessons every week for music, and one to two lessons every week for visual arts. So, when I talk about one lesson, it is around 14 minutes, but the school has the autonomy to control this number, which means they can decrease it. —Bo Wah Leung¹⁷ (China, Global)

¹⁶ Head of Dance Studies at the University of Auckland, former Chair of the World Dance Alliance, May 2023

¹⁷ Professor of Music Education at the Education University of Hong Kong and President of International Society for Music Education (ISME), July 2023

Echoing the pressures tied to testing from the previous section, Leung explained that schools often reduced the time allotted to arts education in response to parental pressure to prioritize subjects that appear on standardized tests.

Even when policy moves in the direction of prioritizing arts education, there may be obstacles to implementation. Dr. Maninder Sarkaria¹⁸ (India) spoke highly about the intention of India's 2020 policy and its focus on holistic development in children. However, putting policy into practice proved difficult.

India has come out with the National Education Policy 2020. In that document, it is written beautifully in a very logical way that there are natural ways for educating a child. In their document, they have specially highlighted how art can be used in your pedagogy, to develop a particular skill in our children, so that the learning becomes interesting, the learning becomes enjoyable...So, it is very easy to say that, but practically, it's not that easy.

The challenge of implementing existing policies that are purportedly good on paper came up repeatedly in interviews across a variety of contexts.

In Chile, arts education is embedded in the compulsory curriculum from the early years. Yet the policy still falls short of ensuring access to quality learning, as Pablo Rojas Durán¹⁹ explained.

This scenario does not achieve the expected result. Those in charge of artistic teaching hours in kindergarten and primary education are not specialists, and the teacher training curricula for these levels the arts are not significant. Therefore, the hours devoted to the arts do not provide quality learning.

Policy that supports arts education in the classroom must also ensure the educators are trained to deliver the material. Effective training should support the development of teacher's own artistic skills, but just as critically, the ability to confidently foster the development of creative and artistic skills in their students.

However, ensuring teachers are well-prepared is only part of the challenge. Jeff M. Poulin²⁰ (USA, Global) described a disconnect between policy and what happens in classrooms, pointing to a lack of understanding among educators about how to interpret and implement policy in practice.

¹⁸ Director of the State Council of Educational Research and Training, April 2023

¹⁹ Director of Department of Artistic Education in the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, July 2023

²⁰ Founder and Managing Director, Creative Generation, June 2023

In the US, the biggest issue is that we have not effectively trained the arts educators, teaching artists, school community, organization, workforce, to [be able to] take learn from and employ—putting public policy into practice. Why? Because of their unfunded mandates, and a discord between the institutions that bring up the next generation of leaders, and those who are making the policies. In our federal education law, we have had the arts as part of the core curriculum, now one of the 17 well-rounded subjects, since 1994. Yet we have tremendous disparity of access to artistic, cultural, and creative learning... A lot of thought is put into our federal policies and a lot of guidance. But frankly, what it does is it allocates money, and it's up to people to spend that money in the right ways to fulfill that mission.

Good policy is only as good as its implementation, underscoring the need for it to be communicated to educators in ways that support practical application in the classroom.

Getting strong support for arts education into policy is part of the story, but strong policy alone is not enough. Implementation falters due to limited funds, time, resources, and critically, insufficient teacher training, which is the focus of the next section. Educators may also be unaware of existing policies or lack the tools to put them into practice. Ultimately, policies are only as effective as their interpretation and the actions they produce in classrooms.

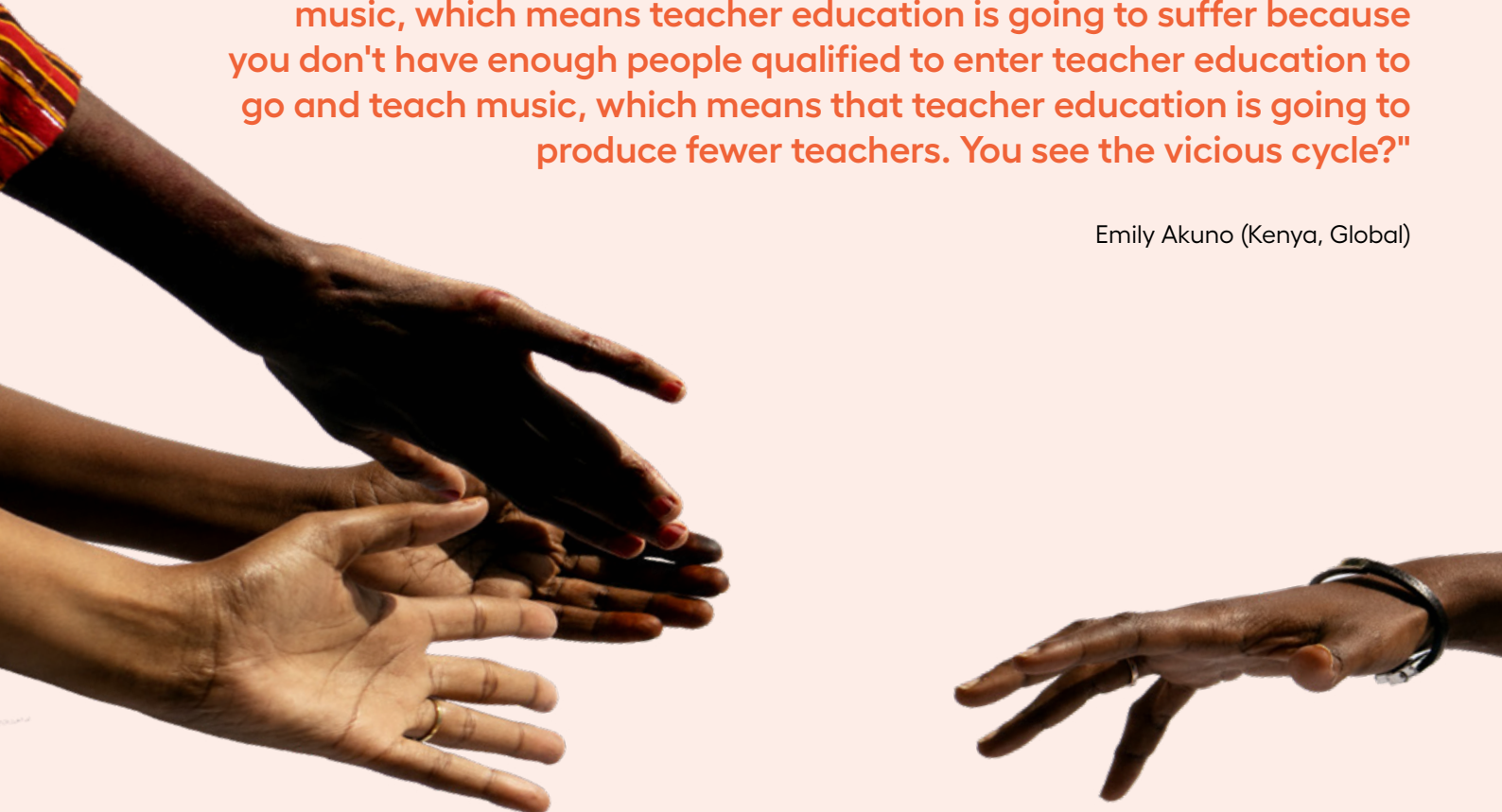
A shortage of trained teachers leads to reduced demand and fewer institutional offerings, which further weakens the pipeline for future arts educators, creating a compounding problem that feeds on itself.

"The key weakness now is the quality of the teaching. Unless that improves, any research will not demonstrate the kind of results we hope for...As a result, the curriculum is poorly delivered and is in danger of being cut. Poor teacher training leads to poor teaching and learning, posing an existential threat to the future of arts education in schools."

Yvette Hardie (South Africa, Global)

"There have been schools that really wanted the arts in the curriculum, but there were not enough trained teachers...This means fewer students coming out of primary school who go and study music in secondary school, which means fewer secondary schools offering music, which means teacher education is going to suffer because you don't have enough people qualified to enter teacher education to go and teach music, which means that teacher education is going to produce fewer teachers. You see the vicious cycle?"

Emily Akuno (Kenya, Global)



1.4 Teacher Training Shortcomings

While policy sets the foundation, teachers are meant to bring it to life in classrooms. Yet across contexts, participants pointed to insufficient teacher training as a major barrier to effective arts education. This challenge is deeply intertwined with the issues discussed so far: limited funding, the pressures of standardized testing, and misalignment between policy and practice. Without adequate training for teachers, even strong policies and curricula often fail to translate into meaningful learning experiences for students.

Peter O'Connor²¹ (New Zealand) reflected on the ways that teacher training in the arts has shifted in recent years. He connected the decline in arts specialist training to the growing emphasis on assessments and school rankings.

What we've ended up with is that our initial teacher education is focused on getting teachers able to administer assessment and rank kids. Everything else falls away... I teach our one-year post-grad course. These are kids that do a one-year course so that they can become a teacher, and they only get eight hours of the arts.

In New Zealand, new generalist teachers receive just eight hours of training in arts education over the course of their preparation. This minimal exposure not only limits teachers' confidence and capacity to teach the arts, but also affects the quality of students' learning experiences and their long-term engagement with the arts.

Yvette Hardie²² (South Africa, Global) described poor teacher training as the most significant obstacle to effective arts education.

The key weakness now is the quality of the teaching. Unless that improves, any research will not demonstrate the kind of results we hope for...As a result, the curriculum is poorly delivered and is in danger of being cut. Poor teacher training leads to poor teaching and learning, posing an existential threat to the future of arts education in schools.

Hardie's comment points to a core dilemma: without strong foundational training, arts educators are ill-equipped to deliver meaningful instruction, which could put entire programs at risk of being deprioritized or eliminated. Emily Akuno²³ (Kenya, Global) also emphasized this notion, by highlighting how poor teacher training is not an isolated issue, but part of a "vicious cycle" involving systemic underinvestment and diminishing opportunities across the pipeline:

²¹ Director of the Centre for Arts and Social Transformation Auckland University, May 2023

²² President of ASSITEJ International and National Director of ASSITEJ South Africa, April 2023

²³ Primary Professor of Music at Technical University of Kenya and former ISME President, August 2023

There have been schools that really wanted the arts in the curriculum, but there were not enough trained teachers... This means fewer students coming out of primary school who go and study music in secondary school, which means fewer secondary schools offering music, which means teacher education is going to suffer because you don't have enough people qualified to enter teacher education to go and teach music, which means that teacher education is going to produce fewer teachers. You see the vicious cycle?

A shortage of trained teachers leads to reduced demand and fewer institutional offerings, which further weakens the pipeline for future arts educators, creating a compounding problem that feeds on itself.

Pablo Rojas Durán²⁴ (Chile) echoed the idea of a self-perpetuating cycle, but pointed to standardized exams as a key driver. He explained how the structure of national assessments marginalizes the arts from both schooling and teacher training systems.

There is a vicious cycle with the current system, because the entire system is in place for exams. There are two big exam moments for children: the intermediary and before entering university. Both of these exams focus on these three categories: mathematics, science, and language. Art is not there. This means art is not relevant for the university, the teachers, or the training of the teachers. The arts are not valued as relevant by teacher training institutions and therefore, in the type of teaching they develop... Several studies carried out in the last 10 years in our country reach the same conclusion, that close to 70% of the teachers in charge of teaching artistic subjects in public schools in the first 6 years of schooling do not have adequate training.

While several interviewees emphasized how teachers are under pressure to prepare students for high-stakes exams, Rojas Durán pointed to teacher training institutions themselves as key players in reinforcing the marginalization of the arts. Because the arts are excluded from assessment systems that shape educational priorities, they are deemed irrelevant by universities and teacher education programs. This devaluation trickles down, resulting in a lack of adequate preparation for the majority of teachers tasked with delivering arts education in Chile's public schools.

Teacher training is intricately tied with the broader structural challenges of providing arts education in public schools, including limited funding, standardized testing pressures, and misaligned policy. It also reflects and reinforces the broader societal

²⁴ Director of Department of Artistic Education in the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, July 2023

valuation (or devaluation) of the arts. When the arts are not seen as essential, investments in preparing teachers to teach them are deprioritized, creating a feedback loop that undermines both the quality and status of arts education within societies.

1.5 Low Valuation of the Arts

The challenges explored thus far all point to a deeper, more pervasive issue: the low value placed on the arts by societies. Across interviews and surveys, participants from diverse professions, regions, and economic contexts consistently highlighted the difficulty of shifting mindsets that place little or no importance to the arts. Deeply rooted norms, attitudes, and beliefs often position the arts as non-essential, making it challenging to secure sustained support for arts education. As Ellen Winner²⁵ (USA) noted, prevailing cultural attitudes largely dismiss the value of the arts:

I think the biggest obstacle is that our culture doesn't really value [the arts]. There's only one other thing that's extra-academic, and that's athletics, but athletics is never questioned. Sometimes people say it's there for teambuilding, but nobody questions why it's important. But the arts: everybody considers arts a frill.

Winner asserted that athletics, like the arts, operate outside of traditional academics but are rarely questioned in their importance, reflecting broader cultural attitudes. In societies like the United States, sports receive consistent investment and reverence, while the arts are often treated as non-essential. This disparity underscores embedded societal norms that shape policy decisions, funding allocations, and school-level priorities.

Societal attitudes and mindsets that place a low value on the arts are not new, and may stem from historical traditions. Throughout history artists have operated outside of traditional roles and norms. For example, Helena Jiu Lee²⁶ (China) reflected on the historically low status ascribed to performing artists in China:

In Chinese ancient history, the opera singer had a very low social position. They were considered artists but not treated respectfully. That's a long historical tradition--1000 years. So, if a kid says, 'I want to be an engineer' or 'a scientist' in the future, they'll always be respectable, but [not] if a kid says, 'I want to be an actor.'

²⁵ Professor Emerita of Psychology at Boston College and Senior Research Associate at Project Zero, July 2023

²⁶ Youth and Arts Specialist, Founder of Helena Academy of Drama and English [HADE], June 2023

Attitudes or mindsets that devalue arts education can also stem from religious interpretations or cultural norms within communities. Dr. Mohammad Momani²⁷ (Jordan) noted that among some communities, “Music and theatre occasionally encounters resistance stemming from particular religious interpretations.” As a result, teachers, students, and parents may be hesitant to engage in arts education activities or classes in some settings.

In many contexts, careers in the arts are seen as unstable or financially risky, reinforcing skepticism about the value of arts education. Parents and communities may place little value in arts education because they do not consider employment as a professional artist as a respectable or desirable pathway for their children. Negative connotations about the unpredictable and transient life of an artist are deeply entrenched in societies, as Dr. Emily Akuno²⁸ (Kenya, Global) noted:

[Start] with the community's perception of the arts. And that perception has to do with the paycheck. And sustaining a livelihood. And the notion that if you are bright and clever, you should be going to do medicine... And I still think some of it is stemmed partly from traditions, the traditional musician was kind of a “trooper doer,” you know, a traveling minstrel, and did not have a fixed fee. Even if they did, they would never be rich. They had to rely on the benevolence of their host. And that doesn't look very lucrative.

Parental and societal concern about children's futures often center as much on social respectability as on economic prosperity. The perception that the arts cannot offer stable or sustainable livelihoods discourages serious investment in arts education, both at home and in schools.

Moses Watatua²⁹ (Kenya) characterized parents' low valuation of the arts as a “chicken and egg” dilemma:

It's a chicken and egg story, because if [the arts] are not funded, people won't make a living out of it outside school. And of course, then it goes to people not paying for concerts, etc. Parents would say, ‘but what will you do with this thing you're studying, so that you can make a living out of it?’ If people don't consider it as a viable career, then it is not considered important in schools.

Watatua's “chicken and egg” dilemma underscores how broader societal attitudes toward the arts are both shaped by and reflected within education systems. When schools treat arts education as peripheral, it not only shapes student and parent perceptions, but also influences the priorities of future teachers and teacher training institutions.

²⁷ Head of the Training and Supervision Department in the Ministry of Education

²⁸ Primary Professor of Music at Technical University of Kenya and former ISME President, August 2023

²⁹ Founder of Harmony Kenya Foundation, August 2023

As Pablo Rojas Durán³⁰ (Chile) explained, teacher training institutions may also perpetuate attitudes that relegate arts education to lower priority.

The low valuation of the arts is a relevant factor in teacher training institutions, and therefore, in the type of thinking that teachers develop. This devaluation is transmitted to the management teams of educational establishments and the educational community.

Treating arts education as unimportant or of lesser value within teacher training institutions affects the mindsets and skillsets that teachers bring into schools. When future teachers are not equipped to see the arts as integral to student learning and development, they are less likely to meaningfully integrate it into their classrooms. Over time, these attitudes become embedded within schools, further entrenching the marginalization of the arts across education systems.

This disconnect is visible in teacher preparation pathways, where arts education often attracts fewer students and receives less institutional emphasis. Cathy LaSamballo³¹ (Philippines), who teaches training courses for future arts educators, explained that far fewer students choose to specialize in arts, and that those that do often face fewer economic pressures from their parents.

A lot of things are discouraging for art teachers. The people who are able to pursue teaching art are people who can somewhat afford things, because they are not pressured by parents to take the stereotype of Filipinos to become a nurse or to become a flight stewardess. And those are all, for me anyway, very understandable [things] for parents to pressure their children into, especially if they're at the poverty line. That's why a lot of [teachers in training] who I meet are from a middle-class background or a lower-middle class background, because their family can afford to take the quote unquote "risk" of having their child pick art.

Parental pressures on children to pursue lucrative career paths extend to attitudes about teacher training. LaSamballo asserted that students who choose to pursue teacher training specializing in art generally those who come from more affluent families, as the choice to teach art over other subjects is considered risky and less financially stable. Practical considerations about future earnings weigh heavily on education and career decisions. Thus pathways to arts education, both for students and for future teachers, are often shaped socioeconomic privilege, further entrenching inequities in who participates in and benefits from arts learning.

³⁰ Director of Department of Artistic Education in the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage, July 2023

³¹ Founder of ArtGuro, January 2024

While socioeconomic privilege often shapes who participates in and benefits from arts learning in the first place, challenges extend beyond access. Even when policies and school schedules reserve time for arts learning, devaluing mindsets often undermine its delivery, with that time frequently redirected toward subjects perceived as more essential for academic success. As Marianina Van Deventer³² (Namibia) explained,

I would say our biggest obstacle is the fact that people think the arts are not needed. I find that we have a struggle with the parents and especially [school] principals who do not see arts as important. They often use [time reserved for arts classes] as a support period for subjects like mathematics or English. And I realize this is a worldwide phenomenon, it's not just here.

Van Deventer described a “worldwide phenomenon” where time reserved for arts education in public schools is repurposed for other subjects. Claudio Anjos³³ (Brazil), echoed this pattern, describing how even school leaders view the arts as expendable:

In the school curriculum, you have English, Mathematics, Chemistry—and everyone thinks that these subjects are more important than the arts. Within the art class, you can do anything. If you need to have some time for a discussion with the students about any topic, you dismiss the art teacher and use that space to discuss other subjects. Because even in the minds of the head teachers and principals' minds, art is not really necessary.

These reflections highlight how deeply undervaluation of the arts is entrenched within school leadership and operational decision-making, making it easy to sacrifice arts learning time for other perceived priorities.

While the marginalization of arts education stems in part from widespread societal perceptions about its value, it is also reinforced within education systems themselves. Within schools, the arts are often deprioritized through funding decisions, scheduling practices, and curriculum design, signaling to students and families that the arts are less important than other subjects. Teacher training institutions mirror these hierarchies, offering fewer opportunities and incentives for future educators to specialize in the arts. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle: fewer students pursue arts-focused pathways, fewer arts specialists are employed in schools, and the marginalization of the arts becomes further entrenched. Without deliberate intervention, this cycle continues to limit the role of the arts in public education systems and deepens inequities in access and opportunity.

³² Senior Education Officer at National Institute for Educational Development, February 2024

³³ President of the lochpe Foundation, April 2024

Problem Analysis Discussion

This section examined the exclusion and marginalization of arts education in public school systems globally by analyzing key obstacles identified by interviewees and survey respondents. Five primary, overlapping challenges emerged: (1) insufficient funds and resources, (2) the dominance of standardized testing, (3) misaligned or weak policies, (4) inadequate teacher training, and (5) the low societal valuation of the arts. These obstacles are not isolated; they are interdependent and cyclical, reinforcing each other over time, what Moses Watatua (Kenya) aptly described as a “chicken and egg” dilemma.

The problem of insufficient funds was identified in countries across different geographic regions and economic classifications. Respondents from high-income countries were just as likely to cite lack of funding as a major obstacle as respondents from low- and middle-income countries. This does not imply that the funding challenges across contexts are equivalent, that they stem from the same causes, or that access to arts education is comparable across settings. Nonetheless, a few common funding problems span different contexts. First, the absence of dedicated budgetary planning and structure for arts education hinders sustainable investment. Second, education budget cuts triggered by shifting political climates often disproportionately affect arts education. Third, governments’ emphasis on boosting economic competitiveness and labor market outcomes through education systems frequently relegates the arts to a lower status. Although this trend is evident across economic contexts, the intensified focus on generating economic returns in low- and middle-income countries places even greater strain on potential resources for arts education in public schools.

The global fixation on standardized testing compounds these pressures. Difficulties with quantifying and measuring arts learning contribute to the marginalization of arts education in both assessments and policy priorities. Public education systems often prioritize subjects that yield quantifiable results on standardized tests, where the arts are generally absent. Growing demands for accountability at global and national levels further normalize a “teach to the test” and “prepare for the test” approach among administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Policy challenges reflect, and sometimes exacerbate, this dynamic. Even where arts education is formally recognized in national policies, implementation often falters under the weight of accountability measures and resource constraints. Demands from parents and teachers to focus on tested subjects, and a lack of trained teachers to fulfill policy requirements were common barriers. Without deliberate support and sustained investment, well-intentioned policies remain aspirational rather than transformative.

Teacher training systems also mirror and reinforce these broader challenges. Insufficient funding for arts education limits the supply of qualified teachers, while policies that deprioritize the arts reduce both student enrollment in arts courses and the availability of those courses. As fewer students engage in arts education, the pipeline of future arts educators narrows. Meanwhile, the low societal valuation of the arts leads teacher training institutions, particularly for generalist teachers, to place minimal emphasis on arts instruction. Inadequately prepared teachers may avoid teaching the arts altogether or deliver poor-quality instruction, further undermining students' experiences. Over time, these dynamics weaken the overall quality and consistency of arts education in public schools.

Across all these factors runs a deeper thread: widespread societal mindsets that dismiss the value of the arts and arts education. Skills linked to financial success are prioritized, while the arts are often viewed as nonessential. These views are not limited to governments or policymakers; rather, they are embedded throughout society, reinforced by parents, teachers, teacher training institutions, and school leadership alike.

The next section focuses on promising practices and potential levers of change to address and push back against the several challenges and obstacles described above. Interviewees and survey respondents identified strategies and drivers of change that offer a foundation for revitalizing arts education within public school systems.

And the most powerful argument for the arts? EXPERIENCING THEM.

"At the end of the day, they [donors and other influential stakeholders] came to one performance. They heard one story that the parents told them, and they financed it. And they never even asked afterward about an impact report. I have so often had this experience...I'm not saying we shouldn't have evidence, but I think it is an illusion. In a modern way, evidence is just to witness, to observe rigor by talking to parents, to children."

Werner Bachstein (Austria, Global)

"The most remarkable thing is a parent—sometimes it's a father—who witnesses his daughter on stage playing a character—playing a role. And he'd never seen his daughter with that extraordinary power, voice and physical projection. And at times, fathers are reduced to tears—witnessing his daughter that's not allowed that voice sometimes in their home space."

Gerard Bester (South Africa)



Image Source: International Teaching Artist Collaborative (ITAC)



Image Source: Orchestre à L'École; Photo Credit - (c) OAE Caroline Bottaro

"Getting teachers, district leaders, and principals who have not experienced theatre in their life gives them the experience—the experiential learning—that gets them to feel. And once they feel it, they get it...I recently did a showcase with six schools... And afterward the district leader said, 'Drama education is so important. Drama education *is crucial*.'" [original emphasis]

William Yip (China)

"It's that kind of thing where you would have a school leader visit from another school where there was pretty much no music, and come in and think, 'Oh, my goodness, okay, I get it, I get it.'"

Roz De Vile (UK)

2. DRIVERS/LEVERS OF CHANGE: Exploring Promising Practices and Opportunities for the Inclusion of Arts in Public Education Systems



Image Source: El Sistema Greece

FIGURE 7: *Key Drivers of Change*

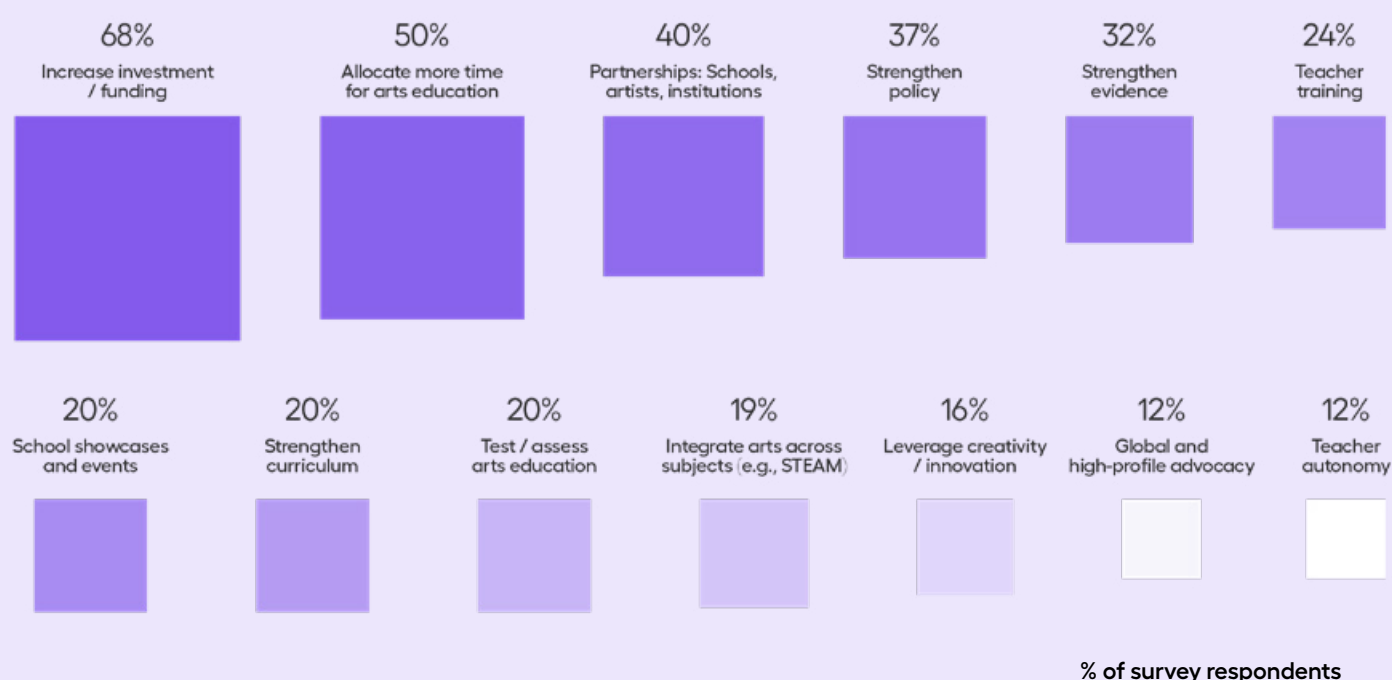
This section presents findings in response to research question 2: ***What are promising practices and potential levers of change at the global, regional, or local level for the inclusion, promotion, and consideration of arts education as fundamental for whole child development within public education systems?*** It focuses on promising practices and potential levers of change for the consideration, promotion, and inclusion of arts education as fundamental within public education systems.

The key drivers of change highlighted in this section are illustrated in Figure 7 above. This section is structured according to the various ecological levels of change: examining the primary needs and promising practices for the inclusion of arts in public schools at the local, the regional, and the global levels. Bottom-up advocacy, or efforts originating from individuals and communities who develop innovations and movements from the ground-up, drives change at the local level. At the regional level, both top-down and middle-out approaches are important levers for change. Top-down approaches include efforts originating by those in power, especially governments, while middle-out approaches generally include efforts initiated by those in the middle of the system, such as school leaders, civil society organizations, or philanthropic intermediaries. Driving change at the global level requires leveraging and strengthening the existing ecosystem for research, knowledge, and advocacy.

Figure 8 below illustrates the top needs that study participants identified for the inclusion of arts education in public education systems. The needs outlined in Figure 8 are threaded throughout the key drivers of change described in this section.

Following the analysis of promising practices and opportunities at various ecological levels, this segment includes a sub-section examining research question 2a: ***What are some of the most promising rationales for integrating arts education to improve whole child development outcomes including academic learning, psychosocial support, social emotional learning, and/or future employment?*** It explores links between arts education to whole child development outcomes, including academic learning, psychosocial support, and future employment.

FIGURE 8: *Driving Needs for Inclusion of Arts in Public Education Systems*



2.1 Local Levers: Cultivating Demand from the Bottom-Up

Low appreciation of arts education was a key obstacle that threaded throughout the problem analysis section above. At the local level, (e.g., within schools, communities, and districts), participants pointed to the need to cultivate and leverage demand for arts education from community stakeholders. Parents are key drivers in generating and sustaining demand for arts in public education, notes Eric Booth³⁴ (USA):

In this society, if parents want it and demand it, it will happen...In places where there is a public demand—a particular school that has a lineage and an identity—a school where the arts are taken seriously—[arts education] will not go away...The people who drive the arts education choices are the families.

³⁴ Owner of Everyday Arts, Inc., International Arts Learning Consultant, Freelance Teaching Artist, January 2023

Capitalist societies function as services, including education, and respond to market demand. Parents and caregivers influence local demand for arts education through school selection, taxes, votes, involvement in school-level or regional advocacy and/or governance, and through the messages about the value of arts learning that they transmit to their children.

As discussed in the problem analysis section, parents can contribute to deterring schools, teachers, and children from focusing on the arts. The other side of the coin shows the pivotal role that parents and families also play in safeguarding the arts in response to shifting policies and school leadership. Strong arts programs that are embedded into the lineage of a school and its identity cultivate and sustain demand from parents and families.

Exemplary schools can generate an ecosystem of demand at the community level. Roz De Vile³⁵ (UK) emphasized the influential power of one such school that Music Masters has long worked with. The school's celebrated music program is woven into the school's identity.

We've been in National Primary School for 15 years, and [our music program] is such a tightly interwoven part of the school, that you couldn't even think about removing it. It is their identity... It's that kind of thing where you would have a school leader visit from another school where there was pretty much no music, and come in and think, 'Oh, my goodness, okay, I get it, I get it.'

Showcasing exemplary arts education programs to policymakers and school leadership from other schools can generate demand for thriving arts programs in other schools and communities.

Witnessing arts education in action can leave long-lasting impressions that influence how local stakeholders perceive, value, and support the arts. As Werner Bachstein³⁶ (Austria, Global) reflected, the power of direct experience can outweigh formal reporting in swaying influential stakeholders, such as ministers, dignitaries, and major donors:

At the end of the day, they came to one performance. They heard one story that the parents told them, and they financed it. And they never even asked afterward about an impact report. I have so often had this experience... I'm not saying we shouldn't have evidence, but I think it is an illusion. In a modern way, evidence is just to witness, to observe rigor by talking to parents, to children.

³⁵ Chief Executive Officer at Music Masters, May 2023

³⁶ Director of the Community Arts Lab at Porticus and Chairman of the Community Arts Network, March 2023

Bachstein suggested that experiential encounters are more powerful in stimulating high-level support from decision-makers than traditional forms of evidence like impact evaluations.

Creating opportunities for education stakeholders to experience arts education for themselves is a crucial lever for change. William Yip³⁷ (China) described the value of the “experiential learning” that school showcases provide, particularly for individuals who have never had experiences with the arts or arts education before.

Getting teachers, district leaders, and principals who have not experienced theatre in their life gives them the experience—the experiential learning—that gets them to feel. And once they feel it, they get it...I recently did a showcase with six schools...And afterward the district leader said, “Drama education is so important. Drama education *is crucial*.” [original emphasis]

School showcases and classroom and performances facilitate experiential evidence that can shift the hearts and minds of decision-makers about the value of arts education. They can also shift perceptions in parents, as Gerard Bester³⁸ (South Africa) described,

I think plays are an important part of the work we do...seeing parents who suddenly believe in what we're doing. The most remarkable thing is a parent—sometimes it's a father—who witnesses his daughter on stage playing a character—playing a role. And he'd never seen his daughter with that extraordinary power, voice and physical projection. And at times, fathers are reduced to tears—witnessing his daughter that's not allowed that voice sometimes in their home space.

Witnessing arts education in action can leave long-lasting impressions that can influence the ways that local stakeholders, including parents, teachers, school leadership, and decision-makers perceive, value, and support arts education. Opportunities for local stakeholders to witness strong arts programs, school showcases, performances, and exhibits, provide crucial experiential evidence, that holds strong potential to cultivate local demand.

³⁷ Founder and Director of William Theatre and Senior Director of Creative Contents at Ximalaya FM, August 2023

³⁸ Head of Windybrow Arts Centre, March 2023

2.2 Regional Levers: Top-Down and Middle-Out Approaches to Stimulating Demand

Widening the lens to the regional level, (e.g., within countries, among adjacent countries and/or countries with historical ties), participants pointed to pathways for generating systemic change. Top-down government investment in developing national plans and supporting them with funds and materials provides vital opportunities for arts education. Yet top-down investment is not the only pathway to successful arts education programming. Middle-out processes also contribute to generating an ecosystem of demand. Programs that meaningfully link local artists and cultural institutions to local schools emerged as particularly vital, as did the role of public-private partnerships, philanthropy, and regional intergovernmental organizations.

The Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI) exemplifies the importance of intergovernmental organizations in stimulating regional demand. OEI is comprised of 23 countries across Ibero-America and provides a platform for ministers and public policymakers to meet. Holding arts and cultural education as one of its strategic focal areas, OEI “strengthens the presence of arts and culture in the curricula of countries of the region through technical assistance, teacher education, and digital spaces and meetings...OEI has produced collective reflection texts that have been the basis of curricular reforms” said Natalia Armijos Velasco, Director General of Culture for OEI. Intergovernmental organizations such as OEI drive opportunities for the inclusion of the arts in public education through lobbying, disseminating advocacy messages across their network of member states, and country-level investment and technical support.

At the country-level, governmental frameworks that provide promote and facilitate partnerships with local artists and institutions support quality arts education in schools. Hélder Pais³⁹ (Portugal) described intentional investment by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to establish these kinds of partnerships.

Schools must elaborate their own cultural plan that involves local artists and arts entities. It's something that schools appreciate because sometimes schools have the theatre across the street, but they've never talked with them. We establish these kinds of bridges between institutions.

The MoE in Portugal facilitated a top-down and localized approach which provides clear guidance applicable to all schools, while requiring individualized “cultural plans” that consider school-level interests and local institutions. Facilitating collaboration and networks between schools and local arts institutions that might not otherwise interact ostensibly enhances the offerings of both. Partnerships with local arts institutions and artists can also fill gaps in teaching staff, teacher training, and curriculum.

³⁹ Head of Curriculum Development for the Ministry of Education, March 2024

Aleksi Valta⁴⁰ (Finland) pointed another example of technical frameworks and guidance supported by the government to enhance arts and cultural education and bolster partnerships.

What binds us together is the children's quality manual, which frames how children's culture should be operated and provides quality standards...The most important way to get to schools is through that system. It's especially important for the private sector, because I think that's where they get paid the most during daytime hours.

Public-private partnerships bolster programming within local arts institutions that can also enhance their footprint and vitality in communities. Partnerships can also provide meaningful direct and indirect income for local artists and institutions. However, disparities in access to arts education remain, particularly between urban and rural settings. Even in countries with robust national frameworks, rural schools often face challenges in implementing comprehensive cultural education plans due to limited infrastructure and resources. As Aleksi Valta also noted,

All the bigger cities are already up and running with a program. My rough estimation is that 90% of Finnish school children have participated in the cultural education plan. So the situation is fairly good, but the smaller villages mainly in very rural areas really can't, because they don't have art institutions, they probably don't have artists, so it's really hard for them to build a program that starts from grade zero up until ninth grade.

This highlights the need for targeted investment tailored to specific needs of rural communities, such as mobile programs, community-based initiatives, and digital solutions, to support access in underserved regions.

In another national context, a government initiative in Ireland has expanded access to performing arts in school communities. While the Prime Minister may have been primarily motivated by economic considerations, the initiative has sparked meaningful projects that are transforming the educational landscape, noted Michael Finneran⁴¹ (Ireland):

Our Prime Minister came up with this government initiative of Creative Ireland. The cynic in me thinks it was to almost commodify and capitalize upon Ireland's great tradition and creativity. But then the pandemic struck, and Creative Ireland had to pivot. Now it has really become about youth and wellbeing and has funded and seeded a

⁴⁰ Executive Director of the Finnish Association of Children's Cultural Centers, May 2023

⁴¹ Head of Drama and Theatre Studies at Mary Immaculate College, May 2023

huge number of projects...which bring performing arts and creative arts provision into the school community. They're definitely having an effect on the ecology.

Within the Creative Ireland framework, schools are paired with an arts and culture professionals who collaborate with the school develop and implement a “Creative School Plan” to enhance the integration of arts across curricula (Creative Ireland, 2024). While Finneran noted his cynicism about “commodifying and capitalizing” on creativity, rationales about the economic benefits that the arts can provide can also be useful levers for change, as the next section will cover in further detail.

Substantial government investment in arts education, while ideal, is not a scenario that applies to all regions. Low- and middle-income countries may be constrained by a lack of resources and by economic development policy priorities. In Ghana, Adwoah Amoah⁴² described ways that their arts organization worked around the lack of government investment in arts education.

Funding is definitely not coming from the government. We're working with privately sourced funds, so it's not long-term...Governments will hop on when they are ready, but until that happens, we will keep making these interventions no matter how small they are, because you never know who you are encountering and the effects or the impact that it could have on that particular person at that given time.

While private funds were often short-term, Amoah suggested that they were still powerful levers for change that create an environment for governments to “hop on when they are ready.” Philanthropy and private funding can play a meaningful role in stimulating change from the middle-out by, for example, empowering local cultural institutions to initiate arts education programming, partnerships, and networks with schools.

At the regional level, top-down investment from government is a powerful lever of change. Yet it is not a consistent or reliable source across contexts. Even in settings with a strong history of governmental support, political and economic policies and priorities are changeable. Generating an ecosystem of demand also requires middle-out interventions, including investment and establishing networks between local artists and arts institutions. Private funders and philanthropists can play an important role in spurring initiatives and filling critical gaps. Advocacy and initiatives must be responsive to the economic, political, and social environment and needs of the context.

⁴² Artist and Co-Director of the Foundation for Contemporary Art Ghana, May 2023

2.3 Global Levers: Leveraging a Global Ecosystem for Research, Best Practices, and Advocacy

Levers of change at the global level rely on building and strengthening research, networks, and advocacy. Determining levers of change that can shift the attention and prioritization of arts education at the global level is challenging because social, political, and environmental factors are so context-specific, and global shifts happen slowly.

Academics and independent researchers play an important role in building and expanding the evidence that can shape advocacy and policy arguments. Robust evidence is an ongoing demand from policymakers. Hanna Koskimies⁴³ (Finland) pointed to the necessity of continuing to conduct robust research to bolster rationales for the importance of arts education, even in a setting with a history of strong support:

Policymakers need research. We need to have more evidence, even here [in Finland], about the importance of arts and culture education, even though there is already some evidence—to make it even stronger...We have a Nordic network for arts education. I shared our [research] which we did a few years ago so that [other countries] could build on that.

Koskimies highlighted the importance of research networks to exchange knowledge and build on each other's research to continue expanding the existing evidence.

Effective forums for knowledge exchange are essential to get cutting edge research and evidence-based practices into the hands of those who can take it up. The research community must also continue to build and exchange evidence and practice-based knowledge that speaks to the evolving needs of young people, and that amplifies marginalized voices. "The research community has been highly effective," said Jeff M. Poulin⁴⁴ (USA, Global). "...The problem is that we don't have effective forums for exchanging knowledge—so what was once revolutionary in 1999 is certainly not meeting the needs of young people today."

Forums such as international conferences, publications, and networks are key mechanisms for disseminating and sharing knowledge globally, but their efficacy has limitations. "As long as they are exclusive. They are not effective," cautioned Poulin. Embedded hierarchies and exclusive practices are pervasive within knowledge

⁴³ Senior Ministerial Advisor for the Ministry of Education and Culture, April 2024

⁴⁴ Founder and Managing Director, Creative Generation, June 2023

sharing forums, limiting the perspectives and voices at the table. Exclusivity can take many forms, including membership fees and requirements, publication paywalls, the privileging of the English and other colonial languages, and prohibitively high costs of travel and attendance to convenings including visa requirements and restrictions. These kinds of exclusive practices perpetuate hierarchies of knowledge that largely privilege the Global North over the Global South, research from well-resourced institutions over knowledge from practitioners on the ground, and perspectives from older generations over the voices of young people.

Ensuring that all voices are represented in knowledge forums is a monumental task, but one that advocates must continue to champion. This includes elevating perspectives and experiences of those who are only beginning to imagine and establish arts education within their local contexts. As Michael Anderson⁴⁵ (Australia) emphasized:

There are places where arts education isn't offered at all, and we need to be thinking about how we can support those places to implement high quality arts education. UNESCO and OECD providing support for arts education is really positive—It creates a sense that this is something that matters and should matter to all of their member states.

Although more work is needed to bring underrepresented voices and regions into global conversations, international institutions that convene diverse stakeholders push the field forward. By amplifying the importance of arts education and responding to broader political, social, and economic dynamics, they help shape the global advocacy agenda.

International events, in particular, serve as important levers for change by bringing countries together to reflect on the role of arts education in addressing rising challenges such as hate speech, segregation, and radicalism. Minister João Costa⁴⁶ (Portugal) described the value of the arts as extending beyond the individual child and pointed to the broader implications for societies and for the world in the face of increasing attacks on democracy and fake news.

[Arts education is] critical for human development, and especially in the times we are living, the time of fake news, the time of attacks on democracy. That is why I have been advocating for these international events. Those who are afraid of democracy start by

⁴⁵ Professor of Creativity and Arts Education in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at The University of Sydney and Co-Director of the CREATE Centre, May 2023

⁴⁶ Minister of Education, Portugal (2022 – 2024), April 2024

chasing artists, journalists, and writers, because they know that the arts are powerful. The arts wake us up. They make us see alternatives—that we are not sentenced to just whatever someone presents to us as the ultimate truth. And, and so in times in which we see this rise of populism, this rise of attacks on democracy, the growth of hate speech, of new types of segregation, of radicalism, the arts can play a major role.

Costa's remarks underscore why global forums on arts education matter, not only to improve learning, but to protect democratic values, challenge disinformation, and foster critical thinking. In a moment marked by rising authoritarianism and social division, the arts remind us that alternative futures are possible. International institutions and events are uniquely positioned to elevate this message, making the case that arts education is not just beneficial, but essential for building more just, open, and resilient societies.

The following subsection features promising rationales for integrating arts education in public schools, which emphasize the value of the arts for whole child development at the individual-level as well as holistic human development at community and societal-levels.

2.A. Promising Rationales for Integrating Arts Education into Public Schools



FIGURE 9: *Promising Rationales*

Intrinsic and instrumental rationales provide compelling justifications for integrating arts education to improve whole child development outcomes.

Intrinsic rationales elevate the importance of arts education for the inherent value that the arts offer in and of themselves, regardless of their effects in other areas. “What the arts deliver is unique to the arts. However, it is precisely this unique aspect that is of great value to the individual and to society” (Vuyk, 2010, p. 174). These rationales focus on the unique experiences and skills that the arts facilitate as valuable for their own sake, rather than the utility of arts education for developing skills external to the arts. On the other hand, instrumental rationales focus on the external benefits and transferable skills arts education offers to other areas. These rationales highlight ways that arts education contribute to other outcomes, including labor market outcomes to support economic growth as well as whole child development outcomes, such as academic and social emotional learning.

Instrumental rationales in support of arts education tend to prioritize the transfer effects of arts education to other domains. “The dominating arguments do not focus on art for art's sake. They focus on social development. Equality. Learning outcomes. These arguments get much more priority than working on arts for itself,” noted Jantien Westerveld⁴⁷ (Netherlands). Educators, program developers, and NGOs such as Méér Muziek in de Klas, which provide arts education programming in public schools, are often pressed to demonstrate the instrumental benefits of arts education in other areas.

While acknowledging the intrinsic nature of art than spans human experience across cultures, geographies, and time, this section primarily features instrumental rationales. This sub-section highlights promising opportune and timely rationales linked to whole child development outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 9 above. These include rationales that connect the art education to citizenship and social cohesion; psychosocial and mental health; future employment and 21st century skills, and academic outcomes.

Yet instrumental and intrinsic rationales are not mutually exclusive. In many countries, they are deployed in tandem to serve both economic and societal goals. Kwok Kian-Woon⁴⁸ (Singapore) explained,

There are two sort of narratives going on, right? One very strong narrative is in relation to economic development [tied to] cultural industries, the creative economy... Now, the other narrative is also very strong for good reason. It's got to do with national development, social development, social cohesion, having a strong cultural life, national identity, developing the soft skills.

⁴⁷ Director of Méér Muziek in de Klas, February 2023

⁴⁸ Vice Chancellor at the University of the Arts, June 2023

Intrinsic value of the arts

Intrinsic rationales elevate the importance of arts education for the inherent value that the arts offer in and of themselves, regardless of their effects in other areas.

"The danger is that some smart superintendent is going to say, 'If the only reason we're teaching the arts is to improve X, let's just teach X directly.' The other danger is that it marginalizes the arts by making them a handmaiden to something else."

Ellen Winner (USA)

Instrumental rationales can help attract funding, political will, and institutional support. A word of caution is warranted, however, to avoid relying too heavily on rationales that focus exclusively on the "transfer effects" of arts education, as they could inadvertently undermine its intrinsic value.



Image Source: Music Masters; Photo Credit - Sisi Burn

Similarly, Man Cheung⁴⁹ (China) emphasized the strategic role of arts education in reinforcing national identity:

[Policymakers] recognize art—and in particular performing arts—can shape hearts and minds... They make sure that they are generating a substantial amount of contemporary Chinese cultural capital, so they don't get swamped by the West... They see that cultural battle as being just as important as the technological one, or the economic one.

These reflections illustrate how governments are leveraging both instrumental and intrinsic rationales in parallel, using arts education to shape not only economic futures but also collective identities and civic values.

2.A.1. Citizenship and Social Cohesion Rationales

Promising rationales that link arts education to whole child development outcomes include those that feature the value of the arts for promoting citizenship and social cohesion. The arts can facilitate expression, storytelling, and perspective-taking. These competencies and experiences foster mutual understanding and respect across differences, and contribute to peaceful, egalitarian societies.

Holistic education connects the individual learner to a shared humanity:

Education is a journey towards the inner part of the self, the outer part of the self, the other, the world, and the universe. This can be achieved [through the arts] if we want our students to be happy human beings to celebrate our shared humanity...through transforming our schools to being art centers, to be in places where people celebrate life with people, celebrate dialogues, celebrate silence, celebrate music, celebrate through history. – Minister Haifa Al Najar⁵⁰ (Jordan)

Al Najar's reflection captures the intrinsic value of the arts to facilitate exploration and curiosity about the experience of being human, and the relationship of the individual to a broader collective. The arts are uniquely positioned to cultivate empathy, curiosity, and social awareness, reinforcing their role in fostering the kinds of interpersonal and civic capacities that underpin citizenship and social cohesion.

⁴⁹ Arts Education Subject Expert at YWEIS, June 2023

⁵⁰ Minister of Culture, Jordan (2021-2024), July 2024

Cultural spaces that bring different groups into contact with one another can support belonging and promote peacebuilding in divided settings (King, 2024). In Columbia, a school arts festival brought together divided communities who were formally at war.

Arts has a lot to do with local identities, local culture, and provides kids the possibility to recognize and value their own identity...Even in very extreme situations, for example, we have been working with rural schools in Colombia that were in a war zone for 40 years. The arts program was developed to recover traditional dances, and organize dancing festivals at the school, for all the villages around. These dances were the first time where people who have been at war with each other for so long, reclaimed their common traditions and were able to celebrate together. And I think the arts have this enormous power to do that, that you cannot get that from mathematics or social sciences alone - Nieves Tapia⁵¹ (Latin America)

As this example from Colombia illustrates, the arts possess a unique capacity to create space for expressing and sharing identities, and facilitating connection across divisions. These types of school-based arts events go beyond creative expression; they become acts of community-building, cultural preservation, collective healing, and cohesion. This example further demonstrates the value of school-centered arts education events to create transformational arts education experiences within communities.

Similarly in Jordan, school-based arts performances helped strengthen social cohesion and connection between the school and the communities it serves. Jordan's education system faces immense pressure to support both its own population and a substantial refugee population. These demographic pressures have strained public services and contributed to tensions between host and refugee communities, including in schools (Kubow, 2020). Tala Sweis⁵² (Jordan) described how these performances helped build trust and foster pride among Jordanians and Syrians:

At the end of each year, we organize community events with the school where we invite the parents to come and see their children performing. So, in communities where we had Syrians and Jordanians the, the sense of social cohesion came to the surface and the sense of pride that parents felt seeing how their children were performing. The connection between the school and the community improved.

⁵¹ Founder and Director for CLAYSS, February 2023

⁵² Director of the Madrasati Initiative, January 2023

Her remarks highlight how the arts can serve as a bridge in divided or displaced communities, strengthening relationships among students, families, and schools.

Arts education can be a powerful mechanism for cultivating the values, skills, and relationships essential to citizenship and social cohesion (Bell & Desai, 2011). Rationales linking arts education to these goals are increasingly important amid political polarization and growing threats to open civic discourse around the world. These arguments may be especially compelling to policymakers, funders, school leadership, and educators working in post-conflict settings, divided societies, or communities experiencing rapid demographic change. In such contexts, positioning the arts as a means of building shared understanding, fostering dialogue, and strengthening civic engagement can be particularly persuasive. This kind of emphasis may also help elevate the role of arts education within broader education agendas and policy conversations.

2.A.2. Psychosocial and Mental Health Rationales

The use of arts for the purposes of healing and psychosocial support in response to adverse and traumatic events are well-documented (Burde et al., 2015; Lahmann, 2018, Pisani et al., 2016, Kuttner, 2015). In the context of education, the arts are increasingly recognized as important to supporting students' mental health and broader developmental outcomes (Afrikaner, 2018).

During and following the COVID-19 pandemic, rationales linking the arts to wellbeing and psychosocial support gained new visibility and relevance. Widespread school closures and social isolation during the pandemic triggered a mental health crisis among children and youth (Kohn et al., 2021; Perlman Robinson et al., 2022; Zosh et al., 2017). As education systems and communities grappled with how best to respond, many turned to arts education as a vehicle for supporting social-emotional learning and restoring connection and wellbeing.

Policymakers, schools, program facilitators, and arts organizations implemented arts education programming at mitigating the psychosocial toll of the pandemic while also supporting engagement and learning (see Agrawal et al., 2022; Lieshout, 2020; Lahmann, 2024; Shravrani et al., 2022). In many places, this led to renewed interest in integrating arts into education systems more broadly. As Sameen Almas⁵³ (India) explained, “We used the pandemic as an opportunity to emphasize wellbeing needs, and very surreptitiously brought arts to achieve that end.”

⁵³ Director of Projects at NalandaWay Foundation, April 2024

⁵⁴ Senior Ministerial Advisor for the Ministry of Education and Culture, April 2024

This strategic alignment between wellbeing and arts education goals created new openings for advocacy. As Hanna Koskimies⁵⁴ (Finland) observed,

I think that there's a lot of discussion and [political and strategic] will for understanding the importance of arts education at the moment... COVID played a role in this, because during that time, it became very clear how important it is for children to be able to express themselves, and how important it is for children to have arts education and what they can gain from it.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to reverberate across education systems and arts institutions and may not be fully understood for years to come. Beyond the education sector, there is global momentum surrounding rationales linking the arts to mental health and broad health outcomes (Sajnani & Fietje, 2023). Indeed, the World Health Organization recommends arts for the purposes of improving health and wellbeing and the evidence is growing (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). This expanding field of practice and research could open the door for stronger cross-sector collaboration between ministries/departments of education, culture, and health.

Although the connection between arts for supporting mental health and wellbeing is widely known, rationales linking arts education to psychosocial wellbeing carry renewed weight as education systems continue to respond to the lasting impacts of the pandemic. The global investment in arts-based approaches during and immediately following COVID-19 generated momentum that should not be lost. Schools and governments around the world turned to the arts as a means of supporting children's emotional health and sustaining their ability to learn amid unprecedented disruption. Coupled with growing international attention, funding, and evidence on the broader relationship between arts and health, the time is ripe for elevating these arguments within education and health policy dialogues alike. Arts education should not be viewed as a temporary remedy, but as a lasting and integral part of whole child development.

2.A.3. Future Employment Rationales: 21st Century Skills

Another compelling set of rationales for arts education centers on its role in building 21st-century skills—competencies like creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving that are increasingly vital in a rapidly changing global workforce. As economies shift toward innovation- and knowledge-based industries, the ability to think flexibly and generate original ideas is becoming just as important as technical expertise. In this context, arts education is gaining recognition as a means for cultivating the skills that students need not only to participate in the workforce, but to help shape its future.

This shift is already influencing education policy. Growing emphasis on creativity and creative thinking has prompted curriculum and policy reforms shifted in many high- and middle-income countries (Durham Commission, 2019; Cuesta, 2022). Leading technology and innovation companies are driving demand for individuals who can collaborate and solve complex problems. As Michael Finneran⁵⁵ (Ireland) notes,

These major conglomerates and major multinational employers are looking for non-lateral thinkers, they're looking to hire graduates and people who are innovative, who will work well in teams. And they are probably one of the greatest levers of pressure on our governments in terms of recognizing the importance of creativity in the education of our young people.

Employers are not just seeking technical skills, but individuals who can generate ideas, collaborate across teams, and approach problems from multiple angles. Advocates and proponents for creative and critical thinking argue that these skills are more resilient to automation and artificial intelligence. The ability to generate original ideas and approach complex challenges with innovation will remain in high demand across evolving labor markets (Bakhshi, H., 2023).

Arts education is well-positioned to support the development of these future-facing competencies. As Ralph Buck⁵⁶ (New Zealand, Global) explained,

Arts education attends to 21st century competencies. When you look at employment statistics and what employers want, they don't want someone who can 'do the thing,' they want people who've got those basic foundational skills...who can work in teams or think creatively or solve problems. We just have to be better at articulating that.

The growing demand for flexible, innovative thinkers presents a strategic opening for advocates to highlight the alignment between arts education and 21st-century skills. In many countries, education reforms are underway to close the gap between what schools teach and what future jobs require. This current discourse around education and workforce alignment offers a timely opportunity to position arts education as essential to preparing adaptable, creative, and collaborative learners.

Rationales linking arts education and 21st century skills may resonate particularly well with ministries of labor, economic development, and education, as well as private sector partners and funders. Framing arts education as a catalyst for future-ready skills not only reinforces its value in education systems but also aligns it with

⁵⁵ Head of Drama and Theatre Studies at Mary Immaculate College, May 2023

⁵⁶ Head of Dance Studies at the University of Auckland former Chair of the World Dance Alliance, May 2023

national and global economic priorities. With growing international attention on skills for the future, now is a particularly ripe moment to elevate the role of the arts as a central pillar of how we prepare young people for the complexities and possibilities of tomorrow's world of work.

2.A.4. Academic Outcome Rationales

Rationales linking arts education to improved academic outcomes remain one of the most frequently cited and politically compelling justifications for investment in arts programming. In many education systems, especially those driven by testing and performance metrics, arguments that demonstrate how the arts support learning in other core subjects continue to attract attention from policymakers, administrators, and funders. Recently, robust studies have helped strengthen the evidence in this area. For example, impact evaluations in Chile and the United States found that arts-integrated programming was associated with improvements in academic achievement, writing performance, and student engagement (Bowen & Kisida, 2022; Egana-del Sol, 2023).

The STEAM movement, which is an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the arts into science, technology, engineering, and math education, is a particularly prominent example of how the arts are being positioned to support academic goals. STEAM approaches are appealing to policymakers because they link the arts to stronger performance on STEM indicators (Belbase et al., 2021). As Representatives from the Ministry of Education in Japan⁵⁷ noted, “Many policymakers are interested in STEAM: the collaboration between the different subjects, such as math and science and art.”

However, while these instrumental rationales are often effective in the short term, they come with important caveats. Overemphasizing the utility of the arts for improving other subjects can unintentionally narrow the perceived value of arts education. When arts programming is justified solely by its contributions to math or reading scores, it risks becoming a handmaiden to other disciplines. As Ellen Winner⁵⁸ (USA) asserted,

Almost all the claims for arts education are spurious about the transfer effects of arts education into some other area, whether it's test scores, or social emotional learning, or community engagement, or community rejuvenation financially. None of them are based on the value of arts education itself...The danger is that some smart superintendent is going to say, ‘If the only reason we're teaching the arts is to improve X, let's just teach X directly.’ The other danger is that it marginalizes the arts by making them a handmaiden to something else.

⁵⁷ Kazunari Shitami, School Inspector and Senior Specialist for Curriculum of elementary school music, Nobukazu Kawai, Senior Specialist for Curriculum of middle and high school music, Yasuyo Kobayashi, Senior Specialist for Curriculum of elementary school arts and crafts, Tomokazu Hirata, Senior Specialist for Curriculum of middle and high school art, July 2024

⁵⁸ Professor Emerita of Psychology at Boston College and Senior Research Associate at Project Zero, July 2023

This perspective highlights the need to balance instrumental and intrinsic rationales in order to protect the integrity and depth of arts learning experiences. While evidence and advocacy that links arts education to instrumental outcomes are valuable in attracting attention and investment from policymakers in the immediate term, intrinsic value rationales may be more durable.

By the same token, well-evidenced links between arts education and academic outcomes may be useful entry points for advocacy. For example, they may be particularly effective with ministries of education, school boards, or funders under pressure to demonstrate results. Instrumental rationales can help attract funding, political will, and institutional support. A word of caution is warranted, however, to avoid relying too heavily on rationales that focus exclusively on the “transfer effects” of arts education, as they could inadvertently undermine its intrinsic value.

This is a timely moment to elevate these arguments. As education systems recover from pandemic-era learning disruptions, many are rethinking how to re-engage students and accelerate learning outcomes. In this context, well-evidenced links between arts education and academic performance can offer a persuasive entry point for policymakers, school leaders, and funders seeking strategies to support student success. With global attention focused on learning recovery and the development of more holistic, equitable education systems, now is the moment to position arts education not as peripheral, but as central to advancing academic success, supporting whole child development, and fostering lifelong learning.

Levers of Change Discussion

This section outlines potential solutions to address the problems identified in section one. It highlights levers of change and promising practices for stimulating demand for arts education in public school systems at local, regional, and global levels. It also presents compelling rationales for elevating arts education in public schools, taking into account current momentum and the factors influencing global investment and advocacy. Taken together, this section underscores the need for flexible advocacy approaches that are grounded in strong evidence and tailored to context-specific priorities.

At the local level, levers of change center on bottom-up demand from community stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, school leadership, and local lawmakers. Amplifying and sharing the practices of exemplary arts education programs and schools present meaningful opportunities to build support. School arts showcases and festivals are key mechanisms for enabling communities and local leadership to witness the value of arts education firsthand. This kind of “experiential” evidence is a powerful tool for shifting the hearts and minds of decision-makers about the value of the arts.

While local-level levers emphasize bottom-up engagement, regional levers of change focus on top-down and middle-out approaches. Promising practices include partnerships that bring local arts and cultural institutions into partnership with schools to strengthen arts education delivery. Government investment and strategic frameworks are critical for building the infrastructure to sustain such programming and generate demand. However, these efforts must address disparities in access, particularly between urban and rural communities where schools often lack arts institutions, trained personnel, or infrastructure. Tailored solutions, such as mobile programs, community-based initiatives, and digital innovations, can help address these gaps and promote equitable access.

Regional intergovernmental networks can support top-down efforts by lobbying, advocating, and providing technical support for arts education to member states. Yet top-down support is not a reliable resource across regions, as governmental investment varies widely. In many low and middle-income countries, public funding may be limited, requiring greater reliance on philanthropic and private sources. Private sector funds play a vital role in supporting middle-out strategies by funding local arts institutions, initiating school partnerships, and spotlighting model programs.

At the global level, traditional levers of include research and evidence, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. There are key opportunities to strengthen these efforts. Researchers must continue to build robust evidence on the benefits of arts education

and ensure findings speak to the evolving needs of young people. Just as importantly, existing evidence must be synthesized and communicated in accessible, actionable formats for local stakeholders. Strengthening infrastructures and networks for cross-context knowledge exchange is also needed. International publications, events, and institutions are vital platforms for the exchange of global best practices, but deliberate efforts are needed to improve inclusion and representation of historically marginalized contexts and voices. Ultimately, global progress depends on expanding and diversifying the ecosystem for evidence and advocacy.

Finally, this section examined several of the most promising rationales for integrating arts education to improve whole child development. Rationales connecting arts learning to citizenship and social cohesion are particularly relevant to counteract political and social divisions. Rationales that focus on the wellbeing and mental health have gained new urgency since the COVID-19 pandemic and are bolstered by the growing global evidence and advocacy linking the arts and health. Rationales that frame arts education as a pathway to future employment highlight its role in building 21st century skills, such as collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, and of course, creativity. These skills are increasingly in demand amid rapid technological change. Finally, rationales linking arts education to academic achievement remain persuasive to many policymakers, especially as STEAM approaches gain traction.

Together, these levers and rationales demonstrate that advancing arts education requires both structural investment and strategic messaging that resonate across diverse contexts and priorities.

"When we link culture and arts education, we can better utilize the educational system as a platform for safeguarding cultural expressions, which is fundamental to the history of humanity."

Paola Leoncini Bartoli (Global)



3. GLOBAL ADVOCACY AND STRATEGY: Opportunities and Momentum



Image Source: Stages Theatre Group

FIGURE 10: *Status of Global Advocacy for Arts Education*

This section presents findings in response to research question 3: ***What is the status of global advocacy and strategy initiatives for arts education?*** Where are there global/regional opportunities or momentum? Key features highlighted in this section are illustrated in Figure 10.

This section reviews the global landscape of advocacy for arts education, focusing on the current status, areas of momentum, and key advocates. UNESCO's initiatives and its affiliate networks surrounding culture and arts education feature prominently, as they maintain important global visibility and influence in this arena. This section also draws attention to areas of interest for global advocacy, including enhancing creative industries and economies, and bolstering innovation through 21st century skills.

This segment also includes a sub-section examining research question 3a: ***Who are advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders in this area?***, highlighting entities and considerations for influential advocacy and new streams of momentum.

3.1 UNESCO's Global Arts Education Advocacy

Global advocacy for arts education is most clearly tied to the intergovernmental agency, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1999, the Director General launched the International Appeal for the Promotion of Arts Education and Creativity at School at the General Conference of UNESCO. That appeal spurred three UNESCO-sponsored World Conferences.

The first World Conference on Arts Education hosted in Lisbon, Portugal in 2006, generated the *Road Map for Arts Education*, which outlined key recommendations at multiple levels, (i.e., international, national, school, teacher, classroom) to promote quality learning in arts education. The key outcome emerging from the Second World Conference, hosted in Seoul, Korea in 2010, was the *Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education*. The *Seoul Agenda* drew on the Road Map to establish an action plan and strategies for global investment in accessible, high-quality arts education. One notable advocacy action coming out of the Seoul Agenda was the proclamation of the 4th week in May as International Arts Education Week. Each year, UNESCO partners and global arts organizations generate advocacy events and actions in International Arts Education week.

UNESCO adopted a decision to create a revised framework for culture and arts education in 2021 that would promote an integrated approach across its Education and Culture sectors. The third World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, hosted in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates in 2024, featured the adoption of a new *Framework on Culture and Arts Education*. The framework builds on the outcomes of the two World Conferences on Arts Education to update the guidelines set out in the *Road Map for Arts Education* and the *Seoul Agenda*.

3.2 Strategic Links Between Culture and Arts Education in UNESCO's New Framework

UNESCO's World Conference on Culture and Arts Education in the United Arab Emirates in February 2024 and the adoption of a new *Framework on Culture and Arts Education* are important developments for global arts education advocacy and policy. While the two previous world conferences focused solely on arts education under UNESCO's mandate in Education, the most recent world conference represented cooperation between two pillars under UNESCO's mandate: Culture and Education. This integration represents a strategic evolution, opening new possibilities for cross-sectoral collaboration. While some participants expressed concern that this blending of priorities might dilute or distract attention from actionable recommendations for arts education, it also creates new avenues for strategic advocacy.

Globally-informed policy frameworks such as this one provide important tools for advocacy by establishing shared language, direction, and legitimacy. However, they also carry the inherent challenge of crafting a single actionable document that speaks to diverse contexts and perspectives. Sanja Krsmanović Tasić⁵⁹ (Serbia, Global), reflected on the challenge of drafting recommendations for UNESCO's Framework:

⁵⁹ President of the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), Founder and artistic director of Hleb Theater, May 2023

Our challenge was how to make this document very concrete, and action-based, but also relevant to the whole world... I was thinking, 'my God, the results are so diverse.' It is trying to incorporate so many different points of view, you know, and how then do you put it all together into a global document, that can be accepted, that can be concrete, and that can be action-based? It's like 'Mission Impossible.'

Tasić's reflection captures a central tension in global policymaking: how to honor contextual specificity while forging collective direction. Despite these challenges, the Framework generates new avenues for strategic advocacy.

For example, UNESCO's mandate surrounding the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage magnifies attention to artistic and cultural practices of local and indigenous populations in the most recent framework. The new Framework for Culture and Arts Education demonstrates heightened attention to the amplification of "local and indigenous knowledge systems" (p. 3). It also explicitly names education as playing a critical role in "the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism" (p. 5). While language surrounding the importance of "traditional arts" and supporting the participation of "marginalized populations" was included in the Seoul Agenda (see pp. 4-5), the recent Framework features more explicit language aimed at decolonizing narratives and practices surrounding education and culture.

Bo Wah Leung⁶⁰ (China, Global), described how ascribing the status of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) amplified attention and resources to the Cantonese Opera in Hong Kong.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is quite impactful...For example, Cantonese opera in Hong Kong, is the only one ICH from Hong Kong. Cantonese opera is then valued by the government and they put a lot of money to push, for example, to support the Hong Kong Academy for performing arts to have our first bachelor degree for professional artists and musicians for of Cantonese opera, and we have a Cantonese opera Development Fund to financially support different troops of Cantonese opera to have their performances...ICH is similarly impactful now in other countries, including in Africa, and especially in developing countries.

Leung noted that ICH created financial support for Cantonese Opera training and performances. He asserted that ICH is similarly meaningful in supporting arts education, particularly in "developing" countries.

⁶⁰ President of the International Society for Music Education (ISME) and Professor of Department of Cultural and Creative Arts at The Education University of Hong Kong, July 2023

Paola Leoncini Bartoli⁶¹ (Global) explained the significance of the culture and arts education link from UNESCO's perspective on advocacy: "When we link culture and arts education, we can better utilize the educational system as a platform for safeguarding cultural expressions, which is fundamental to the history of humanity." She also highlighted the culture strategy initiatives within UNESCO, and the increasing focus on the potential for economic growth through the creative economy and cultural industries (see UNCTAD, 2024). The strategic linking of culture to arts education with the adoption of UNESCO's most recent Framework is an opportunity for global advocacy. Indeed the inclusion of culture into the Group of 20 (G20) workstream signals the global importance of cultural industries to the world's leading economies, which could be leveraged for partnerships, funding opportunities, cross-sector collaboration, and stakeholder messaging.

⁶¹ Director for Cultural Policies and Development at UNESCO's Culture Sector, June 2023

"We are creating a strategy to enable the kids born in 2023 to really understand the arts so that when they are 40 and become Africa's leaders, they will take care of them."

Sahar Khalil (Egypt)



Image Source: International Teaching Artist Collaborative (ITAC)

3.3 Enhancing Creative Economies and Industries Through Education

Extending beyond UNESCO's initiatives, there is a growing focus on creative industries which presents a valuable opportunity for arts education advocacy, particularly in contexts that are seeking to develop and diversify their creative economies. Natalia Armijos Velasco⁶² (Spain) noted that “foreigners” were employed to do film production jobs in Colombia that locals could do if an appropriate education infrastructure was in place.

In South America, there are a lot of documentaries and series and everything with HBO and Netflix. But what is happening is because of the lack of trained people in Colombia for example, the production companies come with their own professionals, who are foreigners actually doing the jobs that people from Colombia could do if there was a curriculum that was entrenched in the education system.

Bolstering the education infrastructure for creative industries could enhance economic growth while also pushing back against neo-colonial practices, such as foreigners from high-income settings taking jobs that could employ locals.

As governments look to diversify their economies, cultural and creative industries are gaining prominence as engines of growth. The small island economy of Sint Maarten has historically relied on a single tourism pillar, as Clara Reyes⁶³ explained. Reyes described advocacy efforts targeting parents to strengthen alignment between education and creative career pathways:

We've been very strategic in having information sessions with parents and schools because we are a one pillar tourism economy, and we're trying to shift to diversify to the creative industries... We're having forums, to educate parents and young people to start aligning their career trajectories in secondary school from early on to start choosing subjects that will align with the future of the culture creative industries.

Her remarks highlight how advocacy efforts can be strengthened by involving families and shaping subject choice and career planning in the early years of secondary education.

⁶² Director General of Culture for Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI), August 2023

⁶³ Head of the Department of Culture within the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport, May 2024

In other contexts, governments are embedding creative industry goals through large-scale education reform. To support the development of a local film industry in Qatar, policymakers set out to establish a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) framework. “They recognized that art would underpin new business, especially in bringing the film industry into Qatar....the TVET framework was designed to develop the skillsets that will be needed by Qatar going to 2030,” explained Michael Phillipps⁶⁴ (Qatar).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is emerging as a catalyst for the development and growth of creative industries (NBC Online, 2024; Thomas, 2024, Collard, 2020). While TVET generally targets older children and youth that may have either completed schooling or dropped out, it remains relevant for advocacy in public education systems. For example, some TVET programming works with public vocational programming in secondary schools through public-private partnerships (Angel-Urdinola & Kugler, 2025). Moreover, strong TVET programming in creative industries and a labor market demand for creative skills can be leveraged for arts education curricula for younger ages.

Policymakers shifted their attention toward arts education curricula in Kenya when they realized that there were not enough jobs available for the large number of children graduating from universities. Moses Watatua⁶⁵ (Kenya) described the origins of a competency-based education curriculum which made music compulsory through the sixth year of primary school: “[Policymakers] realized that government cannot keep promising employment to people, they have to create their own employment. And it's by following their passions and creating a market for things that people enjoy doing, like content creation, performances, movie making.” Watatua indicated that policymakers revised the curriculum to provide more possibilities for children to explore their personal interests and passions, while enabling individuals to create their own employment.

This kind of strategic thinking about leveraging arts education curriculum for creative industries extends beyond Kenya, as the African Union is in the process of developing a new arts education policy that prioritizes integrating arts education in schools (African Union, 2020). Sahar Khalil⁶⁶ (Egypt), described the development of a new arts education policy that aims to be contextually relevant for the continent:

I'm part of the African Union Art Education Working Committee developing the arts education strategy and policy... [which considers]: What is the importance of art for Africa? How do we involve Africans in building up strategy that is suitable for their own context, and not just overwhelm with protecting the arts the European way?...We are creating

⁶⁴ Director of Applied Research, Innovation and Economic Development at the University of Doha for Science and Technology and UNESCO Chair in TVET, July 2023

⁶⁵ Founder of Harmony Kenya Foundation, August 2023

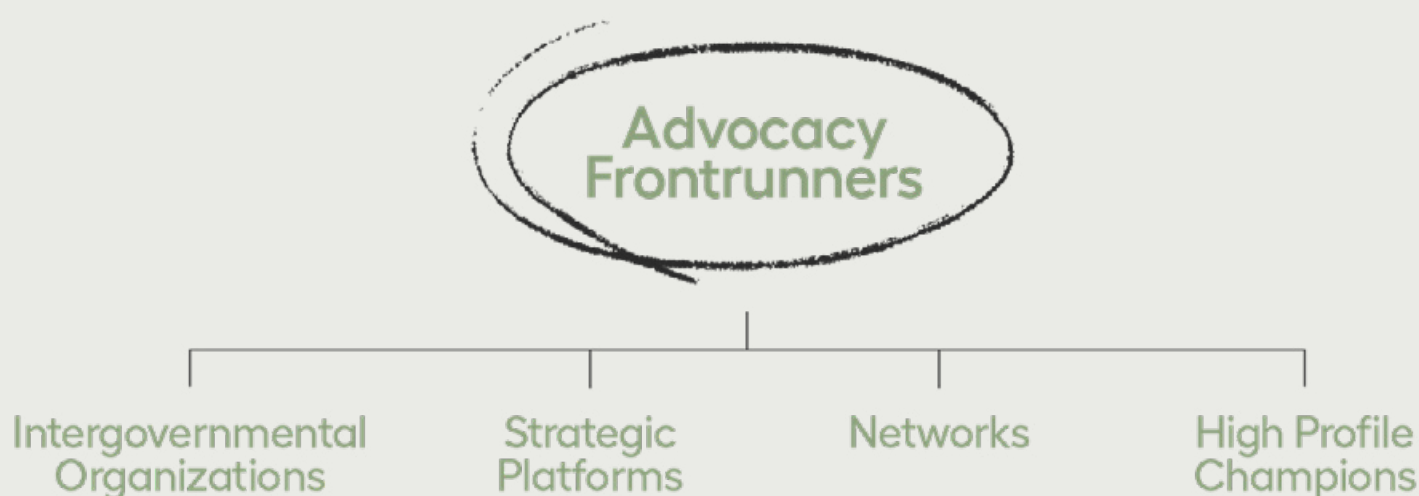
⁶⁶ Professor of Curriculum and Teaching at Art Education College at Helwan University, July 2023

a strategy to enable the kids born in 2023 to really understand the arts so that when they are 40 and become Africa's leaders, they will take care of them.

The African Union's work highlights the importance of regionally-relevant strategy for arts education, and serves as another example of the importance of regional intergovernmental organizations in driving arts education advocacy.

3.A. Advocates and Frontrunners

FIGURE 11: *Frontrunners Shaping Arts Education Advocacy*



This sub-section presents the key global advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders in arts education. It presents a snapshot of notable examples that came up in interviews with participants, which are illustrated in Figure 11. These include prominent organizations, strategic platforms, networks, funders, and high profile-champions. As this section focuses primarily on initiatives and advocates working at a global level, national governmental bodies and regional organizations are omitted. It concludes with recommendations for building future advocacy partnerships.

3.A.1. The Influence of Intergovernmental Organizations

Intergovernmental organizations are powerful drivers for advocacy and shaping global policy priorities. UNESCO and its arts education initiatives since 1999 have influenced global advocacy through world conferences, policy documents and frameworks, publications, and messaging.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has also played an important role in shaping policy priorities and advocacy narratives tied to arts education and creativity. For example, publications such as “Art for Art’s Sake? The Impact of Arts Education” (Winner et al., 2013), highlight the intrinsic value of the arts and encourage policymakers to consider creativity and cultural learning as essential components of a well-rounded education. The OECD’s emphasis on measuring educational outcomes and competencies and its research and policy related to the importance of creativity and creative thinking for innovation are highly influential in driving strategy within the education sector.

Stéphan Vincent-Lancrin⁶⁷ (Global) described the development of the work in this area:

We [OECD] had this report saying that we need to empower people for innovation. So the question was: How do we develop the skills and have an education that is important for innovation? So the usual way of thinking in the science policy community is that we need more STEM, geniuses, and need more PhDs. At the same time, when you think a bit more broadly, some other people were saying that we need more entrepreneurs and then we need, we need more creativity, which they associated with the arts and so we need more arts education...And that's actually what led to the design of the work that we did afterwards on creativity and critical thinking.

OECD’s research and technical support for teacher professional development across subjects includes pedagogical resources, rubrics, and assessments to support creativity and creative thinking in teaching and learning (see Vincent-Lancrin, 2019; Lucas 2021; LEGO Foundation 2023). Research on these tools indicated promising results for generating a common framework and shared language surrounding creativity and its assessment, with the caveat that changing teacher practices is challenging, and teachers need dedicated support and training to adopt new pedagogical resources in the classroom (Vincent-Lancrin, 2019).

Indeed, the OECD’s inclusion of creative thinking in PISA’s 2022 Innovative Domain Assessment elevated the status of creativity as a critical learning outcome. “At the end of the day, it puts creativity and creative thinking on the map,” said Vincent-Lancrin.

⁶⁷ Senior Analyst and Deputy Head of Division at the Organisation of Co-operation and Development (OECD), May 2024

3.A.2. Strategic Platforms for Arts Education Advocacy

Growing recognition of creativity as pivotal to teaching and learning has opened the door for new alliances and advocacy efforts. A range of strategic platforms including corporate philanthropies, international foundations, and global innovation networks, play key roles in advancing arts education through funding, policy engagement, and cross-sector collaboration.

Corporate partners like the LEGO Foundation, which advocates for creativity and play-based learning, play a meaningful role in cross-sector collaboration to advance arts education. For example, the LEGO Foundation was one of the first corporate sponsors and collaborators on PISA's Creative Thinking assessment. The LEGO Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the LEGO Group, is an influential organization that engages in global education initiatives that are relevant and connected to arts education in public schools. Corporate philanthropies, such as Ford Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, are additional examples of contributors to global arts and education advocacy, particularly through their sponsorship of programming that prioritizes creativity and free expression.

Alongside corporate-led efforts, international foundations play an important role in shaping education policy by working across countries to embed creativity and the arts into national curricula. For example, Creativity, Culture & Education (CCE), a UK-based international foundation, partners with education systems worldwide to foster creativity in young people. Operating in over 20 countries, including Pakistan, Australia, and Chile, CCE focuses on scalable, sustainable initiatives that integrate creative practices into national curricula and teaching methodologies.

The Community Arts Lab/Porticus Foundation, which funded this report, is another key player in the international philanthropy space. Through its sustained investment in arts for social change and arts education globally, Porticus supports both research and on-the-ground initiatives, including many of the models profiled in this report. Its work exemplifies how foundations can advance long-term, systems-oriented approaches to arts education.

Complementing these policy-oriented efforts, global platforms like HundrEd play a key role in identifying and elevating promising education innovations, including in the arts, that have strong potential to inform practice and policy. HundrEd is a globally influential nonprofit organization within the education sector that generates a collection of one hundred global innovative education organizations each year whose approaches are child-centered, effective, and scalable. HundrEd partners with leading global education funders and organizations, such as OECD, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Save the Children, LEGO Foundation and others. While HundrEd is not explicitly arts-focused, it highlights innovative arts education organizations and approaches. The newly established HundrEd Foundation will support the scaling of education innovations.

3.A.3. Arts Education Networks

Networks are essential interlocutors for arts education advocacy. Global advocacy is bolstered UNESCO's partner networks, such as the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE), which includes more 3 million members from four global arts organizations representing various disciplines in arts education: the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), International Society of Education through Art (InSEA), International Society for Music Education (ISME), and World Dance Alliance (WDA). WAAE collaborates with the UNITWIN network Arts Education Research for Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development, a think tank initiative that convenes universities and institutions to network, share knowledge, and leverage research. These networks channel research and knowledge about best practices from educators and practitioners to feed into UNESCO's global advocacy. They participate in distilling diverse messages from member states, and support disseminating global recommendations back to these states.

A growing number of global networks are also advancing arts education through collaboration and advocacy. The International Teaching Artist Collaborative (ITAC) promotes cross-border partnerships and provides resources to integrate the arts into education systems worldwide. Similarly, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ International) brings together artists, cultural institutions, and organizations in over 75 countries to champion children's artistic and educational rights through theatre and the performing arts. The Community Arts Network (CAN), which commissioned this research report, further exemplifies the power of collective action by connecting artists, educators, cultural workers, researchers, and institutions to promote arts for social impact on a global scale.

Global advocacy cannot be sustained without deliberate, grassroots partnerships that span sectors and engage local communities, as David O'Fallon⁶⁸ (USA), explained:

We need the push and the pull both. Arts educators don't need one more damn thing to do, but the people around them—community members, businesses, creative sectors, other educators—can be savvy coalition builders and collaborators, deliberately working together to create a stronger sense that we all really want this for our kids, our schools, and our communities.

Strong advocacy coalitions that link grassroots organizers, educators, civic actors, and global organizations generate momentum and bolster legitimacy for arts education.

⁶⁸ Founder, The Creative Future, LLC, February 2024

3.A.4. Advancing Advocacy Through High-Profile Champions for Arts Education

In addition to networks and institutions, individual champions including high-profile artists and public figures offer powerful potential to amplify the case for arts education. Their personal experiences and public platforms can help bridge the gap between policy, philanthropy, and public engagement, and enhance momentum for global advocacy efforts.

Powerful arts education experiences create the most diligent advocates, a sentiment which was echoed over and over in my discussions with interviewees. Indeed, nearly every participant I spoke with could point to the importance of the arts in their own lives as pivotal to the work they do now. Again, this points to the importance of creating opportunities for “experiential evidence” for those potential advocates who have not had quality arts in their own schooling.

High-profile celebrities who have been shaped by their arts education experiences are powerful advocates, as Rachael Jacobs⁶⁹ (Australia) suggested.

I think the most effective advocates are high-profile people, celebrities, or people in government who had a positive experience in the arts and can draw on that as an example of why they're a better person today or why they're successful.

High-profile/celebrity artists can draw on experience from their own lives to enhance their advocacy. For example, UNESCO has long employed high-profile advocates as Goodwill Ambassadors to use their influence and platforms to advance UNESCO's strategic goals and initiatives. Pharrell Williams was recently named Goodwill Ambassador for Arts Education and Entrepreneurship, joining a long list of prestigious artists (UNESCO, 2024).

Jigyasa Labroo⁷⁰ (India) pointed to artists within the Hindi film industry as an untapped resource for advocacy.

We have one of the world's biggest film industries in the world. In the Hindi film industry or other film industries in India, their actors, directors, and everybody in that universe could be great advocates for arts education. But that doesn't happen currently.

⁶⁹ Senior Lecturer Primary Creative Arts at Western Sydney University, July 2023

⁷⁰ Co-Founder and CEO of Slam Out Loud, February 2023

Celebrity advocacy is an asset to draw attention and support for arts education from a wide audience of stakeholders. In Ireland, for example, Bono of the rock band U2 collaborated with the government to develop an organization that enhances access to music education. “Bono went to the government and said, look here’s ‘X’ million euros. If you match it, we’ll give you this money and set up a national organization [Music Generation] to promote music alongside schools,” noted Michael Finneran⁷¹ (Ireland). Along with celebrity advocacy, Finneran hoped to see a billionaire philanthropist step into a visible advocacy role. “One of the things that has disappointed me over the last number of years is that we haven’t had the emergence of a strong global player, like the Gates Foundation or the like, that might support the arts and education.” Alliances with billionaire philanthropists could serve as a strategic avenue for future advocacy.

While not a substitute for systemic investment or grassroots advocacy, partnerships with high-profile champions can be a valuable tool for raising visibility and generating momentum. When rooted in meaningful engagement with the field, strategic alliances with celebrity advocates and philanthropic leaders could help draw broader attention to the importance of arts education and unlock new avenues of support.

⁷¹ Head of Drama and Theatre Studies at Mary Immaculate College, May 2023

Global Advocacy Discussion

This section focuses on the status of global advocacy and strategy initiatives for arts education, including areas of momentum, as well as current and potential frontrunners in advocacy.

UNESCO's initiatives over the past 25 years have been important and influential vehicles for advocacy. The recently adopted *UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education* brings culture to the forefront of its recommendations, creating avenues for advocacy that amplify the importance of indigenous voices and art forms in education. The strategic linking of arts and culture education within the Framework also facilitates opportunities for advocacy linked to the growing attention on building creative industries.

While global advocacy has raised the visibility of arts education and expanded its strategic relevance, these efforts must also be supported by enforceable policy commitments at the national and subnational levels. Many countries have ratified international agreements that commit to providing access to arts and cultural education, yet these mandates are often weakly enforced. Similarly, national and subnational education laws often require a minimum level of arts instruction in public schools, but implementation falls short. Strengthening legal accountability through clearer implementation guidelines, stronger monitoring systems, and greater awareness among educators, families and communities, could help translate these commitments into practice. Legal frameworks mandating arts education are an important but often under-leveraged complement to global advocacy, which has helped raise the field's profile.

Alongside legal and policy efforts, the integration of culture into the G20 workstream signals growing global recognition of the arts' economic and social value. Momentum around cultural industries and creative economies is opening new pathways for arts education advocacy, including TVET initiatives that equip learners with creative industry skills aligned with national workforce and development goals.

Many of the frontrunners highlighted in this advancing the role of creativity in education, including the influential work of multilateral intergovernmental organizations such as the OECD. This points back to the need for advocacy that effectively links arts education to 21st century skills and innovation.

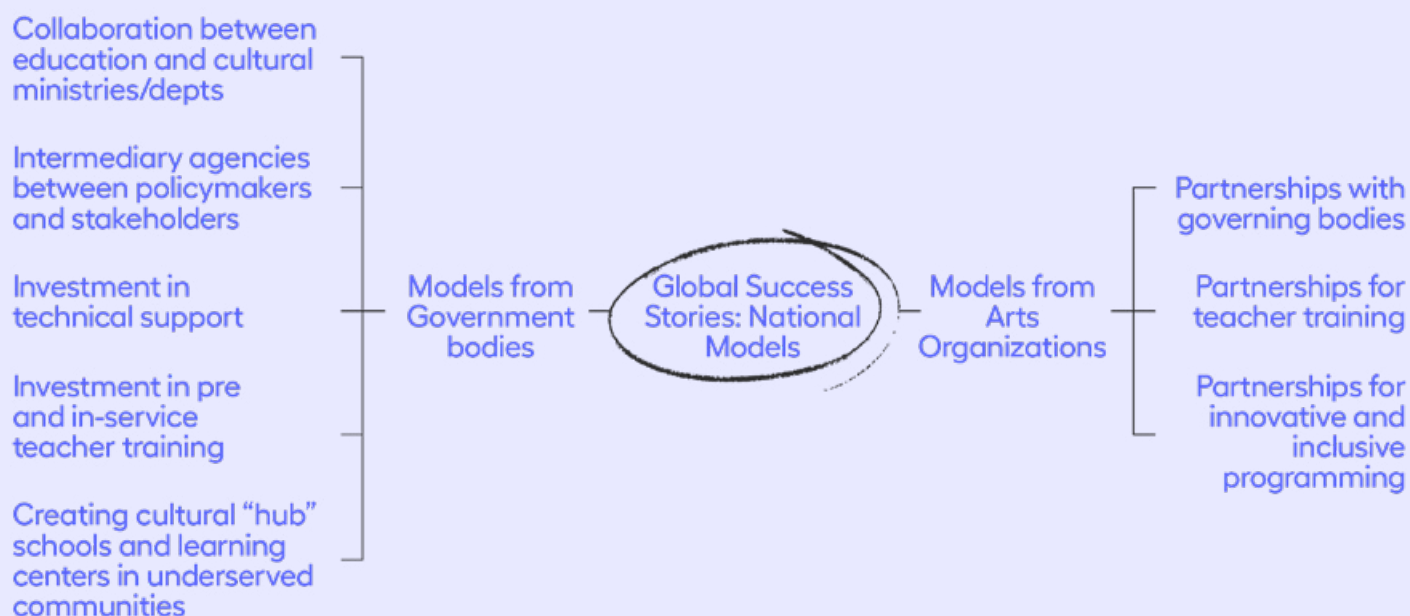
In addition, global institutions, philanthropic organizations, and transnational networks are also shaping the trajectory of arts education advocacy through partnerships, funding, research, and convening power. The emergence of new champions, such as high-profile figures and artists, could reaffirm and energize attention to arts education.

4. GLOBAL SUCCESS STORIES: National Models Integrating Arts Education



Image Source: Yabous Cultural Centre

FIGURE 12: Key Features Within National Models



This section presents findings in response to research question 4: ***What are examples of national models that successfully include and promote arts within their public education systems? What factors contribute to their success?*** The paragraphs that follow feature examples of existing models that contribute to quality and scalable arts education in public school systems. These examples of national models are organized into two groups, as illustrated in Figure 12. The first group includes models that primarily stem from national government bodies within a sample of countries. The second group includes exemplary programs led by arts organizations that partner with national or sub-national governing bodies.

The models featured in this section are certainly not exhaustive. They emerged throughout the course of the study, beginning with the initial desk review, to interviews, survey responses, and documents shared with me by participants and key informants. Models were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, the extent to which they illustrated scalable and innovative practices in public school systems, and their consistent engagement with government departments or ministries. The omission of a country or information about a particular case is not indicative of its lack of worth or merit, rather it is likely the consequence of limitations of time and scope.

It is worth noting that the models included in this section are from both centralized and decentralized education systems. Decision-making in centralized systems happens at the national level, with the central government in control of key aspects such as policymaking, curriculum design, funding, and assessment across the country. In decentralized government systems, decision-making is distributed across

regional governments and municipalities, with local-level autonomy over aspects of policy, curriculum, budgeting, etc. While most decentralized educations have a centralized decision-making body, the role is typically limited to providing guidance, setting standards, and ensuring accountability. Thus, national models will operate differently in these systems. In a centralized system for example, a successful model could be scaled at a national level uniformly across schools in response to a decision from the central governing body. Scaling a successful model within a decentralized system, however, would require regional and local authority buy-in, along with adaptation for local settings (UNESCO IIEP, McGinn & Welsh, 1999).

FIGURE 13: *Assets that Support Scalable Arts Education Programming*

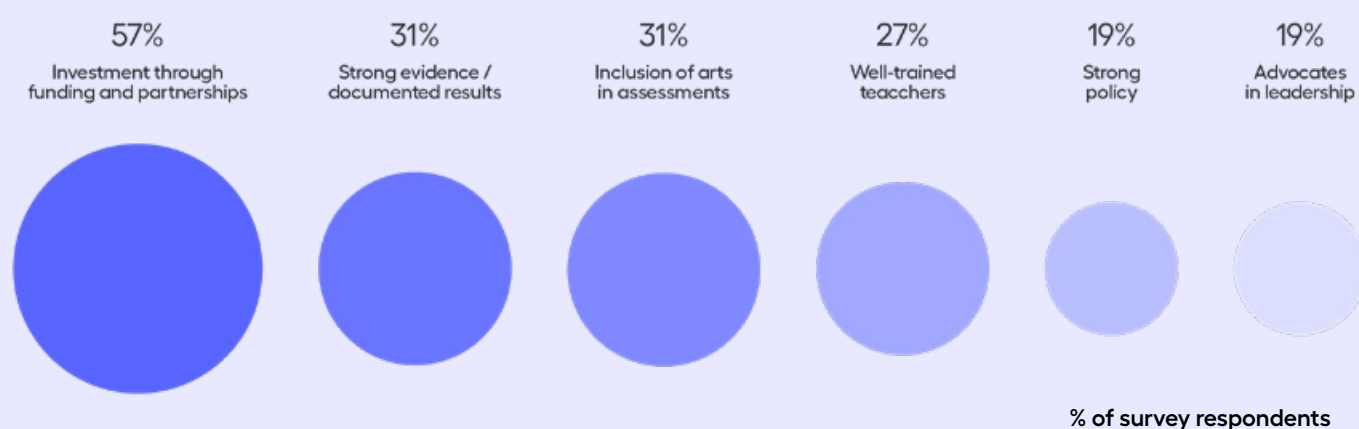


Figure 13 illustrates assets identified by survey respondents that support scalable arts education programming. These assets feature prominently in the models described in this section. This section concludes with a discussion of factors that contribute to the success of arts education programs within these models.

4.1 Models Stemming from Government Bodies: Facilitating Collaboration, Partnership, and Cultural Plans

Chile: Investment and Ministerial Collaboration

In Chile, arts education is a fundamental component of the national curriculum, overseen by the Ministry of Education. Visual arts and music are part of their compulsory education in primary school. Students engage in a general curriculum during the initial years of secondary school which includes arts subjects, before selecting specialized tracks in the latter years (ChileEducation, n.d.). Chile's education system is a mix of centralized curriculum and policymaking with decentralized management elements.

The Acciona Program: Art and Culture in Education is an exemplary model Chile launched and fully funded by the Ministry of Cultures, Arts, and Heritage. The Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Heritage collaborates with the Ministry of Education to ensure that the program aligns with the national education curriculum and policies, and to facilitate access to public schools. The program is implemented widely in public primary and secondary schools, prioritizing underprivileged areas. Key activities include artistic and educator partnerships, professional development, and technical assistance to schools. A rigorous impact evaluation of the Acciona Program demonstrated improvements in academic outcomes and creative behaviors (Egana-delSol, 2023).

Cuba: An Enduring Investment to Arts and Education

Cuba's sustained investment in artistic and cultural participation reinforces the value of the arts to society and positions arts education as a fundamental right connected to individual and collective identity (Gordon-Nesbitt, 2017). Cuba's highly centralized education system is one of the strongest in Latin America, rooted in a deep commitment to investment in high quality schooling for all ages. (Brandhorst & Betrán Marín, 2021). Despite economic challenges, Cuba has maintained a high investment of its overall budget to education. It offers a powerful model for integrating arts education into its public school system, enhanced by collaboration between the Ministry of Education (MINED) and the Ministry of Culture (MINCULT). Arts education is embedded into the national curriculum throughout compulsory primary and basic secondary education, from ages 6 to 15.

MINCULT collaborates with MINED to align formal arts training with broader national education goals and provide robust teacher training at institutions like the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) (Chohan, 2023; López, 2011). In addition, Casas de Culturas, supported by MINCULT, serve as inclusive community centers that provide cultural and artistic training and opportunities, particularly in rural areas (Centro de Cooperación Cultural, n.d.). These community-based and nonformal learning spaces enhance and supplement learning opportunities provided in formal schooling by providing artistic opportunities for children in remote areas, supporting the development of local cultural hubs far away from urban centers, and foster the celebration of indigenous culture and artistic expression. Another exemplary initiative, the "Educate Your Child" program is led by MINED in collaboration with several other ministries. It leverages community volunteers and peer teaching models to generate scalable early access to education in low-resource settings, including arts, without the need for heavy infrastructure investment (Laire, 2016).

Finland: An Inclusive and Child-Centered Infrastructure

Finland stands out as a global leader in arts education due to its government-supported, inclusive policies and innovative practices that establish an infrastructure for integrating arts education throughout primary and secondary school. Finland's child-centered and equity-driven philosophy and commitment to teacher autonomy allows educators to tailor arts lessons to the needs of their students while fostering innovation (Juntunen, 2017). All arts education initiatives are designed to eliminate barriers such as cost, location, or social background. Schools offer free meals and transportation, while specialized programs target underserved areas. Consultation with students via surveys ensures that their interests shape activities, fostering engagement and ownership. Finland's education system is decentralized, with a high degree of autonomy granted to municipalities.

Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture integrates both sectors under one roof, effectively institutionalizing the coordination of arts and culture into policy and curriculum. The Finnish National Core Curriculum mandates arts education from grades 1–9, incorporating subjects such as visual arts, music, crafts, and physical education. Although drama is not a standalone subject, it is woven into teacher training and extracurricular activities. A robust network of 36 professional children's cultural centers ensures accessibility to high-quality arts education across the country through the development of tailored cultural education plans, which encourage partnerships between schools and local cultural institutions. Teachers employ formative assessments, project-based evaluations, and personalized feedback to gauge student development in the arts (Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centers, 2023).

Other innovative programs include The Curious Class Pilot, which integrates arts into daily school routines through collaborative projects between teachers and art professionals; The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities, which offers free, extracurricular options based on children's preferences; and the Art Testers Program, which provides every 8th grader with annual visits to cultural institutions, paired with educational activities (Koskimies et al., 2019).

Ireland: Collaborative Investment in Creative Schools

Ireland exemplifies a robust integration of arts education within its public school system, guided by centralized government policies from the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The Primary Arts Education Curriculum encompasses visual arts, music, and drama, engaging children from age 4–12 (Curriculum Online, n.d.). Arts education is for ages 12–15 and becomes optional in the senior cycle, ages 15–18.

One particularly innovative program is the Creative Schools Initiative, managed by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media, which has been widely implemented across Ireland. Each school is paired with a Creative Associate who collaborates with the school to design and implement a tailored Creative School Plan to integrate arts across curricula and encourage innovative arts education practices. Additionally, the Arts-in-Education BLAST Residency Programme, enables schools to collaborate with professional artists to integrate arts into the curriculum through 20-hour residencies (Arts Council, 2025, Creative Ireland, 2024).

Portugal: A Collaborative and Flexible Approach to Partnership

Portugal serves as a model for integrating arts education into its public school, guided by centralized policies from the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture. Arts education is compulsory for children ages 6 to 15, with both mandatory and optional arts education components for ages 15 to 18. Portugal's flexible framework allows schools to adapt the national curriculum to design unique programs that cater to students' interests and local cultural resources.

Notable features include the Plano Nacional das Artes (PNA), a collaborative initiative between the Ministries that aim to integrate arts and cultural education into the public school system over a ten-year period (2019–2029). A central component of the PNA is the development of Cultural School Projects (*Projetos Culturais de Escola*), which encourage schools to create and implement their own cultural initiatives tailored to their unique contexts and student populations. These projects foster partnerships between educational institutions, local artists, and cultural organizations (Governo de Portugal, 2019).

Complementing the PNA is the Programa de Educação Estética e Artística, which fosters collaborations between schools and cultural partners, and provides continuous professional development for educators to equip them with tools to deliver high-quality arts instruction. Moreover, the National Strategy for Citizenship Education encourages schools to incorporate theater, music, and visual arts into projects that address social and environmental challenges, promoting active citizenship through creative expression.

Singapore: Centralized Policy Establishing Arts Education as a Priority

Arts education in Singapore is guided by centralized policies from Ministry of Education which partners closely with the National Arts Council. Arts education in Singapore is mandatory for all students from primary to lower secondary with the option to pursue more specialized art education at the upper secondary ages (MoE Singapore, 2024).

The National Arts Council-Arts Education Programme (NAC-AEP), a joint initiative between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth, offers schools a curated directory of quality arts programs, including performances, workshops, and artist residencies, designed to complement the school curriculum. More than 95% of schools under the MoE have leveraged NAC-AEP to provide students with arts education experiences, drawing on both traditional and contemporary art forms.

Enhancing the provision of quality education in Singapore public schools the National Institute of Education (NIE), the sole teacher education institute in Singapore, which provides comprehensive training for art educators (NIE, n.d.). The NIE operates under the Ministry of Education (MoE) to ensure its programs align with national educational goals.

South Korea: A Model for Collaboration and Innovation

South Korea is often cited as a model for its leadership in promoting arts education. Through centralized and collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism the country has developed a robust framework to ensure that students have access to arts education in primary and secondary school. South Korea's strategic investment in arts education and the promotion of cultural industries has been pivotal to fostering its thriving creative economy and growth in exporting popular culture globally. The government's deliberate policies and financial support transformed the nation's cultural landscape, leading to the global phenomenon known as the Korean Wave (Adams, 2022; UNESCO, 2022).

For primary school ages, the curriculum emphasizes painting and basic music performance, including exposure to traditional Korean instruments. Students of lower secondary ages focus on visual arts, music theory, and cultural heritage. Arts education is elective based in specialized disciplines for upper secondary ages (MoE Korea, n.d.).

The Korea Arts & Culture Education Service (KACES) is a government agency under the Ministry of Culture is instrumental in enhancing quality arts and culture into public education by collaborating with schools and cultural institutions to support programming and teacher professional development. One notable initiative is the Teaching Artists Program which deploys professional artists to schools to enhance

arts instruction and expose students to diverse artistic practices. Another innovative program, the Arts-Flower Seeds Schools initiative supports the development of long-term, comprehensive arts education programs in schools located in underserved areas, with the goal of transforming them into cultural hubs. Another standout feature of South Korea's approach is the integration of digitization and artificial intelligence (AI) to modernize and elevate the provision of arts education in public education system.

Complementary Case: El Sistema - Venezuela and Global Adaptations

El Sistema (El Sistema Nacional de Orquestas y Coros Juveniles e Infantiles de Venezuela) offers a powerful example of how sustained government investment in arts education infrastructure can yield transformative and scalable results. Founded in 1975 by José Antonio Abreu, this national system of youth orchestras has provided free, high-quality music education to children and youth, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, as a means of social transformation. Backed by consistent public funding, the program demonstrates how community-based arts education can achieve widespread global impact. El Sistema's success and global adaptability stem from its emphasis on ensemble-based learning, peer mentorship, and intensive, community-embedded programming designed to promote social inclusion through music, all delivered free of charge and supported by strong public investment (Creech et al., 2016; Uy, 2012; Habibi et al., 2016). While El Sistema is not embedded in the formal school curriculum, its model is so successful and has been replicated in so many other contexts around the world, that it merits featuring here.

El Sistema has been adapted in over 60 countries and continues to expand to new global settings (Uy, 2012). Rigorous evidence of El Sistema's impact highlights its value in both social and cognitive domains. Studies suggest that participation in El Sistema is associated with improved self-esteem, social cohesion, and academic performance (Creech et al., 2016). A randomized controlled trial conducted in Los Angeles on an El Sistema-inspired program, Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA), revealed significant gains in executive function, empathy, and school engagement among participants compared to non-participants (Habibi et al., 2016). El Sistema in Venezuela is largely supported by the Venezuelan government, but funding models in other contexts vary, relying more on private funds and local organizations. The program's global adaptations and robust evidence make it a powerful model for expanding access to music education.

4.2 Models Stemming from Arts Organizations: Partnering to Build Curricula, Teacher Skills, and Deliver Quality Content

Image Source: Art of Music Foundation;
Photo Credit - Mia Collis

Art of Music Foundation – Kenya



[The Art of Music Foundation](#) is a Kenyan nonprofit committed to expanding access to music education for children and youth in underserved communities. Operating within Kenya's decentralized education system, the Art of Music Foundation works directly with public schools to deliver arts programming that supports learning, creativity, and youth development. The Foundation supports classroom delivery and provides training for teachers in low-resource environments.

Through the Ghetto Classics program and Orchestra for Schools Initiative, the Foundation reaches more than 1,000 children each year. It also delivers music instruction in partnership with government-funded schools using the Carnegie Hall Link Up Recorder curriculum, adapted for the Kenyan context. Other exemplary initiatives include the Safaricom Youth Orchestra and student-led agribusiness projects that help fund arts learning.

The Art of Music Foundation's model is scalable through community-based hubs, strong public-private partnerships (e.g., Safaricom Foundation), and a focus on youth empowerment through performance, teaching, and entrepreneurship.

Image Source: ASSITEJ – South Africa

ASSITEJ – South Africa



[The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People](#) South Africa (ASSITEJ SA) is a national network organization dedicated to promoting and supporting theatre and arts experiences for children and young people. Operating in South Africa's semi-centralized education system, ASSITEJ SA serves as the official partner to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in supporting teachers to deliver

Creative Arts curricula across South Africa through their Kickstarter Educational Empowerment Project. This program trains artists in South Africa's compulsory arts curriculum and partners them with teachers to support the delivery of arts education. By providing training, resources and ongoing professional development, the initiative seeks to create arts-rich educational environments in schools, with a focus on grades 4-6. ASSITEJ SA has partnered with the DBE in developing national "Life Skills" textbooks, which includes coverage of Creative Arts.

Another key initiative, Theatre4Youth / Arts4Youth, creates a national framework that connects schools with performing arts experiences tailored to young audiences. The program facilitates performances and workshops in educational settings, and connects schools to relevant arts organizations.

Image Source: Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute;
Photo Credit - Fadi Kheir

Carnegie Hall – United States



[Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute](#) (WMI) creates education and social impact programs, playing a central role in fulfilling the Hall's mission of making music accessible. These initiatives integrate music education into public schools and foster musical skills and appreciation. Carnegie Hall partners with more than 115 orchestras across the country and around the world to offer the Link Up program for grades 3-5. Link Up provides interactive curricula, including singing and playing an instrument, and a

performance with a local orchestra. Link Up is also available online, along the K-2 curriculum Musical Explorers, for teachers and school districts to use freely. Musical Explorers helps students learn songs from around the world, building a deeper understanding of different cultures while developing basic singing and listening skills.

Operating in the United States' decentralized education system, Carnegie Hall invests in teachers by providing in-depth training and community through Music Educators Workshop, for K–12 music teachers across the US. In New York City, The Ensemble Connect School Partnerships facilitate residencies in public schools through partnerships with teachers.

Image Source: CLAYSS

CLAYSS – Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Peru



[The Latin American Center for Service Learning](#) (CLAYSS) is based in Buenos Aires and Montevideo and supports the development of service-learning initiatives in educational institutions and social organizations worldwide. The organization's work includes research, publications, technical assistance, advice to companies and governments and the promotion of impact networks. They provide training for students, teachers, community leaders and public officers.

Operating in countries with largely decentralized education systems, CLAYSS's program promoting Service-Learning in the Arts in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Peru works in partnership with local and national governments, higher education institutions, civil society, and community organizations. Service-learning in the arts projects provide young people, particularly those in conditions of socio-economic vulnerability, opportunities to express themselves creatively while generating improvements in their communities.

Image Source: ConArte;
Photo Credit - Carlos Saavedra

ConArte – Mexico



[ConArte Mexico](#) is a civil society organization that integrates professional teacher-artists into formal and public educational settings, offering workshops, classes and presentations in visual arts, music, theatre, and dance, with an emphasis on local socially-engaged expressions. Operating in Mexico's partially decentralized education system, ConArte's collaborations with the Secretaría de Educación Pública include the development of resources such as *¡Ah, que la canción! Música mexicana en la escuela*, which integrates Mexican musical

traditions into classrooms, and the *Guía de herramientas interculturales para la convivencia escolar*, a teacher training manual for incorporating intercultural tools and peace within diverse classrooms and communities.

ConArte has its headquarters in La Nana, Urban Laboratory for Engaged Art, in Colonia Guerrero, a historically under-resourced neighborhood in downtown México City. Through art exhibitions, cultural events, community gatherings, and a community school, La Nana has become an integral part of daily life for both residents and visitors. ConArte also organizes festivals like *Encuentro Arte, Escuela y Comunidad*, showcasing student performances in a professional theater. ConArte's initiatives are largely supported by individual and corporate donations.

Image Source: Crear Vale La Pena (CVLP)

Crear Vale la Pena – Argentina



[Crear Vale la Pena](#) (CVLP) is an Argentine nongovernmental organization that has promoted social transformation through the arts since 1997. Originating in community cultural centers, its work expanded into public education and health systems, training teachers, health workers, and public officials across Latin America in creative practices for inclusion, well-being, and locally-informed policymaking. Operating in Argentina's decentralized education system, CVLP has implemented its "Entornos

Creativos" (Creative Environments) methodology with five provincial governments, eleven municipal governments, and the National Secretariat of Education in Argentina.

The World Bank, the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), and OEI recognized CVLP as one of the 13 most innovative pedagogical experiences in Latin America. CVLP has been evaluated in studies by the Universidad de San Andrés and FLACSO, which documented its contributions to educational practice and learning environments (Garzón & Sampredo, 2018; Onetto et al., 2021). Each year, CVLP reaches over 60,000 students and 2,000 educators. It co-leads regional policy initiatives and is part of OLA, a five-year international research project on youth, arts, and mental health.

En Sus Zapatos: Un Espacio de Empatía Activa – Spain

[En Sus Zapatos: Un Espacio de Empatía Activa](#) (In Their Shoes: A Space of Active Empathy) is a program developed and implemented by Teatre de Conciencia (Theatre of Awareness), an organization that uses its theatrical methodology to promote social and emotional learning. Operating in Spain's decentralized education system, the program systematically uses the arts to integrate social emotional learning,

Image Source: Asociación Teatro de Conciencia;
Photo Credit - Elena Buenavista, provided by 20minutos.es



specifically active empathy, into the national curriculum in collaboration with various regional governments in Spain, as well as other countries. The program stands out due to its distinct teacher training model that deliberately maximizes scalability. “En Sus Zapatos” has received international accolades from UNESCO, OECD, HundrED and the LEGO Foundation for its innovative approach and impact.

Image Source: Orchestre à L'École;
Photo Credit - (c) OAE Caroline Bottaro



L'Orchestre à l'École – France

[L'Orchestre à L'École](#) works for the development and success of young people in primary and secondary schools through collective musical instrument practice. Operating in France's centralized education system, the association ensures that orchestra classes are deployed throughout the country to bring music education opportunities to the most marginalized students and communities, providing daily support to project developers.

Orchestre à L'École is a recognized Association of Public Utility, working in collaboration with the French Ministries of Culture, of Education, and of Territorial Cohesion. It collaborates with local music societies and associations along with national philanthropies, businesses, and international foundations.

Madrasati – Jordan

[Madrasati](#) is a nonprofit initiated by Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah, which works closely with the Ministry of Education and other key stakeholders to enhance learning environments in public schools.

The Music in Madrasati program, one of the organization's flagship initiatives, seeks to mainstream music education into the early primary curriculum and change perceptions about the value of the arts. This effort includes the development of a

Image Source: Madrasati, a Queen Rania Al Abdullah Initiative;
Photo Credit - Ayham AbuHammad



nationally aligned music curriculum, tailored training for non-specialist educators, and advocacy that underscores the role of music in holistic child development. The program champions a comprehensive cultural plan for integrating arts education more deeply into the national educational framework through policy advocacy.

Operating in Jordan's centralized education system, Madrasati's multifaceted approach fosters collaboration across the public, private, and civil sectors to bolster the model's scalability and sustainability. Importantly, Madrasati's adaptable and responsive design allows for effective implementation in diverse settings and promotes inclusive education across Jordan, including schools in resource-limited areas.

Image Source: Méér Muziek in de Klas;
Photo Credit - Set Vexy



Méér Muziek in de Klas – Netherlands and Dutch Caribbean

[Méér Muziek in de Klas](#) (MMidK) is a foundation established in 2014 to support structural music education for all primary school children in the Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean. Since 2023, it has expanded its focus to include broader arts education, with a focus on children who stand to benefit most from access to arts learning in and around schools (MMidK, 2024).

MMidK advocates for the role of arts education in whole child development by raising public awareness and influencing policy. Operating within a decentralized education system, the foundation builds strong local networks through collaboration with educators, teacher training institutes, cultural organizations, school administrators, and other stakeholders. It also promotes knowledge exchange, provides free educational resources, and offers financial incentives to support schools and teachers in strengthening their arts curricula.

The foundation works in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, as well as private funders such as the Cultural Participation Fund. Queen Máxima serves as the honorary chair of MMidK.

Image Source: NalandaWay Foundation

NalandaWay Foundation – India



[NalandaWay Foundation](#) is an award-winning non-profit that uses the arts to empower children and adolescents from disadvantaged communities. Over the past 20 years, they have reached 10 million children across 10 states in India by creating safe learning spaces and experiences that nurture curiosity, creativity, and compassion.

Operating in India's decentralized education system, NalandaWay works in partnership with governments and local communities in urban and rural settings, integrating arts and wellbeing initiatives into government-run schools, Child Care Institutions, urban slums, and Anganwadi Centres. The organization collaborates with various state governments across the country to develop and integrate arts-based curriculum into school systems. Its initiatives include integrating arts into education through creative curricula and workshops, running music and visual arts programs like the Chennai and Delhi Children's Choirs, supporting mental health and wellbeing through arts programming rooted in social and emotional learning, and holistic development programming to support adolescent girls.

Image Source: PLANEA, red de Arte y Escuela;
Photo Credit - Septimadirección

PLANEA – Spain



[PLANEA](#) is a network that collaborates with governmental education departments in Spain to integrate artistic practices into public school curricula. Operating in Spain's decentralized education system, the network is organized around territorial hubs comprised of public schools, cultural institutions, and local stakeholders in the regions where it is active.

PLANEA provides professional development for educators in participating schools, facilitates partnerships with artists and cultural institutions, and develops and exchanges resources and tools. In its initial phase, PLANEA engaged seven pilot educational centers, with plans to expand to a total of 15 over five years. As of 2024-2025, PLANEA's network included 14 pilot centers, 385 collaborating centers across four regions, and 399 participating public schools.

Image Source: Slam Out Loud

Slam Out Loud – India



[Slam Out Loud](#) (SOL) is a non-profit organization reimagining how arts education and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) are delivered in India's public education system. Through poetry, storytelling, theatre, and visual arts, SOL supports children from underserved communities build Creative Confidence (life) skills to support them in finding their voice and expressing themselves meaningfully. SOL engages with 213,000

children in person, and reaches approximately 10 million through digital platforms.

Operating in India's decentralized education system, SOL partners directly with state governments to integrate SEL and place art educators in classrooms across four cities: Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Their at-scale model with governments in Punjab and Maharashtra combines contextual arts-based curricula, teacher training and support, and their SEL assessment framework. In Punjab, SOL has co-created the State Art Committee and is building the official textbook to reach 5 million children. In Maharashtra, their tribal education project has reached deeply underserved areas.

National Models Discussion

This section highlights a selection of models that illustrate innovative and exemplary programming infused into national public education systems. Top-down and middle-out approaches feature prominently among these models.

Key factors that emerge from the first group, national models stemming from government initiatives, include: 1) Collaborative efforts between national education ministries/departments with cultural ministries/departments. Ministry partnerships draw on the overlapping interests of governing bodies to enhance quality arts education in schools, and in turn, community engagement and programming in cultural institutions; 2) Intermediary agencies and organizations operating at the intersection of governing bodies and key stakeholders support the translation of strong policies into strong practices. Designated nonpartisan entities can serve as connectors between schools, arts organizations, and private sector partners. They can also play an essential role in conducting research, facilitating partnerships, and advocacy; 3) Investment and technical support to schools to develop culture/arts education frameworks that guide the offerings of a particular school and community; 4) Investment in quality teacher training and professional development opportunities for arts educators in schools, and 5) Creating cultural “hubs” within underserved areas through targeted outreach and investment in schools and community-based arts learning centers. These hub schools and learning centers can improve access, foster grassroots initiatives, and generate local demand for arts education among marginalized and/or harder-to-reach populations. Partnerships with creative arts professionals and institutions are pivotal to these last three points.

Key factors that emerge from the second group, arts organizations that support the inclusion of quality arts education programming into national public systems, include: 1) Partnerships with governing bodies to support the development of cultural plans, curricula, and arts education frameworks. Governing bodies rely on strong arts education partners to develop the guidelines and practices that facilitate the delivery of quality programming; 2) Partnerships to develop and deliver professional development for teachers. Arts organizations and professionals play an essential role in bridging gaps in teacher training; and 3) Partnerships that facilitate the co-creation and delivery of innovative and inclusive arts education programming alongside teachers and school leadership. Among the models featured here, the arts organizations that governments partner with to expand arts education often demonstrate a strong track record of delivering innovative programming that reaches marginalized or underserved populations. Their ability to address access gaps positions them as valuable collaborators in national efforts to strengthen arts education.

Taken together, these national models highlight the importance of translating arts education policies into meaningful practices through investment in partnerships, cooperation and collaboration, school-level frameworks, and teacher training. Across the board, the importance of public-civil society partnerships and public-private partnerships that facilitate collaboration between schools and local artists and cultural institutions are pivotal mechanisms delivering quality arts education in public schools. Several models also offer compelling examples of deliberate investment in addressing disparities in access between rural and urban areas, including targeted regional initiatives, mobile programming, and expanded digital access to arts education resources. The integration of digitization and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can extend the reach, relevance, and adaptability of arts education in diverse and underserved settings.

The diversity of national models featured in this section reflects a wide range of approaches to integrating arts education within public systems across different governance structures, cultural contexts, and resource levels. These models include examples from centralized and decentralized systems, and span varied art forms, pedagogical frameworks, and partnership structures. Importantly, they also demonstrate how arts education can be successfully scaled when supported by strong policy frameworks and meaningful local engagement. These models also serve as powerful advocacy tools, helping stakeholders illustrate what successful, government-engaged arts education can look like in practice. In particular, these models offer practical insights into funding and resourcing models, ranging from fully government-supported programs to those sustained through public-private and civil society partnerships, and provide a range of strategies to address one of the most commonly cited barriers to sustainable arts education.

CONCLUSION



Summary of Findings

The four findings sections of this report describe 1) *the problems* contributing to the marginalization or exclusion of arts in public school systems; 2) *the levers of change* and opportunities for infusing arts education into public education systems; 3) the status and momentum surrounding *global advocacy* for arts education; and 4) examples of *existing models* that successfully integrate quality arts education into public schools.

Research Question 1: Problem Analysis

The *problems* examined in section one highlight the challenge of funding and investment in arts education; the global focus on standardized test subjects; weak policy to support arts education; poor teacher training; and the low valuation of the arts. While these problems are not the only challenges affecting the provision of arts education, they consistently emerged as the most pressing throughout this investigation. Findings in this section reinforce much of what the literature tells us, with the benefit of some added nuance from interviewees. These problems are linked and overlapping, yet a low appreciation for the arts seems to be at both the beginning and end of the cycle.

Challenges surrounding insufficient funds and unsustainable funding for arts education is relevant across contexts. High-income countries have far more capacity and resources to invest in quality programming, yet the push for schools to equip students with skills that support labor market readiness and contribute to economic growth reaches across settings. This pressure contributes to the prioritization of literacy, numeracy, and STEM subjects over arts education which is especially pronounced in low- and middle-income countries, where resources are limited.

A hierarchy of subjects and skills is reinforced by global attention to standardized tests, which focus on math, language, and science. Standardized testing has spurred policy reprioritization and shuffling, yet a number of national policies acknowledge and even prioritize arts education, the importance of creativity, and their links to innovation. Despite policies that demonstrate a focus on arts education, investment of funds and resources are required to translate policy into practice. Weak arts education policy or even the weak implementation of strong policy marginalizes quality arts education in school systems.

The problem of teacher training is prevalent and cyclical, with diminishing quality cited among training programs, and fewer teachers choosing to train as arts education specialists. Generalist teachers typically receive minimal exposure to arts education, and without a background in the arts, they are equipped with too few skills to confidently or effectively deliver quality arts education. Contexts with strong policy that include compulsory arts education often struggle to fill positions with qualified teachers.

Prevailing attitudes and perceptions of arts education as a “frill” inform funding decisions, policy priorities, and the supply and demand of quality teacher training. Each of the problems described above contributes to a cycle of devaluation, and it affects the mindsets of all relevant stakeholders, policymakers, school leadership, teachers, parents, students, community members, etc.

Recommendations and strategic approaches for addressing the problems outlined in section one appear throughout the three findings sections that follow.

Research Question 2: Levers of Change

The ***levers of change*** findings show that stimulating demand for arts education in public schools requires unique approaches at various ecological levels. Local levers of change include fostering bottom-up advocacy through community stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers and local leaders. Regional levers of change include both top-down and middle-out approaches, highlighting the value of governmental support through investment and strategic frameworks, cross-sector partnerships, and the pivotal role of collaborations between schools and local arts institutions. Global levers of change include continuing to build and strengthen evidence and strengthening the infrastructure for knowledge exchange and advocacy.

Achieving meaningful and sustainable change requires both top-down alignment and grassroots momentum. Localized efforts, especially those rooted in community partnerships, can spark broader improvements when supported by strategic investment and supportive policies. Emphasizing flexible, context-responsive approaches supports responsive, accessible, and sustainable arts education programming, particularly in efforts to close gaps between urban and rural areas.

Strategic partnerships, targeted funding, and flexible implementation models can help overcome systemic barriers in under-resourced regions. At the same time, building a more inclusive global ecosystem for evidence-sharing and advocacy will be important to ensuring that promising practices and research reach the stakeholders who can use them.

This section also features ***promising rationales*** for integrating arts education, including its role in fostering citizenship, social cohesion, mental health, and 21st-century skills like creativity and critical thinking. Advancing these levers of change will depend not only on targeted investments and inclusive infrastructure, but also on the effective use of resonant rationales that highlight the value of arts education for students, communities, and societies.

Research Question 3: Global Advocacy

Findings in the ***global advocacy*** section emphasize opportunities to harness momentum around creativity, innovation, and the development of creative industries. UNESCO's 25-year leadership in arts education advocacy, culminating in the new Framework for Culture and Arts Education, opens strategic opportunities by linking education and culture. The OECD's push to promote creativity and creative thinking through education are reshaping global education priorities, offering arts education advocates a timely opportunity to highlight the strong alignment between arts learning and the 21st-century skills now in focus. This section also features key global advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders, including international organizations, philanthropists, and networks, who are driving change through research, partnerships, and investment.

While global advocacy has elevated arts education, stronger legal enforcement of existing international and national commitments is needed. Many countries mandate arts education in policy, but implementation remains inconsistent. Strengthening legal accountability, monitoring, and awareness at national and community levels would complement global advocacy.

The growing momentum surrounding cultural and creative economies reflected in initiatives like TVET and the integration of culture into the G20 agenda, offers new entry points for policy and investment. Philanthropic actors, education networks, and the emergence of high-profile champions also present promising opportunities to strengthen global advocacy and mobilize broader support.

Research Question 4: Existing Models

The last finding section presents ***existing models*** that successfully integrate arts into public education systems, including examples of those stemming from government initiatives, and those stemming from innovative arts organizations. The vital role of partnerships is emphasized again here, including public-civil society partnerships and

public-private partnerships, as well as the importance of collaboration, investment, and innovative practices in translating policies into quality arts education programming. Key features also include government collaboration across education ministries/departments, intermediary organizations that work at the intersection of governing bodies and key stakeholders, investment and technical support in developing school-level arts education frameworks and teacher training, and the contribution of arts organizations and professionals in developing arts education plans, curricula, and teacher training, and delivering quality programming.

The diversity of national models featured in this section reflects a wide range of approaches to integrating arts education within public systems across different governance structures, cultural contexts, and resource levels. These models include examples from centralized and decentralized systems, and span varied art forms, pedagogical frameworks, and partnership structures. Importantly, they also demonstrate how arts education can be successfully scaled when supported by strong policy frameworks and meaningful local engagement. These models offer practical insights into funding and resourcing models, one of the most frequently cited barriers to sustainable arts education, from fully government-supported programs to those sustained through public-private and civil society partnerships. At the same time, these models underscore the importance of structuring partnerships in ways that uphold local ownership and allocate resources efficiently.

Intermediary organizations, which often play a vital role in facilitating collaboration, providing technical support, and driving innovation, must be positioned thoughtfully to avoid diverting excessive funding or disempowering educators and community stakeholders. Ensuring that these organizations act as enablers rather than gatekeepers is critical to promoting equitable, responsive, and sustainable arts education programming.

Discussion and Recommendations

Disrupting a global cycle of devaluing the arts in public education requires coordinated, multi-level action. Drawing on the problem analysis, promising levers of change, global momentum, and existing national models outlined in this report, this section offers key recommendations to strengthen arts education from the classroom to global education systems and advocacy platforms.

Stronger mechanisms are needed to bridge gaps between policy and practice, from global frameworks to regional, national, and local levels. **Clearer implementation guidelines, robust monitoring systems, and greater awareness among educators and families can help strengthen legal accountability and translate policy into action.** This also includes enhancing enforcement of existing agreements and frameworks that support arts education within national systems. **Investing in intermediaries that connect policymakers with key stakeholders** is one way to advance this goal. These “go-betweens” include organizations, networks, and/or individuals that can play an important role in translating policy into effective implementation. However, they must be positioned to support educators and community stakeholders, rather than override or disempower them. Funding for these entities should be carefully calibrated to avoid diverting resources away from local arts education delivery.

At the local level, cultivating demand and shifting mindsets are essential levers of change. Shifting mindsets about the value of arts education demands deliberate efforts to create opportunities for “experiential” evidence. **Community arts experiences centered around high-quality arts education programming in schools facilitate opportunities for key stakeholders to gain the evidence of experience.** Events such as performances, festivals, and art exhibits create opportunities for stakeholders to witness and experience for themselves the value of quality arts education for children, teachers, schools, and communities. This kind of experiential evidence relies on **demonstrating the intrinsic value of the arts** — or art for art’s sake — rather than relying solely on the transfer effects of arts education to other domains. **Embedding community arts events into programming can make evidence more visible.** This recommendation applies across the board, from funders and arts organizations to school leadership and educators.

Schools with strong arts education programs are low-hanging fruit for generating community arts experiences and other “experiential evidence” opportunities. **Exemplary schools can be leveraged to cultivate broader demand for arts education.** For example, facilitating opportunities for stakeholders from other schools and districts (e.g., local lawmakers, school leadership, teachers, etc.) to experience and learn from best practices at exemplary schools can increase demand in other communities. One mechanism for supporting these opportunities is to **broaden partnerships with**

exemplary schools to include dedicated investments in outreach and capacity-building initiatives, enabling these schools to share their expertise and support the development of other schools without adding undue burdens. While exemplary schools are outliers within broader systems, **targeted outreach and investment into developing arts education “hub schools,” particularly in underserved areas, is another lever for increasing demand.**

Parents are pivotal audiences for targeted arts education advocacy because they wield significant influence over other key stakeholders including policymakers, school leadership, teachers, and children. Parents and caretakers are gatekeepers to their children's education through mechanisms including school selection, taxes, involvement in school-level or regional advocacy and/or governance, and through messages that they transmit to their children about the value of arts learning. If parents are convinced of the importance of arts education for the sake of their children's development, wellbeing, and/or future opportunities, they will go to bat for it. Once they are convinced, parents also play a pivotal role in safeguarding strong arts education programming and advocating for resources.

Regional and global advocacy efforts must complement local action by aligning messaging and strategies with emerging global priorities and local realities. Arts education advocacy should prioritize generating experiential evidence that demonstrates the intrinsic value of the arts, it should also **leverage the momentum surrounding timely instrumental value rationales, such as the global emphasis on enhancing creativity through education and the demand for 21st-century skills in an evolving workforce.** While other disciplines contribute to their development, the arts provide a uniquely concentrated and experiential context for enacting and refining them. **Policymakers, educators, and funders alike should recognize the strategic advantage of arts education in cultivating these future-proof skills.**

Several emerging global trends offer strategic entry points for arts education advocacy. A significant opportunity lies in **leveraging the global focus on building creative economies** to advocate for arts education throughout the education life cycle. This could include leveraging TVET initiatives to build public-private arts education partnerships at the secondary school-level, preparing students for roles in creative industries. Similarly, the **growing body of evidence linking arts and health provides another avenue for advocacy**, emphasizing the arts' role in supporting mental health and well-being. Additionally, the STEAM movement, which argues for the integration of arts into STEM learning, is gaining traction and establishing evidence of its relevance. Leveraging the momentum of STEAM is an opportunity for advocacy. Advocacy efforts can leverage this momentum by highlighting the benefits of a reciprocal relationship, advocating not only for adding arts to STEM but also for **putting STEM into the arts by investing in the modernization of arts education through the integration of**

advanced technology. Digital tools and emerging technologies can also help extend access to high-quality arts education in hard-to-reach areas, bridging geographic and resource gaps.

A robust infrastructure for research and coalition-building is key to global advocacy that can support sustainable change. **Strengthening the infrastructure for networks, research, and advocacy that bring multistakeholder coalitions together** is a top priority. This includes continuing to build rigorous evidence surrounding arts education and improving opportunities for meaningful knowledge-exchange across contexts. **Developing new frameworks**, such as a theory of change explicitly for arts education, could help illuminate the unique ways in which arts education fosters both intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes through experiential and transformative learning.

Strengthening the infrastructure of multistakeholder networks requires the **deliberate inclusion of underserved regions and groups**. Language in UNESCO's Framework for Culture and Arts Education about the importance of indigenous knowledge can be leveraged to advance this goal. For example, advance planning, dedicated funding, and ensuring a meaningful seat at the table could **facilitate the representation and participation of marginalized groups at international events**. The sector also requires deliberate efforts to **break down hierarchical research and knowledge exchange frameworks**. For example, donors could require and sponsor researchers to publish their work in open-access journals as part of their funding contracts. They could also allocate funds to support the translation and dissemination of key findings into other languages. Advocacy efforts would do well to **recruit high-profile arts education champions** to take up the cause at all levels; locally, regionally, and globally.

Successful national models profiled in this report point to enabling conditions that make systemic integration possible. High-quality arts education programming depends on **prioritizing teacher preparation at all stages**, from initial training to ongoing professional development, particularly for those in school leadership roles. **National models that demonstrate scalable high-quality arts education invest in teacher training, technical support, school-level arts education plans, and rely on enduring partnerships between schools and cultural institutions to accomplish these priorities.**

Existing models that successfully integrate arts education clearly point to the **crucial function of cross-sector arts partnerships for advancing quality arts education in public systems**. These include public–civil society collaborations, such as public schools working with local arts organizations, as well as public–private partnerships and other coalitions that bring together stakeholders across the education, arts, and culture sectors. However, these partnerships must move beyond short-term initiatives and project-based programming. **For arts education to be fully integrated into education systems, partnerships should be embedded in long-term strategies aligned with national priorities.**

Strengthening national frameworks is also essential. Coherent policies, curriculum guidance, and assessment models grounded in national priorities help ensure consistent implementation. In countries where these frameworks are underdeveloped, **targeted technical support to ministries of education and culture can facilitate adaptation and scale.** The private sector often plays a crucial role in supporting innovative programming, especially in settings where public investment is limited. In addition to enabling schools to collaborate with local arts institutions, private funders could support technical experts to help governing bodies in lower-income settings develop arts education policies and curricula.

Just as exemplary schools can inspire replication and improvement at the local level, **exemplary national models of arts education integration offer valuable blueprints for learning and adaptation across education systems.** Policymakers and practitioners can draw from the diverse models profiled in this report, which showcase practical approaches to implementation across both centralized and decentralized contexts. **To support this kind of peer learning at scale, regional and global stakeholders should invest in platforms and exchange mechanisms that promote cross-country dialogue, shared learning, and transfer of promising practices.** Prioritizing these kinds of system-level learning exchanges, as schools do with one another, can accelerate the spread of effective strategies, evidence, and tools for integrating and sustaining arts education. Sharing these models can also help advocates showcase what is possible and build support for systems-level investment.

Advancing arts education on a global scale requires a multistakeholder approach that fosters cross-sector partnerships, strengthens policy implementation, and prioritizes both intrinsic and instrumental rationales. By investing in networks, frameworks, and experiential evidence, and by aligning grassroots and global advocacy, stakeholders can create the conditions for systemic and lasting change. In doing so, we can move closer to a world where all children, regardless of geography or background, have meaningful access to the transformative power of the arts.



We have historically struggled with questions around the purpose of education often employed to serve dominant ideologies that ignored the complexity and interrelatedness of human nature – the emotional, spiritual, rational, physical and beyond. While acknowledging this complexity will help the arts find their rightful place, We, at the Community Arts Network, believe that the arts are the very vehicle to take us in that direction.

Community Arts Network Team



Image Source: ChezaCheza

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Participating Organizations and Regions

AFRICA (East)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Kenya	Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology Jooust	Interview
	Music Department Technical University of Kenya	Interview
	Harmony Kenya Foundation	Interview
	Kenyatta University	Survey
	Art of Music Foundation	
	ChezaCheza	Survey
	El Sistema Kenya	Survey
	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development	Survey
	Daystar University	Survey
	Kenya Institute of Puppet Theatre	Survey
Rwanda	Brass for Africa	Survey
Somalia	Somali Arts Foundation	Interview
Tanzania	Talanta Tano	Survey
Uganda	Brass for Africa	Survey
	Makerere University Kampala	Survey
	Mebo Theatre Documentaries LTD. Uganda	Survey
AFRICA (West)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Ghana	Foundation for Contemporary Art (FCA)	Interview
	University of Cape Coast	Survey
Liberia	Brass for Africa	Survey

AFRICA (South)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Botswana	The University of Botswana	Survey
Namibia	National Institute for Educational Development	Interview
	Africa Arts Association (AfrAA)	Survey
South Africa	Windybrow Art Centre	Interview
	The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ)	Interview, Survey
	Funda Community College Arts Centre	Survey
	The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative (FATC)	Survey
Zimbabwe	University of Zimbabwe	Survey
Mozambique	Associação Moçambicana para a Educação em Artes Musicais	Survey
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Egypt	Helwan University Egypt	Interview
	October University for Modern Sciences and Arts	Survey
	Museum of Egyptian Modern Art	Survey
	Ministry of Culture	Survey
Iran	Tehran University of Medical Sciences	Survey
Jordan	Madrasati	Interview, Survey
	Ministry of Education - Jordan	Interview
Sudan	College of Music and Drama at Sudan University of Science and Technology	Survey
Qatar	University of Doha, Qatar Petrochemical Company	Interview
Turkey	Bursa Uludag University	Survey
ASIA (East)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
China	Yew Wah International Education School of Shanghai Gubei Arts and Design	Interview
	Helena Academy of Drama and English (HADE)	Interview
	William Theatre	Interview

ASIA (East)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Japan	Ministry of Education	Interview
	Joshihi University of Art and Design	Survey
	Kanagawa Prefectural Sagami Koyokan High School	
South Korea	Korea Arts & Culture Education Service (KACES)	Interview
ASIA (South)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
India	Slam Out Loud	Interview
	State Council of Educational Research (SCERT)	Interview
	NalandaWay Foundation	Interview, Survey
	Azim Premji University	Survey
Nepal	Bikalpa Arts Center	Survey
ASIA (Southeast)	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Singapore	University of the Arts Singapore	Interview
	Singapore Drama Educators Association	Survey
Vietnam	University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh City	Survey
Philippines	ArtGuro	Interview
	Department of Education, Catanduanes	Survey
OCEANIA	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Australia	Arts and Social Sciences Department at The University of Sydney	Interview
	Big MAMA Productions	Survey
	CREATE Centre	Interview
	Primary Creative Arts Western Sydney University	Interview
	Connecting the Dots in Music	Survey
	Elder Conservatorium of Music	Survey

OCEANIA	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
	University of Adelaide	Survey
	Brainstorm Productions Play Ltd.	Survey
New Zealand	Centre for Arts and Social Transformation Auckland University	Interview
	Dance Studies Department University of Auckland	Interview
	Ministry of Education New Zealand, Sistema Whangarei -Toi Akorangi	Survey
	Kings College, Auckland University of Technology	Survey
The CARIBBEAN	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Sint Maarten	Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth, and Sport	Interview
EUROPE	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Austria	Community Arts Lab & Porticus	Interview
Denmark	Rhythmic Music Conservatory	Survey
Finland	Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore	Interview
	Finnish Children's Cultural Centers	Interview
	Ministry for Education and Culture	Interview
France	UNESCO Paris	Interview
	Orchestre à l'École	Survey
Ireland	Art Education Department Mary Immaculate College Ireland	Interview
	Galway Art Academy	Survey
Italy	Bari Conservatory	Interview
Luxembourg	El Sistema - Luxembourg	Survey
Netherlands	Méér Muziek in de Klas	Interview
Norway	Seanse Art Center, Volda University College	Survey
	Kulturtanken Arts for Young Audiences	Survey
Portugal	Curriculum Development Department - Directorate General for Education	Interview
	Ministry of Education Portugal	Interview

EUROPE	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Romania	Asociația Superar	Survey
Scotland	Creative Scotland	Interview
Serbia	International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA)	Interview
Slovakia	Civic Association Superar Slovakia	Survey
Spain	Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, Culture (OEI)	Interview
	Accion por la Musica	Survey
	Pedagogías Invisibles	Survey
United Kingdom	Global Institute of Creative Thinking; Centre for Real-World Learning	Email Correspondence
	Music Masters	Interview
Ukraine	International school	Survey
SOUTH AMERICA	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Argentina, Colombia, Peru	Latin American Center for Service Learning (CLAYSS)	Interview
	Crear Vale La Pena	Survey
Brazil	lochpe Foundation	Interview
	ABEM Brazilian Association of Musical Education	Survey
	Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina/ Secretaria Estadual de Educação de Santa Catarina	Survey
	Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Sul / Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Artes Visuais	
Chile	Department of Artistic Education in the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage Chile	
Ecuador	Tinkuy Encuentros Arte Educación	Survey

NORTH AMERICA	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
Canada	Art and Dream Studio	Survey
	McGill University	Survey
	ExChange	Survey
	Dozan World	Survey
	York University	Survey
Mexico	Mexican Institute of Arts Education IMASE	Survey
United States	Artful Learning	Interview
	Creative Generation	Interview
	Boston College	Interview
	New York University Arts Education	Interview
	Teaching for Artistic Behavior, Inc.	Survey
	Brooklyn College, The City University of New York	Survey
	George Mason University	Survey
	The Creative Future LLC	Interview, Survey
	Chicago Public Schools Department of Arts Education	Survey
	Mather Site Art	Survey
	Rehearsal for Life, Inc.	Survey
	Center for Artistry and Scholarship	Survey
	The Neo-Political Cowgirls	Survey
	University of Colorado Denver	Survey
	Fairfax County Public Schools	Survey
	Antioch Charter Academy	Survey
	MINDPOP	Survey
	Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestras	Survey
	The Lewis Prize for Music	Survey
	Seminole County Public Schools	Survey

NORTH AMERICA	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
	StageWrite	Survey
	San Diego Youth Symphony	Survey
GLOBAL	ORGANIZATION	RESPONSE MODALITY
	The International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ)	Interview
	International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA)	Interview
	International Society of Education through Art (InSEA)	Interview
	International Society of Music Education (ISME)	Interview
	UNESCO Executive Office of Culture	Interview
	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	Interview
	LEGO Foundation	Email Correspondence
	Bright Future Arts Foundation	Survey
	Union Internationale de la Marionnette (UNIMA)	Survey
	Music Masters	Interview

Appendix B. Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Name, Title, Location (city, country)

1. Tell me a little about the work you do and the ways that it interacts with the arts or arts education.
2. How, if at all, do you see arts education contributing to an individual's learning or development (for example, academic performance, creativity, innovation, play, SEL, mental health? empathy? Social responsibility? democratic values? sense of belonging? tolerating different views or beliefs? Something else?)
3. How, if at all, do you see arts education contributing to a community's/society's development?
4. Do you think some types of arts education should be prioritized over others, or that learning about some art forms holds greater value than others?
5. What are the greatest obstacles to arts education in government/public schools? (for example, standardized testing, focus on STEM, the challenge of quantifying arts education, lack of theory and measures, something else?)
6. What are the greatest assets for arts education in government/public schools in terms of enablers or funders? (for example, public-private partnerships, specific funders/orgs/government officials, something else?)
7. What are the greatest assets for arts education in government/public schools in terms of perceptions or evidence about its benefits? (for example, STEAM, building SEL, promoting innovation, something else?)
8. While my main goal with the interview is to gather your ideas and learn from your expertise, I am also trying to gather as much literature on these ideas as possible. Is there any key evidence that you would recommend? (*particularly important for non-Western orgs/interviewees)
9. Can you think of a particular government/organization/program that provides exemplary arts education in public schools?
 - a. *If speaking to an arts organization, first ask: What are the most successful aspects of your approach? What makes it possible? What aspects of your approach could be transferable to another organization in a different setting, or even in a different country?
 - 9a. [If yes to 9, skip if no] What is exceptional about their approach?
 - 9b. [If yes to 9, skip if no] What makes their approach possible?
10. Who are the most effective arts education advocates nationally? (for example, specific funders, organizations, government officials, someone else?)
11. Who are the most effective arts education advocates globally? (for example, UNESCO, specific funder, specific government, specific network, someone else?)
12. What would need to happen for arts education to receive greater priority in government schools than it does now? [What is the single greatest need in order for arts education to be prioritized in government schools globally?]
 - a. [adjust this when speaking to a governmental figure: What would you/your government need in order to give greater priority to arts education in national schools?]
13. Did you have a chance to take a look at the desk review summary that I sent along with the questions? If so, is there anything you read there that stood out to you as particularly relevant or not relevant to the work that you do/your organization does?
14. Is there anything else that you'd like me to know?
15. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C. Codebook

ARTS EDUCATION MODALITY	
Crafting	Crafting education taught in schools
Dance	Dance education taught in schools
Digital media arts	Digital media arts taught in schools
Drama/theatre	Drama/theatre education taught in schools
Filmmaking	Filmmaking taught in schools
Music	Music education taught in schools
Photography	Photography education taught in schools
Poetry/creative writing	Poetry education taught in schools
Visual Arts	Visual arts education taught in schools
BACKGROUND INFO	Name, title, org, geographic region, etc.
Personal History	Description of background in the arts
COVID	Any reference to COVID
CURRICULA	Any reference to education curricula
Centralized	School curriculum is centralized
Curricula: Change	Reference to change in curriculum past and present
Curricula: History/Past	Accounts of what curricula used to look like in the past
Curricula: Arts Education	Any reference to arts education curriculum for schools/classrooms
Curricula: Negative	Any negative reference to curricula
Curricula: Positive	Any positive reference to curricula
Curricula: Subject other than arts	Any reference to non-arts subjects curriculum for schools/classrooms
Curriculum Development	Curriculum development that prioritizes arts education
Decentralized	School curriculum is decentralized
Syllabus	Reference syllabus models
EDUCATION SYSTEM	Reference to the education system global and local

Arts Education	Project focus- roadmap to bringing in/back arts ed to public education
Private Education	Any reference to private education or schooling
Public Education	Any reference to the public/national education or schooling
FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INCLUSION/EXCLUSION OF ARTS EDUCATION	What are some of the underlying causes for the exclusion or marginalization of arts within public education systems globally? How, if at all, are these causes related?
Accessibility	Reference to access to arts education
AI: Technological Advancement	Learning AI and technology become centered and most valued in schools, some schools not able to keep up with advancements
Attitudes & beliefs	Negative attitudes and beliefs about arts education's purpose and benefit
Cross Educational Comparison	Rise of comparison across countries/cultures of education outcomes
Economic Measures	Success of education based on economic factors
Employability	Public schools focus on education outcomes based on employability /job market
Global Education Market	Market for the exchange of global education policy and practice
Grade focus	Emphasis on teaching and student performance for grades
Literacy	Any reference to literacy and literacy being prioritized discipline over arts ed
Math	Any reference to math and math being a prioritized discipline over arts ed
National Economic Development	Focus on economic growth
National Standardized Tests	Reference to national standardized testing in schools
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act- 2002- school accountability through assesment, begin focus on standarized testing in the US
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
Quantifiable Data	Policy makers want measurable data and outcomes for education in public schools
Science	Any reference to science and science being prioritized discipline over arts ed
Standarized testing	Reference to standarized testing
STEM	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
TVET	Reference/ focus on technical and vocational education and training
FUNDING	Funding sources and measures

Donors	Reference to donors for arts education and funding
Funding: lack of	Poor funding for arts education and programs
Funding: resources, assests	Funding support and resources
Funding: strategy	Reference to funding strategies for art education
Government	Reference to government funding
Grants	Reference to grant funding and writing for arts education and programming
Philanthropy	Reference to philanthropic funding for arts education and programs
PARENTS	
Parents: Beliefs and attitudes	Reference to parental beliefs and attitudes surrounding arts education
Parents: lack of value	Parents prioritize societal ideas of success (e.g. income based professions, lawyer, doctor)
Parents: support	reference to parental support for arts education
POLICY	
Arts Education Policy	Education policies that prioritize arts education
Education Policy	Postive and Negative policies that structure arts education
Global Education Policy	Reference to global expectations and practices for arts education
Government Policy	Education policy established by local and federal government
Regional Policy	Education policy established and implemented regionally
POSITIVE IMPACTS OF ARTS EDUCATION	How do the arts facilitate human and country development?
Civic Education	Arts offer a vessel to teach civic education and build engaged citizens
Democracy	Arts contribute to thriving democracies
Creativity	Arts foster creativity
Economic growth	Arts facilliate knowledge sharing and instrumental rationales that build skills
Empathy building	Empathetic perspective taking and bridging social divides
Experiential learning	Arts facilitate narrative building and knowledge sharing
Innovation	Fosters innovation with economic development and learning subjects
Learning through play	Learning through play linked to arts education

SEL	Social and Emotional Learning linked to arts ed
Social cohesion	Nation building, tolerance of differences for societal functioning
Whole child development	Arts contribute to well rounded and holistic development of children
RECOMENDATIONS/MOVING FORWARD	
Contacts & Resources	Suggested contacts and resources from interviewee
SCHOOLS	
Policy- practice gaps	Gaps in art education praxis
Resources, supplies, materials	Mention of resources, supplies and materials in public schools
Schedule	Issues with class scheduling arts education
RQ2: DRIVERS/LEVERS OF CHANGE	"Promising practices and potential levers of change at the global, regional, or local level for the inclusion, promotion, and consideration of arts education as fundamental for whole child development within public education systems."
Lever of change global	Lever of change working to improve arts education on the global level
Lever of change local	Lever of change working to improve arts education on the local level
Lever of change regional	Lever of change working to improve arts education on the regional level
Public- private partnerships	Public-private partnerships that involve state-level actors (i.e., education ministries/boards, philanthropies, nonprofits) and local arts groups
Research/Evidence	Reference to theories of change and new measures for art education
STEAM	Science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics
RQ2A: PROMISING RATIONALES FOR ARTS EDUCATION	What are some of the most promising rationales for integrating arts education to improve whole child development outcomes including academic learning, psychosocial support, social emotional learning, and/or future employment?
Value of arts education: Intrinsic	Holistic development/welbeing
Value of arts education: instrumental	Elevate the importance of arts education for the cultivation of creativity support potential future employment outcome
RQ3A: KEY ACTORS AND MECHANISMS FOR ADVOCACY	Key advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders in arts education.
Advocate	Working towards uplifting and bettering arts education and initiatives
Corporate actor	Corporations contributing to arts education in schools.

RQ3A: KEY ACTORS AND MECHANISMS FOR ADVOCACY	Key advocates, frontrunners, and potential co-funders in arts education.
Advocate	Working towards uplifting and bettering arts education and initiatives
Corporate actor	Corporations contributing to arts education in schools.
Funder	Reference to funders supporting arts education
Global Organization	Reference to global organization working in/supporting arts education
High profile & celebrity advocates	High profile & celebrity advocates for arts education
InSea	International Society of Education through Art
ISME	International Society for Music Education
Local Organization	Reference to local orgs supporting and working with arts ed in schools, non-profit
NGO	Reference to NGO working in/supporting arts education
Ministries	Reference to MoE, MoC supporting arts education
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
Philanthropy	Reference to philanthropy and philanthropists supporting arts education
Public arts, events, performance, festivals	
SDG4	Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality education for all that provides knowledge and skills needed for sustainable development
Seoul Agenda	Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education, 2010 UNESCO sponsored world conference in North Korea
Students	Students advocating for the positive impacts of arts education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Artists	Artists advocating for the positive impacts of arts education
WAAE	"World Alliance for Arts Education:) is an advocacy and research network comprised of four global organisations: the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association, International Society of Education through Art, International Society for Music Education and World Dance Alliance"
RQ4: EXISTING MODELS	National models that include arts in their public education systems
After & outside of school programs	After and outside school programs and clubs dedicated to Arts Education
Negative aspects/examples of models	Reference to current arts education working negatively in schools

Nonformal/informal programs	Programs that do not take place in public school settings
Postive aspects/examples of models	Reference to current arts education working postivley in schools
SOCIETY, CULTURE AND NORMS	Any reference to culture and education system
Colonial Education	Any reference to colonial education practices and influence
Decolonization	Any reference to decolonizing education, curriculum, practice, organizations
History	Any reference to the history of education
Indigenous	Any reference to indigenous knowledge systems, education, practice
Post Colonial Education	Any reference to post colonial education, influence, impact
Region	Any reference to region and influence on education
Religion	Any reference to religion and influence on education
Society: lack of value	Art education under valued in societal discourse/status quo
Society: support	Reference to societal support for arts education
TEACHERS	Any reference to teachers
Teaching Artists	Reference to teaching artists/practices in public schools
Teachers: postive	Any positive reference to teachers or training
Teachers: negative	Any negative reference to teachers or training
Teacher: employment	Reference to teachers employment, jobs
Teacher: training	Any reference to teacher training

Appendix D. Survey Protocol

1. Which of the following best describes you? (select as many as apply):

- Government representative with knowledge about arts education in public schools;
- Representative for an arts education organization that provides programming in public schools;
- Independent expert on arts education in public schools;
- Representative for an organization that does advocacy work for arts education in public schools;
- Representative for a donor organization that funds arts education in public schools
- Arts educator in public schools;
- Researcher/scholar specializing in arts education;
- Other: [text entry]

2. Your name and title:

3. Organization/agency (if applicable):

4. Organization/agency category (select as many as apply):

- CBO/CSO;
- nonprofit;
- donor;
- government;
- educational: School/College/University;
- multilateral;
- network;
- individual,
- freelance;
- other: text entry]

5. In which region(s) do you primarily work? (select as many as apply):

- North Africa;
- Central Africa;
- East Africa;
- West Africa;
- Southern Africa;
- North America;
- Central America and the Caribbean;
- South America;
- Europe;
- Middle East;
- Central Asia;
- East Asia;
- South Asia;
- Southeast Asia;
- Oceania

6. In which country/countries do you primarily work? [dropdown menu]

7. What type(s) of arts education do you or your organization/agency primarily support or provide? (select as many as apply):

- visual arts (e.g., drawing, painting, photography;
- sculpture; ceramics);
- music education (e.g., singing, playing an instrument, school orchestra and/or band);
- dance education;
- drama education, poetry/creative writing;

- digital media arts;
- filmmaking;
- Other: [text entry];
- [n/a]

8. Briefly describe (in 1-2 sentences) how you or your organization/agency provides and/or supports arts education in public/government schools: [short answer]:

9. Is the education system in which you support or provide arts programming centralized or decentralized at the national level? [centralized; decentralized; other: text entry]

a. [If item b (“representative for an arts education org...” is selected in response to #1] Is your arts education programming institutionalized within the national education system or are there plans to scale it up nationally/institutionalize it within the education system? (e.g., be part of the national curriculum or national teachers' training, etc.? *Please note: We are specifically seeking organizations with programs and/or plans in place to institutionalize arts into public schools, versus projects that end when funding runs out.)

Y/N

Other: text entry

Q9a sub-questions (for models):

i. [If Y or Other to 9a] Briefly explain: How is your arts education programming institutionalized within the national education system? Or what plans are in place to scale it up within the national education system? (e.g., be part of the national curriculum or national teachers' training, etc.): [short answer]

ii. [If Y or Other to 9a] What makes it possible?: What are some of the essential elements or assets that enable your arts education programming to be institutionalized/scaled on a national level? (select as many as apply):

- POLICY: inclusion of arts education on national assessments/standardized tests;
- POLICY: strong arts education policy;
- CURRICULUM: strong arts education curriculum;
- CURRICULUM: using arts to enhance learning in other subjects
- INVESTMENT: commitment of funding and/or resources from government
- INVESTMENT: commitment of funding and/or resources from partnering institutions/individuals;
- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: teaching/professional artist programs in schools;
- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: public-private partnerships;
- EVIDENCE: strong research or results from programming;
- DEMAND: high demand from parents;
- DEMAND: high demand from students;
- DEMAND: high demand from teachers;
- SUPPLY: lack of well-trained teachers to fill positions;
- ADVOCACY: high profile/celebrity advocates;
- ADVOCACY: effective advocates in leadership positions;
- Other: text entry]

iii. [If Y or Other to 9a] Are there other key factors that make your model for arts education successful? Please explain. [short answer]

iv. [If N to 9a] What would make it possible?: What elements or assets would you need in order for your arts education programming to be institutionalized/scaled on a national level or adopted by the MoE? (select as many as apply):

- POLICY: inclusion of arts education on national assessments/standardized tests;
- POLICY: strong arts education policy;
- INVESTMENT: commitment of funding and/or resources from government
- INVESTMENT: commitment of funding and/or resources from partnering institutions/individuals;

- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: teaching/professional artist programs in schools;
- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: public-private partnerships;
- EVIDENCE: strong research or results from programming;
- DEMAND: high demand from parents;
- DEMAND: high demand from students;
- DEMAND: high demand from teachers;
- SUPPLY: employment options in the arts;
- ADVOCACY: high profile/celebrity advocates;
- ADVOCACY: effective advocates in leadership positions;
- SOCIETAL VALUE: society has greater appreciation or value of the arts; Other: text entry

10. In your opinion, how does arts education contribute to an individual's learning or development? (select up to 3):

- strengthens academic performance in other subjects;
- builds creativity;
- increases innovation;
- increases critical thinking;
- supports whole child development;
- promotes democratic values/social responsibility;
- promotes empathy;
- promotes social cohesion;
- Other: [text entry]

11. In your opinion, what are the top 3 obstacles to providing quality arts education in government/public schools? (select up to 3) [multiple choice:

- POLICY-CURRICULUM:
- POLICY-CURRICULUM: prioritization of skills and subjects measured by standardized tests;
- POLICY-CURRICULUM: prioritization of STEM;
- POLICY: insufficient policy to support arts education;
- INVESTMENT: insufficient funds and/or resources to implement arts education in schools;
- INVESTMENT: insufficient teacher training;
- EVIDENCE: insufficient evidence that demonstrates the benefits of arts;
- DEMAND: lack of demand for arts education from parents;
- DEMAND: lack of demand for arts education from students;
- DEMAND: lack of demand for arts education from teachers;
- SUPPLY: lack of trained teachers to fill positions;
- SUPPLY: lack of employment options in the arts;
- SOCIETAL VALUE: society does not appreciate or value the arts;
- SOCIETAL ETHICS: society has ethical or moral objections to arts education;
- Other: [text entry]

12. In government/public schools where quality arts education is currently available to students, what are the top 3 assets or resources that make it possible? (select up to 3): [multiple choice:

- POLICY: including assessment of arts education on national assessments/standardized tests;
- POLICY: strong arts education policy;
- POLICY-CURRICULUM: strong arts education curriculum;
- CURRICULUM: using arts to enhance learning in other subjects;
- INVESTMENT: sustainable/reliable funding;
- INVESTMENT: strong teacher training model;
- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: teaching/professional artist programs in schools;
- INVESTMENT-PARTNERSHIPS: public-private partnerships;
- EVIDENCE: strong evidence that demonstrates benefits of arts education;
- DEMAND: demand from parents;
- DEMAND: demand from students;
- DEMAND: demand from teachers;
- ADVOCATES: high profile/celebrity advocates;

- ADVOCATES: supportive government leadership;
- ADVOCATES: supportive school leadership;
- INVESTMENT/EVIDENCE/ADVOCACY: school showcases and/or public performances that demonstrate value of arts education to community and/or leadership;
- Other: [text entry.]

13. In your opinion, who are the top 3 most effective advocates for arts education in public schools nationally and/or globally? (select up to 3): [multiple choice:

- artists;
- students;
- teachers;
- parents;
- local art organizations/institutions;
- researchers that demonstrate benefits of arts education;
- donor organizations/institutions;
- arts education networks;
- UNESCO;
- celebrities/high profile individuals, exemplary schools with strong arts education programming
- Other: [text entry.]

a. You selected "local art organizations/institutions" as one of the most effective advocates in the previous question. Are there local arts organizations that are doing especially strong advocacy work that we should know about and/or get in contact with? If so, would you kindly share their names/websites/contact information?

14. In your opinion, what is most needed in order to expand and prioritize arts education in public/government schools?: (select up to 3): [multiple choice:

- POLICY: Include arts education on standardized tests;
- POLICY: Strengthen arts education policy and curricula;
- POLICY: Allocate more time for arts in the curriculum;
- POLICY: Create policy to support teacher autonomy;
- INVEST: Dedicate funds and resources to support provision of arts education;
- INVEST: Invest in strong pre and in-service training for teachers;
- INVEST-PARTNERSHIPS: Invest in partnerships between schools, professional teaching artists, and arts institutions;
- INVEST-PARTNERSHIPS: Invest in public-private partnerships in collaboration with dedicated governmental leadership;
- EVIDENCE: Conduct research to show measurable benefits of arts education for learning and/or development;
- EVIDENCE: Conduct research to show effectiveness of institutionalized program/model that can be scaled,
- EVIDENCE: Generate a theory of change or a measure for arts education;
- ADVOCACY: influential advocacy from high profile/celebrity advocates;
- ADVOCACY: Advocate for integration of arts learning into other subjects (e.g., S.T.E.A.M);
- ADVOCACY: Network and partner with UNESCO to influence global policy;
- ADVOCACY: Advocate for centrality of arts to creativity and innovation;
- INVEST/EVIDENCE/ADVOCACY: School showcases and/or public performances that demonstrate value of arts education to community and/or leadership;
- Other: [text entry]

14a. Briefly explain why you selected these needs.

15. Are there other institutions, experts, and/or government representatives supporting exemplary arts education programming in public/government schools that we should send this survey to, or contact for an interview? (Please note: We are especially interested in making connections to individuals and organizations in low and middle income countries.): [text entry]

16. Is there anything else you would like to share with us? [text entry]