

# Current Streams in American Art Education



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# INTRODUCTION

This book was started several years ago as a part of my personal engagement with the American educational system. After moving to the USA, we had to adjust to new educational standards for our two daughters who were teenagers at that time. Also, because of my personal interest as a scholar in the related field of Art Education I was eager to analyze and compare the educational system of my country (Russia) with the system of American education. These reasons happily combined in my understanding of how this system works for my children and in my interest in writing about discoveries in the field which I can share with colleagues. Since that time, many things have happened: I have become a member of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), presented some ideas at an NAEA convention, interviewed teachers, and published articles and books in both Russian and English. All efforts were motivated by my curiosity to dig deeply to make connections and distinctions, to feel and express the similarities and differences. Obviously, the systems were different, but those differences were hard to define at first glance. It was necessary to create criteria for differentiation.

This book is written by a person who is interested in the system, but who is an outsider. The outsider does not judge and evaluate because his or her intention is to ponder on a system in an attempt to understand. My intention is to make a narrative analysis rather than give the reader comparisons. To be honest, I wrote several articles from that perspective, but found it inefficient because in this case the format is constrained by constant references and digressions from one system to another. After some deliberation, I have decided to put aside all attempts to make a perfect comparison and have started to compose a book about the American system itself.

The traditional structure of such editions is usually based on a historic-conceptual approach, starting from the process of development and then moving to the structure of a subject. This volume does not have such a traditional configuration. On the contrary, it looks more unorganized from the perspective of the customary arrangement. From the author's perspective, the subject, modern art education, dictates the unusual plan. Modern education changes constantly and offers many controversial issues. It could be a commonplace to start observations from modern

processes of globalization and the dominance of technologies, but it is inescapable to avoid these general reasons for changing the big picture of education in the modern world. This volume's structure is based on the most relevant topics which exist in current art education in the USA. The author does not have the intention to describe the entire system of art education in the country because to reach that goal would take the efforts of numerous skillful and experienced scholars. Overall, it would be impossible and, probably, unnecessary to provide the entire picture of the field. The book concentrates on the most current issues relevant to the modern time. In the book, new sociological approaches present in American art education of the XXI century are analyzed. The author considers the transformation of the concept of aesthetic experience according to the modern multicultural milieu in the USA. In the beginning of the XXI century, the aesthetic experience concept was replaced by ideas of socialization, visual culture and museum experience. The current educational environment embraces the ideas of visual culture studies, the characteristics of the modern generation, and social factors. Museum pedagogy is studied from its capacity to be involved in art education teaching methods. The book embraces a broad variety of references to illustrate the current streams in modern American art education.

Chapter I, "Art Education in the USA" is dedicated to the system of American education. It observes the general principles of art education in the USA: its history, the schools, the curricula and the subjects. In the teaching of art, from the perspectives of organization, class management, advanced placement and special interests, the chapter portrays the whole system of American pedagogy of art. The chapter points out the benefits and disadvantages of the art education system as a significant part of art pedagogy.

Chapter II, "XX century: Classic Era. The Concept of the Aesthetic Experience in American Art Education", considers models of the concept of aesthetic experience, the fundamental term of art education. The models are deliberated from the perspectives of meaningful categories, such as those forming the perception of art and creativity. The aesthetic experience is considered in its development through the XX century to its transformation at the beginning of the XXI century. Based on more than one hundred academic sources on the aesthetic experience, the chapter focuses on both theoretical and practical materials. The theory of aesthetics in American pedagogy of art is analyzed as a part of art education development. The practical materials include description and analysis of art projects in an American high school.



Chapter III, “XXI century: Wind of Changes”, gives ideas about some changes in the modern world. Based on the author’s observations, three specific areas were studied as important to understand changes in modern education. The psychological and educational traits of modern generations are considered in connection with ways to improve the modern educational environment as a dialogic space for communication. From this standpoint it is essential to analyze the environment of visual culture. Chapter III provides the base for the next chapter, Chapter IV, which describes current tendencies in art education.

Chapter IV, “Current Streams in Modern American Art Education”, defines significant aspects of modern art education. The materials analyzed are taken from NAEA (National Art Education Association) annual conventions, where all current streams and issues are presented from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Also, the chapter presents current processes in the development of modern museum pedagogy because of its dynamic involvement in art education learning methods. The chapter offers a classification of art museums in the USA based on their role in the educational environment.

Overall, the book analyzes modern approaches in American art education from historic and comparative perspectives. To illustrate the current streams in modern art pedagogy, the book has embraced a broad variety of references, including museums’ school projects and internet sources for art and art education. The author believes the volume will be helpful in continuing comparative and analytical studies of the modern art education system.



# CHAPTER I

## ART EDUCATION IN THE USA

Aesthetic choice is a highly individual matter, and aesthetic experience is always a private one. Every new aesthetic reality makes one's experience even more private; and this kind of privacy, assuming at times the guise of literary (or some other) taste, can in itself turn out to be, if not as guarantee, then a form of defense against enslavement. (...) The more substantial an individual's aesthetic experience is, the sounder his taste, the sharper his moral focus, the freer - though not necessarily the happier - he is.

—Joseph Brodsky<sup>1</sup>

### **I.1. General Observation of the Art Education System in the USA**

It is impossible to talk about an education system of a country without discussing the system's structure and terminology. This chapter describes the USA educational system at the beginning of the XXI century, its terminology and its peculiarities, and its educational standards. The chapter pays specific attention to art education in the school system as a part of the art education system. In addition, the chapter considers a system of teaching arts at the advanced level that prepares students for a professional career in the arts. The history of art education in the USA is a

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<sup>1</sup> (Nobel Lecture, December 8, 1987)

[http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1987/brodsky-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1987/brodsky-lecture.html)

long and interesting process reflected in the publications of prominent authors, such as Eisner<sup>2</sup> or Rosenfeld<sup>3</sup>, and requires specific attention with a deep and vast cultural commentary. This book considers only specific tendencies that are current for the modern process of teaching arts.

The term “art education” is accepted as the basic form to describe the process of teaching visual arts in American schools. Nowadays the term “art education” means teaching visual arts, such as drawing, painting, graphics, ceramics. Other arts, for example, music and theater, are not part of art education and exist as different fields in the VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts Program), the umbrella term for the special segment in American schools’ program. This situation is not the same in other countries where different types of creative activities are organized differently. In comparison, in the Russian educational system the term “art education” is the umbrella term for any type of creative performing activities and includes not only visual arts, but also music, theater and art craft. If in the American educational system each part of artistic activities is represented by different special teachers’ and scholars’ unions and associations, in Russia they belong to one research institution that unites all directions of aesthetic creative activities. This example demonstrates the diversity of systems existing in the modern world, and complications occur when comparing the educational systems of different countries.

In this part of the chapter, a brief observation of American education history is presented. There are many books on the subject available, and a reader can consult the bibliography<sup>4 5</sup>. The history of art education in the USA has its roots in the 1870s, when the Boston Committee made a proposal and the Congress of the USA approved a subject “Technical Drawing” as a part of the school curriculum<sup>6 7</sup>. The goal of this action was preparation of specialists for the design offices of East Coast textile manufacturers. Growing cotton on the East Coast and fabric production were the leading industries of the economy. Developing a syllabus and forming the principles of teaching art were connected to William Smyth, English designer and educator. W. Smyth was invited to the USA to organize the process of implementing graphic design for schools that were preparing future fabric designers for factories. These schools needed educators to teach art according to the specific principles of fabric design,

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<sup>2</sup> (Eisner 2005)

<sup>3</sup> (Rosenfeld 2007)

<sup>4</sup> (Efland 1990)

<sup>5</sup> (Smith 1996)

<sup>6</sup> (Smyth 1872)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

with its graphic clarity and special color palettes. The need to provide educators for schools to teach technical drawing had led to the forming of a special Department of Pedagogy at New York College. However, the pedagogy of art as a part of the educational process was formed gradually. The reason was the mentioned need for technical drawing teachers, not for general or academic art. It was the need for forming skills to copy, “the reproductive drawing”.

In the beginning of the XX century, the wholeness of methodical approach was formed under the influence of J. Dewey’s philosophy. Later, his ideas on the correlation between art and experience were developing as the method of projects, elaborating practical assignments in the teaching of arts. In the second part of the XX century Austrian immigrant, artist and educator Victor Lowenfeld, who came to the USA escaping from the Nazi regime, developed a new vision of art education theory and praxis. His book «Creative and Mental Growth»<sup>8</sup>, first published in 1947, had eight editions and for decades became the basis for development of art education in the USA. Because of the innovative elaborations which the artist and scholar made on art education, the period of the 1950-70s is called “Lowenfeld’s era”. The philosophy of teaching art based on Lowenfeld’s vision of the subject generated a new circle of developing concepts of students’ aesthetic perceptions while studying arts.

Later, at the end of the XX and beginning of the XXI centuries, new waves of immigration and technologies demanded new approaches in teaching arts. The aesthetic approach was replaced by ideas of social adaptation, multiculturalism, and tolerance. These modern ideas for creating content for art education are developing fast and actively in modern society, enabling students’ growth in creative expression in different forms of the arts, as well as developing new current subjects for the school curriculum, such as “Digital Media”, “3D Design”, etc.

The system of art education in the USA is interesting because of its practical approach in organizing the educational process. In the system the ideas of John Dewey are implemented in many directions. In the Encyclopedia of Education his name is a synonym for the progressive movement in pedagogy<sup>9</sup>. In one of J. Dewey’s works, “Democracy and Education”, 1916, the philosopher and educator writes that the basis of pedagogy is students’ practical activities inevitably connected to social life. Through communication and creating a special school environment society creates special conditions where students enrich their experience,

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<sup>8</sup> (Lowenfeld 1957)

<sup>9</sup> (Encyclopedia of Education 2003), 2-577

which later could and should be applied in real life in the form of knowledge and skills. J. Dewey defines the educational process as a “continual reorganization, reconstruction and transformation of experience” that, in the perfect situation, has to reflect changes occurring in society (1916, p.50).<sup>10</sup>

After J. Dewey, experience as a core concept of education became an essential part of any educational movement in American art education, turning scholastic and theoretical pedagogy into live experimental science that teaches through actions and experiments. These ideas simultaneously resonate in the works of another great scholar, Russian psychologist L. Vygotsky, who defines activity as the leading process, playing a crucial role in a child’s development.

The term “aesthetic education”, according to the “Encyclopedia of Educational Research”, is a hybrid term that combines educational processes in different art forms (music, visual arts, dance, theater) with training in personal perception and skills. The goal of this combined training is to externalize ideas in individual and collaborative art works. According to the issue, aesthetic education is a specifically organized practice when students’ abilities develop efficiently through aesthetic experience. This education generates specific types of feelings, not necessarily only beautiful and nice ones. The main characteristic of these feelings is their impact on a personality. These feelings create unforgettable joy and harmony; they are emotionally whole, as being the entire process not only of perception, but also of embodiment and completion.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Terms in the American art education system***

In American art education, the naming of each subject has its specific meaning, dividing art-related subjects according to activities. All subjects that deal with different types of visual activities have one title - “Visual Arts”. This umbrella term embraces drawing, painting and other mediums, sculpture and crafts. There are other terms that include different types of performing activities, from “Performing Arts” and “Dance” to “Theater”. A group of subjects related to acquiring music is divided into two groups, “Instrumental Music” and “Choir”. All of these subjects are present at every level of the educational system. However, it is important to mention that state-licensed educational institutions are required to follow these

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<sup>10</sup> Encyclopedia of Educational Research 1992), 2-579

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1-39

regulations because there are some exceptions, specifically in the pre-school system, that do not have to have an educational license. To complete the picture, the school system should be considered from the structural point of view.

Structurally speaking, the educational system in the USA includes pre-school education (kindergarten, pre-school), school education (elementary, middle, and high schools), and higher education. Higher education includes levels of BA, Bachelor of Arts, bachelor degree – undergraduate level; MA, Master of Arts, master degree – graduate level; PhD, doctor of philosophy - post-graduate level.

The other important characteristic of school education in the USA is the different organizational system of levels, which has its specific logic of quantity of schools in one schools district as well as their location. Schools of each level, campuses, are situated in different areas of a city. Moreover, the quantity of elementary level schools is bigger than for the following levels. Elementary schools are smaller and located within almost every neighborhood. This system allows the placing of elementary schools closer to the houses where children live. Students at the higher levels are more flexible in their ability to come to schools, and the quantity of middle and high schools are less respectively. If there are 8-12 elementary schools in one schools district, there are 3-5 middle and 1 or 2 high schools because students are able to drive or take public transportation to get to a school. This system helps to maintain the difference between levels of schools education and keep elementary schools close to small children's houses. On the other hand, it separates students of different ages from each other. It also makes the life of parents with children at different schools more complicated because they have to pick up children from different schools with different schedules.

The higher education institutions, colleges and universities, have separate campuses where students live and study. These campuses have all the required amenities, from libraries and stadiums to pools and cafes. These places live their separate lives with their own social microclimates and traditions. Usually campuses are situated in specially designated areas separate from downtowns and residential areas. Sometimes they could be juxtaposed to other cities as, for example, the University of California, Berkley, or Stanford University. If a university is a part of a city's structure, it is usually separated from it by green areas. For example, the Universities of New York and San Francisco. This disposition separated from a city's life keeps a campus in its independent lifestyle, creating a special and wholesome educational environment.

The next characteristic of the American education system is its general principle of dividing every subject into different levels of studying. At each educational step, students can take courses of different levels of complexity. To reach the highest level in a certain subject, a student has to start from the basic level and then go from one step to another. At any level students can go deeper in certain subjects, but stay on the basic level in others. There are specific requirements for every level, grade and occupation, which students cannot avoid. However, there is a possibility not to expand some subject, studying them year after year, but instead to concentrate on some areas which students are interested in. This principle of educational structure has many positive effects, allowing students to develop their abilities and interests, saving time in getting a higher education degree. From the opposite point of view, there are some negative effects which occur causing problems in the long-term future. The problem is that when students study only basic courses in such subjects as history, geography, literature, or other common-knowledge subjects, the general level of acquiring knowledge of the world's cultural heritage is going drastically down. As a result, students with a high level of proficiency in some areas could experience a lack of geographical or historical knowledge. Generally, this type of educational strategy does not give students the cultural and historical background that connects them with the world's cultural heritage. Parents, and later students themselves, try to cover this gap with extracurricular activities and self-education, but these attempts are sporadic and do not change the entire picture.

The elementary school system offers classes for talented students defined by testing every year. The middle school system has more advanced levels of studying math, languages, history, or science. If elementary and middle education do not have a regular system of deep studying, the situation is different in the high school and higher education systems. Each subject there can be studied on several levels plus classes with advanced learning. These principles will be considered in more detail based on the system of art education.

Due to such a multi-leveled and differentiated system, each student forms his or her own schedule (learning plan) for the next year. Students start to work on an upcoming year's schedule in February-March together with their parents, teachers, and counselors. Usually, to the end of the current year every student is aware of his or her next year's learning plan. Students receive the final approval of their schedules during the first week of a new school year. Different levels of education have more or less independence in forming schedules, because nobody expects elementary school students to understand their learning requirements. However, even



elementary and middle school students have options to choose between some subjects according to their preferences and interests. Students' independence in forming their personal learning schedule increases throughout the whole system, helping them to navigate their interests, goals, and needs.

This type of educational system reflects the personal style of the American educational system, where students take classes based on their individual pace. There are no such phenomena in American schools as "group", "class" or "course", which is traditional, for example, in the Russian educational style. In Russia, from the beginning of a school/college/university students go together through special basic courses and later personalize their interests in more advanced classes; in the entire system students recognize each other as a part of one group. Classmates go together through years, sharing the same class/subjects experience and memories. By contrast, American students are more separated from each other. Even if some students take the same course, it will probably be just one or two of them, because the rest of the students take classes based on their personal needs.

This individualized educational process forms a special educational environment where everyone thinks about his or her personal goals. The lack of shared learning experience could be compensated by creating so-called «studies groups», where students gather together to discuss home assignments or complete projects. Participation in these groups is not mandatory and very informal: students meet in libraries or cafes. Sometimes teachers and professors initiate these groups, but the common practice shows that after completing a course or an assignment a group ends its existence.

In higher education the individual approach allows combining education with work or with specializing in different areas of study. Some students keep working and continue their higher education for more than the four years required for a bachelor degree or two years for a master degree. The diversity of courses students can choose from gives them an opportunity to get "major" and "minor" specializations, which differ based on the level and the amount of hours dedicated to a certain subject. Because of this system university students during the process of getting a higher education degree have the opportunity to study different areas and meet other students from absolutely different areas of expertise. For example, math students could meet art and humanitarian students while studying several basic humanitarian courses, such as history, sociology, cultural studies, etc. Unfortunately, this appealing system has one big

drawback: in any one student's educational plan there may be a lack of many theoretical and fundamental disciplines.

The content of the curriculum, a description of levels and students' skills are open sources and can be found on states' official websites as sets of educational standards. It is important to mention the differences in states' educational standards, for each has its own standard approved by the state's government and published on its educational website. This reflects the entire legislative system of the USA where, except for the general regulations of the federal law, each state has its own judicial system. For example, California has placed its educational standards on its Department of Education's official website<sup>12 13</sup>. However, the federal educational standards, information about federal reforms and changes can be found on the federal Department of Education's official website<sup>14 15</sup>.

The aforementioned standards are the basics for local departments and districts of education to form their defined standards adjusted to the needs of a certain residential area. There are many factors which affect local regulations, such as budget, median income, population, and many others. Based on these factors local educational districts form lists of required and non-mandatory subjects for schools. Traditionally, the most important subjects are math and science-related ones, but the humanities and art-related subjects are considered as additional, even supplemental, to the core disciplines. Many of them, for example, art subjects such as sculpture, theater, dance, are funded from local budgets because the American system of education is directly related to the taxes of local residents; which means that if an area has a low income from taxes, schools will be poorly funded and *vice-versa*. It shows the position of the fine arts in the entire system of American education. Some examples of state and local budgets are represented on the following websites: California<sup>16 17</sup> and Colorado<sup>18</sup>. Official websites also provide comparative analyses of states' school systems.<sup>19 20</sup> The higher the level of local incomes, the higher the taxes and funding for schools, and, consequently, the quality of education. Children may attend only those public schools

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>,

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ed.gov/>,

<sup>15</sup> <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg80.html>

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.ppic.org/main/publication\\_show.asp?i=1001](http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=1001),

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.edsource.org/school-finance.html>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.cde.state.co.us/index\\_finance.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/index_finance.htm)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National\\_Report\\_Card\\_2012.pdf](http://www.schoolfundingfairness.org/National_Report_Card_2012.pdf)

that are located in an area where their parents pay taxes, because this system is based on local and federal budgets. It is not related to private schools, which rely on direct funding from parents. Also there is another type of school, charter schools, that have partially federal and partially private sources for their budgets. The entire system is very complicated and needs specific attention related to the economic and legislative systems of the country. It is important to outline the system for future reference when mentioning a school's location. Considering the economic situation of a place where a school is located is important, in order to understand *a priori* what to expect of this area and its schools too. Opportunities in art education, as well as the set of subjects in art education which students can attend and which every school provides, mostly rely on the economic stability of a district, a town, or a city.

Theoretical research and practical applications have been dedicated to the diversity of subjects that American art education offers. Here are some of the current topics of recent works: issues in teaching in schools with different budgets; teaching in cities and small towns; problems of pedagogy with multicultural or one dominant national environment; and many others. A digital scholarly journal "Teachers College Records" issued by Columbia School of Education, New York<sup>21</sup> helps one to get closer to modern American pedagogy. Practical approaches in the field of art education are considered in a magazine «Art Activities»<sup>22</sup>. The website of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) provides materials on theoretical and practical perspectives<sup>23</sup>.

In conclusion, the system of education in the USA is a complex and multi-leveled structure with the broad variety of subjects to study based on the individual plan for every student. Parts of the system could vary because the system relies on the federal and local budgets.

## **I.2. Teaching Arts in American Schools**

The entire system of education in the USA considered in the first part of the chapter demonstrates the multilevel organization of the educational process. The same structural principles exist in art education, a part of the system. However, some complications with the subject appear because of the specificity of the arts. It is impossible to study the arts through acquiring knowledge, memorizing facts, or solving equations. There are

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<sup>21</sup><https://www.tcrecord.org/>

<sup>22</sup> <http://artsandactivities.com/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.arteducators.org/learning/lesson-planning>

fewer formalities in art education as one could only imagine. Moreover, the arts cannot be compared with the structured actions present in science subjects. They are considered as a field of expressing feelings and activating creative activities. The question is how the educational system should be organized to provide the environment for expressing feelings and creating art projects. The issues of teaching the arts will be considered in the next chapters of this volume, where models of aesthetic experience and modern tendencies in art education will be the subject of discussion. In this part we will touch on several organizational points important for understanding how the system works: how American school students encounter the arts; and what possibilities students have of improving their interest in the arts. Although the school system has special regulations about teaching arts stated on official websites, it is important to consider the first years when children start their educational journey. Early childhood education in the USA has its special niche with special regulations different from the school system. Before detailed consideration of the school system, let us make some observations about the early-years educational institutions in American education as well as the structure of teaching arts within this system.

### ***Art education in early childhood***

The system of early childhood education reflects some issues current for the entire system of teaching the fine arts in the country. Analyzing the system of early childhood educational institutions from the perspectives of studying visual and performing arts requires focusing on the Early Childhood and Middle Childhood Art Standards, as well as the California Preschool Learning Foundations for the arts, as the concepts of art education in a multi-cultural society. In this part of the chapter we try to consider one of the segments of American art education to illustrate current conditions existing in the modern world. Starting from the organization and structure, this part proceeds to more complicated issues, such as goals and the content of art education for this age. We try to consider early childhood education from sociological perspectives: how do early-years educational institutions exist? how have they been created? how do they respond to a multicultural society's requests to provide educational services for students of the earliest age?

The American system of education for early childhood could be compared to a colorful quilt, a rug sewn from small pieces of fabric. The problem here is rather organizational than conceptual. Although American pedagogy develops a lot of studies in the field, from psychological

research to theoretical and practical methods, programs are not standardized and early childhood institutions are traditionally considered as supplemental.

American childhood education includes kindergartens, preschools, and daycare centers. Children spend three to six years there, depending on a state's regulations. After finishing the early childhood programs, children receive certificates of completion that show their accomplishments, attendance, and behavior. Again, depending on a state, these certificates are not mandatory and in some states they are not required.

On the federal level specific attention is paid to developing reading skills, following the 2001 program "No Child Left Behind". The program proposed and accepted at the federal level has specific published goals for educators and parents in the fields of mathematics and reading literacy. The general perspective of the program for early childhood education is preparing preschool children for the challenges of school, making the process of adaptation to the school curriculum smooth and comfortable. Through this program the federal government helps states and local districts to create and maintain methods and strategies of teaching reading and math skills to preschool children. Financial support is available for preschool institutions that take care of three-year-old kids (kindergarten and preschool) up to twelve-year-old children (3d grade of elementary school). The educational standards for this age include the levels of early childhood and middle childhood, i.e. the ages of kindergarten, preschool, and elementary school. The next set of the program considers children of middle and high schools.

However, not all institutions are included in this program of support, but only those that have educational status. Educational status is a special certificate, which can be obtained by an educational institution through following all educational standards and requirements. The license proves that an educational institution is able to provide qualified educational programs and have specifically trained personnel to maintain these programs. It is important to mention this, because many preschool institutions do not have such certificates and provide only day care services.

Early childhood education in the USA is not solid and has a diversity of institutions, approaches and strategies. It becomes challenging for parents to choose a place where their child will spend the entire day. Without a solid systematic program the system is not so much diverse as absolutely multidimensional in its educational services. People who organize preschool institutions face challenges in advertising their centers to attract parents because almost all preschool institutions in the USA charge fees for their services. In this situation parents are customers who

have to be interested in assigning their children to preschool centers. The educational programs provided at these centers should be in accordance with federal and state standards. This is one of the most important requirements and distinguishes between kindergartens/preschools and daycare centers.

However, many children stay at home with one of the parents, who takes care of the kids and is able to take children to different studios and supplemental classes, such as music, art and sport. All of these extra classes are private or are based on volunteering activities at local libraries. There is no system of supplemental education in the USA except for community or private centers, which provide a random list of classes.

Going back to the programs of the preschool system, educational institutions usually follow one of the most popular pedagogical tendencies. The most popular strategies in the modern preschool environment are the Montessori and Waldorf systems. Parents have to navigate their way through this challenging market of educational services: they have to choose an institution according to their child's development, interests and abilities. Parents face many problems, from the cost of tuition to understanding what suits their child's needs. In such circumstances parents have to become experts in the theory, methods and strategies of education.

Many preschool institutions are formed based on national or religious principles. Some provide educational services in the environment of a certain culture where parents try to maintain a national and linguistic environment for a child. Examples are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Russian preschool institutions where personnel and children speak a native language, the language children speak at home. This is one of the ways parents try to develop and to keep a native language for a child. This situation is beneficial for children because they develop their native language naturally and at an early age, not like acquiring it as a foreign tongue. This is possible only if a child is exposed to an environment of this language, a regular life with its routine things, games, and communication with peers and educators.

This type of educational institution is created according to demand at a place. If a population of people of one nationality is present in a local community, it is highly possible that the educational market will react to this demand. For example, in Silicon Valley, California, where tech companies hire professionals from all over the world, the variety of such services is very broad, with Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Russian and German preschools. Going a little bit further from this area, services narrow down to English and Spanish. This shows one of the important

traits of American preschool and school education - the very close connection between the place of abode and the educational services provided.

The new wave of immigration in the last decades of the XX century in the IT field has activated the practice of creating preschool institutions based on a foreign language. It has become popular because of the diversity of nationalities in certain areas not only from one country, but also from the whole world. Educated professionals, moving to another country with a different language environment, want to preserve for their children their native culture through their native language. If previously national clusters were formed because immigrants of one nationality were moving to the country, a movement related to different programs of immigration, now this immigration process has different characteristics. In the case of Silicon Valley, it is not a national but a professional immigration. First of all, such situations are common for the IT field when big companies hire specialists based on their level of professionalism, not their nationality. Hired specialists move with their entire family, and often with children of preschool or school age. The demand for special national education increases in these circumstances. If school education requires students to know the English language because American education is based on this language, preschool institutions allow for the provision of a specific language on demand.

Where is a place for art and art education in this complex system of preschool education? Art education is a part of the entire system, but has a specific place in it defined in Early Childhood and Middle Childhood Art Standards<sup>24</sup>, that were created in the year 2000 and later revised in 2015. Based on the federal standards each state creates its own version of them. There follow some comments about California Art Standards in comparison with Federal Standards<sup>25</sup>.

Principles of art education presented in the Federal Standards define general goals for art educators of various fields included in the Standards: visual arts, music, dance and theater. The Standards develop these goals from the perspective of the practical lifelong learning skills which students will be using in the future as adults. The fundamentals for teaching arts in the American educational system are based on traditions of American theoretical and practical pedagogy. Ideas of pragmatic pedagogy by W. James and G. S. Hall and methods of projects and problem teaching by G. Bruner became inevitable parts not only of American, but also of world educational theory. The same is true of ideas of polyculture education by

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<sup>24</sup>(National Board 2015)

<sup>25</sup> (California Standards 2015)

W. Bronfenbrenner, J. Verch and J. Reed; behaviorism by B. Skinner; and humanistic psychology by A. Maslow and C. Rodgers. Recent studies on socialization, social structure and subcultures are developing the educational field in terms of correlating teaching methods with processes in a society. Works by J. Dewey have a fundamental meaning for an American theory of pedagogy, especially his concepts of a school as the place for forming and developing democracy, and experience as the basis for the educational process.

Keeping in mind the practice-behavioral development of pedagogy in the USA, the general teaching of fine arts goals presented in the Standards looks balanced:

Art education contributes to global or general education goals. Lifelong learning skills are continuously developed and strengthened because art learning focuses on and reinforces innovation and creativity. Through the processes involved in creating and responding to works of art, students are immersed in critical thinking, planning, problem solving, and decision-making. As they learn to work in the roles of artists, they learn self-direction and management; the rigorous effort required to produce works of quality demands persistence. As members of learning communities inside and outside the art classroom, students acquire the ability to be flexible and to interact successfully as part of a team.<sup>26</sup>

The Standards define practical skills for general education and socialization as the general goals for art education. Further, the Standards consider teaching arts from the same perspectives, for example expanding students' knowledge about different art-related occupations<sup>27</sup>, tolerance toward cultures of different countries<sup>28</sup>, knowing terms and phenomena in the art field, and forming skills of efficient self-presentation and self-expression through the arts<sup>29</sup>. The arts are considered as developing interests at the scale of hobbies and supplementary activities during the entire lifespan. As a result, the process of teaching the arts as something entertaining becomes the process of enjoying a pleasant time with the bonuses of skills helpful in the practical life of social adaptation and having a hobby. Such a direction has been formed based on the peculiarities of the country, its traditional multi-national and polycultural social structure. With the coexistence of a variety of cultural communities,

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<sup>26</sup> (National Board 2015), 20

<http://boardcertifiedteachers.org/sites/default/files/EMC-ART.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



these communities tend to preserve their beliefs and customs. On the other hand, these communities may successfully assimilate into the country's social structures. In such circumstances of a cultural polyphony, the educational system has to maintain neutrality in its cultural and worldview basics. This process is hard to retrieve and describe, being part of the system. However, it is visible from the outside. For example, the Russian scholars T. Kuznetsova and S. Utkin who have studied American culture describe the new direction of multicultural strategy that was started during the Clinton presidency: "Something very important has happened: the immigrant country, the number one in the world, has changed its position during president Bill Clinton's time (1993-2001). From assimilation of all immigrants into the entire American nation the country has proceeded to the coexistence of numerous immigrant communities. In the last decade of the XX century, a new voice of national diasporas becomes the mainstream in the country's social life. These diasporas are more loyal to their lost motherland than to the new one where they live now. (...) This phenomenon means immigrants have no hope of integrating into the whole nation. Instead, people participate in bureaucratic institutions, which serve as the common basis in the political life of the country"<sup>30</sup>.

Every student, especially at preschool and elementary level, represents his cultural background, projecting it from his family's lifestyle. However, the country's life is characterized as multicultural and needs a common ground. Humanitarian subjects as well as the arts, reflecting the political course of the country, present a multicultural educational background. In such circumstances, the main goal of art education is to create a special common educational environment with a neutral topic to study. Social goals in art education dictate switching its mainstream focus from aesthetic perspectives to practical usage of the arts. One way to cope with this contradiction would be to create monocultural preschool institutions for children of one nationality, which would help to prolong the development of their cultural backgrounds. Later, in middle and high education, students would be able to acquire the native culture rationally, through reading and extra-curricular activities, but for preschool students living a life in the environment of their original language becomes the essential part of forming their personal identity. Unfortunately, this type of monocultural preschool institution is rare. They are created time after time based on the market demand. They could be considered as a possible solution only with the support of governments.

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<sup>30</sup> (Kuznetsova, Utkin 2010), 378

Getting back to art education, California Art Standards is one of the examples that presents a multicultural environment in the country. California itself is an unique place with a diversity of population, where the proportion of non-native population is 30% according to the 2015 census, with 16 different nationalities.<sup>31</sup> Californian art education is divided into four parts: visual arts, music, theater and dance. This structure remains the same for all levels of preschool and school education, which allows better navigation between school levels. The required parts for teaching the arts include: different types of activities (“Notice, Respond, and Engage”); developing skills; and creating and expressing personal experience (“Create, Develop, and Express”).<sup>32</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Standards of this multicultural state modify the Federal Standards from the perspective of the state’s environment: “The visual and performing arts provide a means for children to grow in understanding themselves and the world around them”<sup>33</sup>. Children get the opportunity to find inspiration in the surrounding world and in their personal experience to create and communicate through the arts. In addition, the art programs actively involve English language learners, although their native culture is different and their level of speaking English is limited. The Standards specifically point out the significant role of the arts in developing language skills, social adaptation and forming a shared communicative space for students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Art, creating beneficial possibilities, is considered as a link between a student’s home, his or her native language environment and the school as an environment of American culture<sup>34</sup>. From the standpoint of a child’s general development, the Standards consider studying arts as a part of children’s games, which not only help their general development but also develop their skills of understanding and representing various phenomena of the world in realistic and symbolic ways.

If we compare the Standards of art education with the Content for art education, contradictions appear because of the different approaches these two types of official documents represent. The content of art education is based on V. Lowenfeld’s concept of aesthetic education. This approach includes art perception, creative expression, historical and cultural context,

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<sup>31</sup> (US Census Bureau), <https://www.census.gov/>

<sup>32</sup> (Foundations for Visual and Performing Arts 2010), 3-10,  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/psfoundationsvol2.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 2

and application<sup>35</sup>. Each type of art is considered as an application of each part for every level of education. However, the Standards do not mention any of these terms except for the last term connected to the practical usage of art skills. The Standards concentrate on the multicultural environment, the development of social skills, and efficient ways to use arts for improving language skills and literacy. The previous Standards of art education created by the Getty Institute in 1996 had aesthetic components in them, but in the recent Standards of 2016 created by the NAEA (National Art Education Association) team aesthetic components were intentionally replaced by more practical terms and skills. Remnants of the past aesthetic approach are still present in the Content of art education, but eliminated from the Standards. Possibly, the Content will soon be modified according to modern directions in art education, and this contradiction will be ironed out. However, the question of using the aesthetic background for art education remains current because it seems quite strange and illogical to eliminate aesthetics from the Standards of art education, the subject which purports to use Aesthetics as its fundamental ground. From our point of view, current American art education is strongly concentrated on developing students' practical and social skills, using arts as the basis for creating good personal, time, and social management, but totally forgetting about arts as the way of wonder, aesthetic perception and development of artistic taste.

Considering art education at preschool and elementary school levels demonstrates the vast range of the system, from state to private educational institutions. Despite the fact that the Standards of art education depict possibilities of developing students' art skills, they all concentrate on social and cross-cultural spheres. The Content and the Standards of art education are different in their terminological corpora, which demonstrates that two different concepts exist in current American art education. The first, presented in the Content, is the aesthetic approach that was used in the XX century; and the second, presented in the Standards, is the social approach, current for the modern time. Hence, modern American art education, having deep and developed traditions in aesthetic education, is changing its direction toward using arts for teaching practical management and social skills in a multicultural society.

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<sup>35</sup> (Content Standards 2001)

### ***Teaching arts at school***

Arts as a school subject is an essential part of the curriculum in American schools during the entire school time, from first to twelfth grade. Each week students study arts for from 1.5 to 4.5 hours, depending on their level of specialization. Studying subjects in the arts field also requires participation in school social activities, such as thematic decoration of interiors, exhibitions, school concerts, performances and festivals. All these activities are essential parts of the rating evaluation system.

Based on these requirements, American students perform at instrumental and choir concerts, create works for exhibitions, dance and play theater scenes. There are many opportunities to study arts in American schools. Students can study several subjects, year after year, at a superficial level. Although it feeds students' interest and gives them experience in participation in different activities, this approach does not give depth to the study of any one subject. However, it does give the student an opportunity to understand his or her personal interests and decide what to do next, testing personal dedication to a certain area of artistic activity. On the other hand, if students are confident in their area of interest, they can study one subject for years to reach a professional level in that one specific area. Completing a certain level of professional development allows school students to apply to art colleges and universities to pursue an art career.

For many students art skills acquired during school years remain a valuable treasure for the rest of their lives. At college they can take some supplemental art classes and later, as adults, keep up their personal artistic interests, participating in instrumental bands, singing, dancing, painting, or making sculpture at home.

The question is how is it possible to organize the professional study of different art subjects. The American system of art education offers a solution convenient for students and parents, allowing students to pursue their dreams even if living in small towns and cities. Each art subject could be taught and studied inside the elaborate multi-level system.

This research studies the process of teaching visual arts in American schools because these subjects are the most popular in the system. This tradition has its roots in the last decades of the XIX century when the first schools of technical drawing were organized upon the requests of some of Boston's factories. From the other direction, the artistic tradition of teaching the visual arts from the perspective of aesthetic education created by V. Lowenfeld in the second part of the XX century has a significant impact on understanding visual arts as an essential component of the

personal development of all kinds of ability: intellectual, creative, and aesthetic.

In the system of art education subjects are unified under one general system called VAPA (Visual And Performing Arts), which includes music, dance, theater and visual arts. «Visual Arts» as an umbrella term includes different types of creative activity, such as graphics, painting in different media, watercolor, ceramics and sculpture. In addition to practical subjects, Visual Arts also offers elements of color theory, composition and art history. «Performing Arts» includes different types of performing arts, such as instrumental music, vocal and choral music, dance and theater.

Standards for all grades are consequently described within the same structure. This helps to keep up the pace of the process of studying, and on the other hand recognizes the differences between levels. The entire document of the Standards is in the public domain placed on the official website of California's Department of Education. Let us quote some extracts from California Standards for Art Education for public schools. This extract specifically considers the activities and personal traits that are important in forming students' artistic personalities. Moreover, the aesthetic categories deepen the area of studying arts not only from the perspective of gaining social and practical skills, but also as the way to develop personal perception and inner artistic vision.

1. ARTISTIC PERCEPTION. Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to the Visual Arts. Students perceive and respond to works of art, objects in nature, events, and the environment. They also use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.
2. CREATIVE EXPRESSION. Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts. Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.
3. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT. Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of the Visual Arts. Students analyze the role and development of the visual arts in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it relates to the visual arts and artists.
4. AESTHETIC VALUING. Responding to, Analyzing, and Making Judgments About Works in the Visual Arts. Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, including their own,

according to the elements of art, the principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.

5. CONNECTIONS, RELATIONSHIPS, APPLICATIONS. Connecting and Applying What Is Learned in the Visual Arts to Other Art Forms and Subject Areas and to Careers. Students apply what they learn in the visual arts across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to the visual arts.<sup>36</sup>

The Standards not only mention important aesthetic characteristics, but also suggest that teachers will provide the environment to develop them. Visual arts here are included in a global cultural context with different cultural references and facts. Following the theory of aesthetic experience, the Standards start from aesthetic perception and cultural awareness and continue with aesthetic expression and valuing.

From an organizational point of view, each subject has four levels of proficiency:

- beginner
- intermediate
- advanced
- advanced placement.

For a better picture of teaching visual arts, it is important to consider each level. The beginner level, the starting point for studying, is the essential one that has to be studied by every student to meet the requirements for finishing school. At this level a teacher's goal is to teach the basics of the subject. In the case of visual arts these basics are the general ideas of self-expression through drawing, colors, shapes and compositions. Nobody expects students at this level to be proficient and skillful in drawing technique. However, the general goal here is to show the way to complete a creative project, to give a sense of creating something new, unique, and original for each person. Traditionally, teachers concentrate on finishing with students one complete project that demonstrates the possibility of going through the entire process of creating

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<sup>36</sup> (Visual and Performing Arts Standards 2011),  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/vpastandards.pdf#search=art&view=FitH&pagemode=none>