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Fine Arts Education to Realise Gender Equality: A perspective of the UNESCO 2024 framework

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Abstract

Fine arts education has an important role in supporting gender equality through the development of creativity, critical thinking, and empathy. However, challenges such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, and underrepresentation of women in the arts remain significant obstacles. This article aims to explore the role of art education in creating gender equality by identifying existing problems and opportunities. A conceptual approach is used by analysing literature related to gender-responsive art education and the UNESCO 2024 framework. The results of the analysis show that fine arts education can be a strategic tool to overcome gender stereotypes, increase women's participation, and create inclusive learning environments. In addition, gender-based programmes, such as inclusive curricula and cross-gender collaboration, can open wider access for women to work in the arts. Through equitable and inclusive art education, it is hoped to create a more equal society that respects gender diversity. The findings of this article emphasise the importance of using the UNESCO 2024 framework to create a more equitable and sustainable arts education system.

Keywords: art education, gender equality, gender stereotypes, inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

Art education contributes to the development of students' creativity, critical thinking skills, empathy and self-awareness. Art education also plays an important role in enriching their aesthetic experience, which is indispensable for the development of emotional and social intelligence. However, art education faces various problems and challenges that need special attention (Steven et al., 2024, p. 3833). Aesthetics and arts education should be seen as a crucial element in the school's mission, not just an add-on to a well-rounded education (Elpus, 2022, p. 50). Art education does not only focus on aesthetic development, but also has a strong social dimension (Awalini et al., 2023, p. 166). Fine art as part of education plays an important role in building sensitivity to issues of equality, including gender. Gender is a social construction that arises due to the influence of the social environment, and refers to an individual's psychological traits or characteristics. Gender is divided into two categories, namely feminine and masculine (Prasyam & Sari, 2021, p. 10). Gender construction refers to the view that gender roles are shaped or constructed by social and cultural factors, where these roles are considered ideal or appropriate for certain gender groups (Fitriani & Siscawati, 2021, p. 5). This means that gender-related roles, expectations and norms are not God-given or natural, but the result of social and cultural processes that develop over time (Setyowati, 2013, p. 29). In other words, gender identity is dynamic and can change according to the cultural and social context in which it is embedded. Creative and critical thinking skills are very important abilities and will be increasingly needed as complex problems arise due to rapid technological advances and social movements in various parts of the world (Ulger, 2018, p. 3). Fine art makes a major contribution in raising critical awareness about gender stereotypes. Gender stereotyping is the labelling or generalisation of the behaviour of individuals from certain groups, whether based on

ethnicity, nation, or gender. This labelling often does not reflect the truth. In the context of gender stereotypes, the differences between men and women have influenced the way society perceives gender identities and roles, which throughout human history has led to gender injustice and inequality (Abu Sofyan, 2012, p. 4). In the context of education in Indonesia, there are efforts to provide the widest possible opportunity for women without limiting them in achieving the highest possible education. Thus, there is no gender discrimination in the education system in Indonesia, which is regulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 31 paragraph 1, which states that 'Every citizen has the right to education.' Despite progress in access to education for all genders, the issue of gender inequality in education remains a significant challenge. Many female students face various barriers in accessing arts education on par with their male counterparts. Entrenched gender stereotypes, discriminatory treatment from educators, and underrepresentation of women in the arts are some of the issues that remain relevant. For example, in the realm of education in public schools, female students are often directed to follow certain art disciplines that are deemed appropriate to their gender roles, while male students are encouraged to explore fields that are considered more 'masculine' (Sofyan, 2012, p. 2). This not only limits individual creativity but also reinforces harmful social norms. The lack of gender-perspective education programmes also results in a lack of understanding of the importance of gender equality in the context of art. Art learning practices in schools related to the introduction of fine artists only show data on male artists as works that can be seen as a source of inspiration in making paintings. Women, with all the advantages and disadvantages influenced by cultural norms, also need to have independence and strength in order to achieve their goals (Ahmad et al., 2022, p. 330). However, if there is still a deep-rooted gender bias in education, then serious efforts are needed to review the

curriculum, learning strategies, and value orientation in art education. While gender parity is widely used to assess educational equity, this approach is unable to capture the complexity of power relations, social norms, or students' experiences of discrimination based on gender and other identities (Unterhalter et al., 2022, p. 511). This means that simply measuring the number of men and women is not enough to understand or realise truly equal education. A more in-depth approach is needed, such as paying attention to the quality of the learning experience and structural barriers. Through this article, the author seeks to explore the role of art education in realising gender equality by examining the various challenges and opportunities that exist. By referring to the UNESCO 2024 framework on inclusive art education, this paper aims to offer concrete strategies to shape an art education system that is equitable, inclusive, and responsive to gender issues. Thus, it is hoped that art education can contribute significantly in shaping a more equal society that values diversity.

METHODS

The research method in this article uses a conceptual approach with a descriptive qualitative research type. This approach aims to critically analyse the relationship between art education and gender equality. The research was conducted by collecting secondary data from various reliable sources, such as scientific journals, UNESCO reports, books, and government policies related to fine arts education and gender equality. Data analysis was conducted by analysing the content of the literature (Wekke, 2020, p. 7) to find key themes, such as gender stereotypes, gender-responsive learning strategies and inclusive art education policies. This research was conducted in several stages. In the first stage, literature on gender equality in arts education, including good practices in formal and informal education institutions, was reviewed in depth. Next, issues such as gender stereotypes and

barriers faced by women in accessing art education were mapped. The final stage focuses on identifying strategic solutions to address gender inequality through art learning. Analyses were conducted with reference to gender-responsive education theory and the UNESCO 2024 framework on inclusive fine arts education. The results of this study are expected to provide conceptual insights into the importance of art education in supporting gender equality and offer strategic recommendations for creating an inclusive and equitable art education environment. Data validation was conducted through source triangulation to ensure consistency and reliability of the information used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Fine Arts Education in the UNESCO 2024 framework

UNESCO has examined Arts Education from two different perspectives. Firstly, the focus is on the arts as individual disciplines of study and Arts Education as a field that aims to develop students' artistic skills, abilities and sensibilities. The second perspective sees art as a pedagogical tool or method, often referred to as 'art in education' or 'learning through art.' In addition, art education can also be understood as a bridge to a form of knowledge separate from itself, where signs and symbols are used to understand things beyond language (Bolden et al., 2023, p. 9). From 13 to 15 February 2024, UNESCO brought Ministers of culture and Education to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates for the UNESCO World Conference on Culture and the Arts. One of the outcomes of the conference was to update the framework for fine arts education with a key focus on inclusivity, cultural diversity and sustainability. Art education in this framework is positioned as an important tool to support the sustainable development goals (SDGs), especially in promoting inclusive and equitable learning. Through art, UNESCO seeks to open spaces for local and international cultural expression, while encouraging environmental awareness.

In addition, strengthening the capacity of teachers through training and the use of digital technology are also highlighted, with the hope that the arts can be integrated into broader education, both for the development of students' creativity and critical skills. This approach reflects UNESCO's commitment to building a more harmonious and innovative global society through arts education. Within the UNESCO 2024 framework, arts education has an important role in promoting gender equality through several strategic approaches. One of the key principles is mainstreaming gender equality in all aspects of policy planning, design and implementation of fine arts education. This framework aims to tackle gender-based discrimination and ensure that art education content and practices are free from gender bias and violence. UNESCO promotes art education as a tool that empowers women and marginalised groups to actively participate, both as art creators and beneficiaries of art education. This is done by opening up greater access for women to learn and create within the arts environment, while overcoming the structural barriers they often face. Furthermore, art education within the UNESCO framework not only encourages equal artistic expression, but also uses art as a platform to promote human rights, including women's right to expression, participation and creation in society. Fine arts are seen as an important tool to overcome gender stereotypes, teach values of equality, and fight for women's rights in various cultural domains. (UNESCO, 2024, pp. 1–10). Thus, art education in the UNESCO 2024 framework has a very relevant role in realising gender equality, not only through art learning, but also by encouraging broader social change through art and culture.

1. Gendered fine arts materials

1.1 Fine Arts Education Domain

History of female artists

This material focuses on the stories and contributions of female artists who often receive less attention in mainstream art history. Examples: Frida Kahlo, Yayoi Kusama, or

local female artists who have had a significant impact on the field of art.

History of male artists

This material highlights the contributions of male artists who have been recognised in art history, while still considering a gender perspective. Examples: Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, and other male artists whose works have had a major influence on the development of art.

1.2 Domain of Fine Art Appreciation

Works by Women Painters

This material includes analyses of works by women artists, with the aim of providing an equal appreciation of women's contributions to fine art. These works can be used to explore unique themes that often relate to women's life experiences.

Works by male painters

This material focuses on works by male painters that can also reflect certain perspectives on gender. This material is not only for appreciation, but also invites students to critique how male views on gender are reflected in works of art.

Women as objects

This material invites students to analyse how women are depicted as objects in artworks from various time periods. Students can discuss stereotypes, idealisation, and changes in the representation of women over time.

Men as objects

This material discusses the representation of men in art, both as main subjects and as objects, as well as how the roles and characteristics of masculinity are portrayed in works of art. Students are invited to see whether there are differences or similarities in the treatment of men and women as objects in art.

1.3 Skills Domain

Boys and Girls collaborate on fine art

This material covers art projects or practices where male and female students collaborate to create work together. The aim of this activity is to foster mutual respect and cooperation across genders.

Choosing a type of practice that can be done by both genders

Gender perception refers to the way a person understands the roles, behaviours and traits that are considered appropriate to a particular sex in a cultural or societal context (Rohmah & Adrianto, 2024, p. 65). In this material, students are invited to choose a type of art activity that can be done together without gender restrictions, such as creating a mural, art installation, or applied art. The aim is to emphasise that all types of art practices are accessible to anyone, regardless of gender identity. These gendered fine art materials not only aim to introduce students to artistic aspects, but also to encourage a deeper understanding and appreciation of gender equality in art. Through the domains of education, appreciation, and skills, students can have a more inclusive and in-depth learning experience, and be able to see fine arts as a means to build social awareness about gender.

2. Strategies in art education

2.1 Reviewing Inclusive Fine Arts Curriculum

Banks (2012) explains that during the civil rights movement in the United States, multicultural education theory was developed with the aim of providing equal access to all students, regardless of race, gender, or social class, to learn. The ultimate goal is to improve academic achievement and transform educational institutions through curriculum development and creating inclusive school environments (Acuff, 2018, p. 35). Meanwhile, the curriculum in Indonesia also plays an important role in ensuring that boys and girls have equal opportunities to succeed and progress to higher education (Kemendikbud,

2013, p. 3). In the context of inclusive children, the main goal of art education is to support the development of the individual child, not just to produce art. It also focuses on improving the behaviours and skills that children demonstrate during the creation process. Fine arts education has an important role to play in inclusive education, with various ways to help individuals express their feelings and thoughts in a relaxed and peaceful atmosphere (Kencana et al., 2020, p. 151).

2.2 Reviewing the fine arts curriculum that is not gender biased

This review of the fine arts curriculum covers all levels of formal education from primary school to university, with an emphasis on junior and senior high school as a critical phase in the formation of gender perspectives, because each level has different challenges and potential in shaping students' gender awareness. Education should be able to create an equal atmosphere, providing the widest possible opportunities regardless of gender. One approach that can be applied is gender-responsive education (Damayanti & Rismaningtyas, 2021, p. 62). Gender-responsive learning provides equal opportunities for men and women to actively participate in the learning process. There is no longer male domination over women; both have equal opportunities to come to the fore. The goal of education that supports gender equality is to ensure that both men and women can understand and perform their roles well. Schools, both formal and informal, play an important role in improving mindsets. Therefore, the implementation of gender-responsive education goes a long way in changing gender-biased views (Damayanti & Rismaningtyas, 2021, p. 62).

2.3 Method/Model Selection

Gender-responsive learning is an educational process that pays equal attention to the special needs of both men and women. This approach requires educators to consider various learning methods (Hidir et al., 2016, p. 221),

there are several methods that educators can use, such as:

Project Group

This method allows male and female students to work together on an art project. This collaboration helps to reduce gender stereotypes by showing that each individual has a unique contribution that is valuable, regardless of gender identity. For example, a joint mural project or the creation of an art installation based on gender equality themes.

Group Case-Study

In this method, students are invited to analyse artworks or real situations involving gender issues, from both male and female artists. Group discussions can encourage students to understand different gender perspectives and learn how art can be a tool to voice issues of equality.

Visit/Observation of Male Artists and Female Artists.

Educators can organise visits to art galleries, exhibitions or artists' studios. This activity not only gives students practical insights but also helps them get to know the works of male and female artists first-hand. By introducing students to artists from different backgrounds, students are encouraged to understand that art is not bound to certain gender norms.

2.4 Gender-Informed Fine Art Learning Workshop/Training

Gender-informed fine art workshops and training can be an effective medium to support gender equality. Through workshops, participants can be invited to understand gender issues in art, create works that reflect their experiences, and collaborate with other participants regardless of gender differences.

CONCLUSION

Art education has a strategic role in realising gender equality. With an inclusive and

responsive approach to gender issues, art education can overcome barriers such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, and underrepresentation of women in the art world. Through gender-based programmes, such as an unbiased art curriculum, cross-gender collaborative learning, and introduction to the work of female artists, art education can open wider access for women to participate and work in the arts. The UNESCO 2024 framework is an important foundation to strengthen the role of art education in supporting diversity, inclusivity and sustainability. By utilising art as a tool for social change, art education not only provides an aesthetic experience, but also a means to build a more equal society, respect diversity, and empower women and marginalised groups. This effort is expected to create a generation that is more aware of the values of equality and is able to bring positive change through art.

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