

WAEE early history (1997 – 2006)

In spring 1999 InSEA (Kit Grauer) and ISME (Einar Solbu) had informal contacts at presidential level.

On 28 May 1999 an ad-hoc meeting for UNESCO's "*Programme for the promotion of artistic education*" took place at UNESCO's Head Quarter in Paris. This Programme was started in 1997 by UNESCO to improve the status of artists and of the art subjects in education. The International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) was represented by Andrea Kárpáti (Vice President) and Diederik Schönau (Secretary), the International Society of Music Education by its President Einar Solbu, and the International Drama/Theater and Education Association (IDEA) by its Vice-President Mrs. Tintti Karppinen. Next to these twenty-six other organisations were represented, mainly from UNESCO and France.

Two issues were discussed: an appeal by Federico Mayor for the promotion of artistic education and a proposal for the organisation of a European Conference on Art Education, to be held in Paris (UNESCO) on 20 December 1999.

The three art education organisations recognized a common concern with regard to the ambition of the issues raised. Their concerns came down to the following observations:

- too much art, too little education (why was the UNESCO Education Department not involved?)
- too much suggestion that aggression is innate and art can prevent that
- art should be appreciated in itself and not seen as a tool towards goals outside art
- education in arts or through art?
- should culture not been included (but what can be regarded as culture)?

In a meeting on November 26, 1999 in Utrecht (the Netherlands) between representatives of InSEA and ISME (IDEA was unable to take part), it was decided to take the following approach in the Paris meeting in December. The three organisations would give a joint presentations as it was seen to be a unique (and maybe the last) opportunity to have a co-ordinated meeting of the three arts education societies with those responsible at UNESCO for arts education. Each representative would give a short introduction about each Society.

Then two projects would be proposed, both related to international exchange in arts education.

The first is on the production of textbooks on practical art education, oriented towards the meeting of cultures in society. In a European context (the scope chosen by UNESCO now) this might be an example of good practice of art lessons with Moroccan and Dutch children in Dutch society. This can relate to visual art, music and drama or a combination of these. No book on theory, but a book with good examples that show how things work in practice. This could be a longer project, for instance: a book every two years, for a period of six years. Each book could contain examples of all the arts, to be used by both art teachers in school and at teacher training institutes. The books should to be published in two or three languages (and paid for by UNESCO).

The second project related to the organization of seminars for art student: a joint project for all the arts, to give art students (and young teachers) from different countries the opportunity to experience different approaches and different cultures.

These projects would put within the frame of the *Appeal for the promotion of arts education and creativity at schools as part of the construction of a culture of peace*, as proposed by UNESCO's Director General Federico Mayor, pointing also to the multilingual aspect of publishing books on art education. The three organisations could offer the networks and the ideas that make it work, UNESCO should finance the project itself.

As InSEA had been given seed money by UNESCO to develop a website, ISME and IDEA would apply for the same support by UNESCO, not as a request, but as matter of fact, as for music and dance/drama new problems will arise when developing a website.

On November 3, 1999, the UNESCO General Assembly accepted the *Appeal* as proposed by UNESCO's Director General Federico Mayor.

On December 20, 1999 the actual conference took place at UNESCO's Head Quarter in Paris. The summit was held in the form of plenary presentations and podium discussions, to give a chance to share experiences for representatives of different art forms who do not normally meet at their own, subject-specific conferences. From among many hundred arts-related organisations, due to limited time available, the organisers could invite only major societies of arts education to propose joint

projects. Tintti Karppinen (IDEA), Einar Solbu (ISME), and Diederik Schönau (InSEA) took the floor for a joint presentation in which they expressed the willingness of art educators around the world to accept the invitation of UNESCO for new projects for arts education.

The next day a planning meeting of the three arts education organisations took place with Teresa Wagner, the UNESCO official responsible for arts-related Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). It was hoped that co-operation will soon be established among theatre, music and visual arts educators.

On February 17, 2000 IDEA, InSEA and ISME presented their formal project proposal '*My culture is...*' to the Director of UNESCO, Mr. Koochiro Matsura.

In July 2000 UNESCO decided to hold three regional meetings of experts in Latin America, Africa and the Arab States, which would seek to establish for each region a list of the major forms of artistic expression at national level in the fields of music, fine arts and drama for introduction into primary and secondary schools. This initiative was seen by UNESCO as clearly in keeping with the spirit of the proposed project "My culture is...". However, in a reaction on November 18, 2000, the three art education organization were puzzled by this initiative, as their project proposal was not answered by UNESCO. They also expressed concern about the regional experts meetings as it is unclear what its objectives in fact were, and that they found a vast discrepancy between the task the 12x3 experts are supposed to do, and the resources allocated to that purpose.

On April 2, 2001 another meeting with UNESCO took place in Paris with different organizations in one way or another related to art education. The three organizations were represented by Einar Solbu Diederik Schönau, and Tintti Karppinen. To this delegation was added Willem Wijgers, Director of ISME's Project Bureau in Utrecht.

All those who took part in the discussion agreed that there was a real need for good teaching material for each kind of situation and country. The only problem was to define the kind of material that should be promoted. For the time being, emphasis was made on material for introducing multicultural art to children from different regions of the world and living in Western countries. It was agreed that this project should have a good reception at the European Union and UNESCO would encourage its submission to this body for funding. It turned out that the project 'Our culture is...'" (the title of the proposal had been changed in the meantime) was not considered realistic by UNESCO, as it was too costly and 'to far ahead'. It was UNESCO's intention to have six regional meetings all over the world first, where a regional approach could be taken as to how governments in that region could be stimulated to give arts education a permanent place in education – and not as a pastime and to put arts education on the agenda of national governments. The only thing the three organizations could do was to suggest experts in the different world regions to take part in the regional meetings.

It was agreed that the UNESCO's position paper entitled "*Teaching of the Arts in the School Environment*", was a working document that would be hopefully completed after the series of regional meetings that were expected to take place during 2001 and 2002 in different geo-cultural contexts. It was also suggested that arts materials which were urgently needed had to be linked to a given curricula; therefore, the results of the above mentioned meetings could also be used with a way for producing art teaching materials.

UNESCO, as well as the authors of the project "My culture is ...", were willing to cooperate together in order to promote art education in the school system, and a permanent communication should be established between UNESCO and the NGOs concerned. It was therefore suggested to organize an annual meeting on this issue.

In 2001 Plans were presented by IDEA to the European Union for a congress on arts education, that should take place in the fall of 2001, which regrettably was not supported by the EU.

In August 2003 the European regional congress organized by UNESCO took place in Helsinki. This meeting was used as an opportunity to discuss the possibilities to host a World Congress on arts education. In this UNESCO took the lead, but, according to UNESCO rules, a national government should support such an initiative by hosting it in its country. UNESCO was represented by Ms. Milagros de Corral, Deputy Assistant Director General for Culture, and Tereza Wagner, programme specialist of the Division of Arts and Cultural Enterprise. Two countries were represented, Canada and Portugal, and it was expected that one of these countries would become the main partner. UNESCO had already budgeted a congress for 2005. It would be the first World Congress on arts education (plural!), where UNESCO representatives, governmental representatives and art educators would

convene to discuss the need and potential of the arts in general education. As such it would be a 'political' congress, but thanks to the regional congresses that have taken place, it would be very much on the content of arts education as well.

On March 4, 2006, during an InSEA European Regional Congress in Viseu, the three Presidents of IDEA, InSEA and ISME signed a joint declaration for the UNESCO World Congress of arts in education that was going to take place in Lisbon from March 6-9, 2006.

What became apparent in this summit was UNESCO's concern, as expressed by Ms. Sonia Bahri, Head Secondary Education Department of UNESCO, with regard to the backlash on education by the results of the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), initiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). UNESCO would favour an inclusion of the arts in the PISA research.

Diederik Schönau
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