VISUAL CULTURE AS A NEW EDUCATIONAL SOCIO-TECHNOLOGICAL PARADIGM

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INTRODUCTION

Today's society is marked by an image turn where the image is the leading creator of culture and an essential communication tool. The literature analysis of numerous authors about visual studies and image issues shows that the pictorial/visual/iconic turn is a set of symptoms that we notice in Western postcapitalist societies, characterized by the dominance of image and visual communication in everyday life (Purgar, 2009: VIII). Communication takes place using an image, so visual literacy has become a vital life skill and one of the most critical competencies in education. In today's culture, visuality needs a new approach to academic research, so the field of visuality and vision is widely explored from the various humanistic and social disciplines' points of view (Dikovitskaya, 2012)

Interest in visual culture has been present in education since the 1990s for several reasons. The contents of visual culture are transmitted by digital technology, which has become the primary tool in the life of young people. Social patterns are sent through various forms of advertisements, films, videos, and social networks and impact identity formation. In addition, visual culture is also the main inspiration of contemporary art practice, which is why it is necessary to include the content of visual culture in art education. This research aims to determine the extent to which the social aspect of visual culture is dependent on the technology with which it is transmitted and how the culture dependent on the image affects education. Therefore, visual culture is considered a new paradigm with educational aspects related to socio-technological development.

CULTURAL ROOTS OF THE VISUAL CULTURE EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM

Education always occurs within a culture and is determined by cultural beliefs more than scientific discoveries. For this reason, it is necessary to establish the interrelationships and influences between culture and education. The metaphor of education as a continent of culture suggests that education isn't an isolated island but a much stronger foundation on which civilization is embodied (Bruner, 2000). Any form of thought and learning cannot be isolated from social circumstances because culture influences any action of the human mind as a social habitat.

In modern society, culture as an image has replaced the paradigm of culture as text because we are faced with the visual construction of culture instead of the visual construction of society (Paić, 2008: 58). Our culture is predominantly visual because our world is filled with visual images essential for presenting ourselves and creating meanings to communicate with the environment (Cartwright & Sturken, 2001). The turn towards images has resulted in a fascination with the image, so our values, opinions, and beliefs are formed under the strong influence of the various visuals we encounter daily.

CHANGE OF EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM OF VISUAL ART EDUCATION

The interest in changing the teaching paradigm of art history and visual art education comes from special cultural conditions after the 1990s when society's habits changed and turned towards a visual form of communication and cultural construction.

Visual education in the past focuses exclusively on the work of art exploring the authors' idea and the historical context, which arises solely from the circumstances of its creation. That approach can no longer respond to the contemporary meanings of works of art that occur in the present. Therefore, it is necessary to change the paradigm of teaching relying solely on understanding artistic language and recognizing styles toward understanding the conditions of visuality in which viewing occurs. One of the general features of culture and modern education is constantly changing, so such changes should be considered a natural development.

Art history influenced various interdisciplinary cultural theories about the impact of mass media, advertisements, and films on individual identity and their power in conveying patterns and political messages; art history changed the methodology of art interpretation to a more interdisciplinary approach. Mass production of paintings in the second half of the 20th century changed the way of communication, which affected the artistic practice and reception of the spectator. The spectators' visual experience does not occur in isolation but is formed by memories and images from different aspects of life. He does not encounter the visual domain exclusively through fine art but builds his visuality on all visible contents in the surroundings. In contrast, he meets art only in isolated galleries and museums. In such conditions, understanding only the art in the visual world is no longer enough. Still, it should consider how different ideologies are embedded in the image and the methods by which the image influences identity formation (Cartwright & Sturken, 2001).

SOCIO-TECHNOLOGICAL IMPACT ON IDENTITY FORMATION

The development of new areas, such as visual culture, which focuses on a broad aspect of visual phenomena in the environment and thus puts works of art on an equal footing with other images, has prompted reflections around the world on the inclusion of a broader concept of visual literacy in the education system, most often by integrating visual culture with visual art education.

Since the 1980s, social change has been driven more by the technological development of mass media and digital image than by political ideologies, so we can say that society has transformed into a technosphere, lost its established ways of functioning, and developed new methods of communication and education (Paić, 2016).

Today's culture is predominantly visual because our world is organized around visual pleasure. Images are vital to presenting, creating meanings, and communicating with the environment. Our values, opinions, and beliefs are shaped under the strong influence of various forms of visual culture that put new challenges ahead of us: understanding how images and observers create meanings and determining the role of the image in our culture (Cartwright & Sturken, 2001).

RESEARCH

According to the specified theme of Visual culture as a new educational socio-technological paradigm, the following hypothesis was set:

1. Culture of the image had a significant impact on education

2. The concept of visual culture is conditioned by technological progress and social identity formation.

The hypothesis is demonstrated by analyzing the literature on the field of visual art education from Croatia and the world, which deals with the emergence of the paradigm of visual culture and the opinion of Croatian experts collected by the Delphi method for the doctoral thesis.

RESULTS

According to analyzed literature abroad, the several determinants were classified considering visual culture issues in education: (1) Today's culture is predominantly visual because digital media constitute reality; (2) Developing critical competence is very important for visual literacy; (3) New digital media should be used in learning and creating art; (4) Visual culture is connected with students' daily experiences due to growing up in the digital world; (5) Visual culture has a significant influence on identity formation; (6) Examples of visual culture should be incorporated into teaching about art.
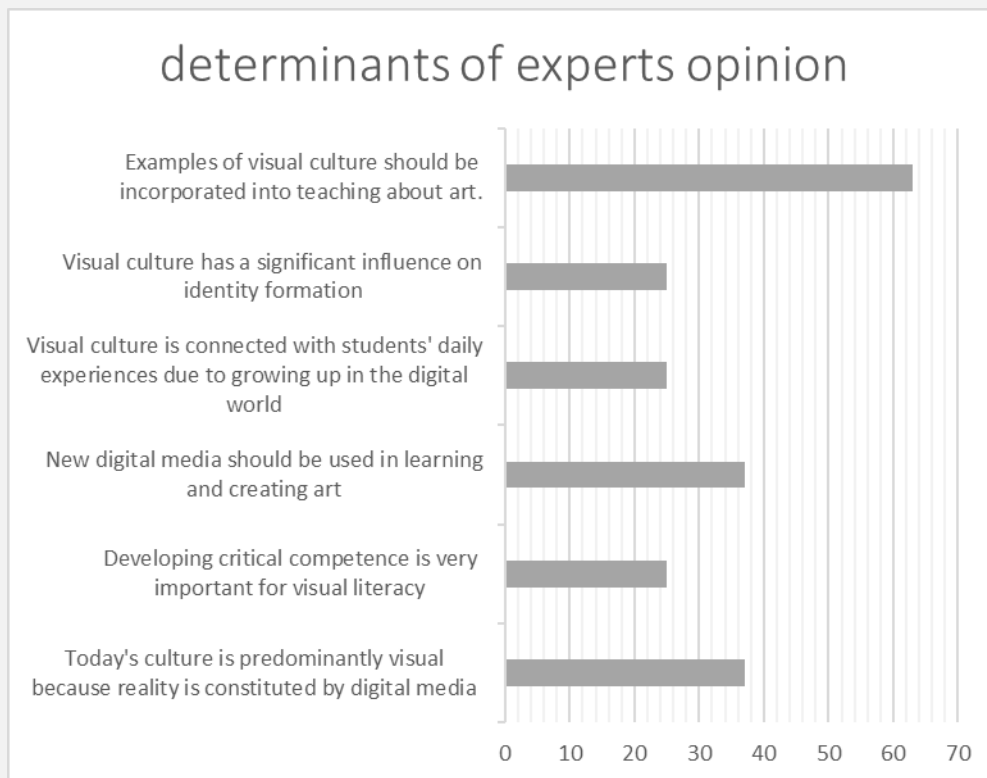

Figure 1. The results of Delphi method - experts' opinions according to the technological aspect of visual culture

Thinking of experts collected by the Delphi method shows that 37% of experts mention that today's culture is predominantly visual because digital media constitute reality, 25% point out the importance of developing critical competence in visual literacy, and 37% think that new digital media should be used in learning, 25% established the connection of visual culture with students' daily experiences due to growing up in the digital world, 25% highlight influence of visual culture on identity formation and 63% think that digital visual culture content should be incorporated into teaching (Figure 1).

CONCLUSION

Analyses of mentioned visual art education literature, originating from the world and Croatian authors, show that the primary trend in the last 20 years is the consideration of the influence of visual culture on education.

Therefore, we can argue that visual culture is a new educational socio-technological paradigm because, in a specific way, it connects education, social identities, and technology.

Answers to these research questions are seen in the emphasis of several determinants equally confirmed in the world and Croatian literature around the 2000s as in the opinions of Croatian experts in the 2020s.

Some authors have pointed out that today's culture is predominantly visual because digital media constitute reality. Another one refers to the importance of developing the critical competence of visual literacy. Some highlight the necessity of using new digital media in learning and incorporating the contents of digital visual culture into teaching. Most of them agreed about the connection of visual culture with students' daily experiences due to growing up in the digital world and the influence of visual culture on identity formation. All involved authors and experts must link technological progress towards digital image reproduction, the dominance of the image in the creation of today's culture, and the importance stated for education due to the impact on the development of young people.

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