



**Response to the UNESCO Futures of Education Consultation
Submitted by the NGO: International Society for Education through Art (InSEA)**

InSEA's vision of 2050: Futures of Education

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Executive summary and introduction

This submission summarizes recurring themes discussed by an International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) focus group addressing what education may look like in 2050. The group reflected and envisioned possible social, cultural, economic, and environmental challenges in 2050 and focused on how the visual arts can meet these challenges. Our focus group looked into the crystal ball and tried to imagine the circumstances in which education may take place in 2050. We reimagine how knowledge and learning will shape the future of humanity and the planet addressing the collective purposes of education in 2050 that includes what we learn, how we learn, and where we learn (UNESCO, 2020).

To do this we asked: In what ways will art and art education shift in 3 decades from now? How might artists and art educators lead this change? Or will they be collaborators? Do we have a vision for educational change through creativity, imagination and wonderment? Will we, for example, eliminate 'schools' as we know them and create innovative learning spaces? Will galleries and other cultural institutions become globalized as potential digital teaching and learning spaces? What social, cultural and technological changes do we want to see as a Society? How we envision education in 2050 will help us decide our futures of education through art.

InSEA was founded in 1954 and aims to promote a model of education first elucidated by Sir Herbert Read in his seminal book *Education through Art* (1943). "Education through art is a natural means of learning at all periods of the development of the individual, fostering values and disciplines essential for full intellectual, emotional and social development of human beings in a community." More recently, our community of art educators has revisited Read's vision (Coutts & Eça, 2020; Coutts & Eça, 2019; InSEA Manifesto, 2018), which, we believe, encapsulate our philosophical stance - that visual art is a fundamental human right and of intrinsic educational value. Before we can write or communicate verbally, humans are making marks, we are drawing; a natural and universal human activity, one that is about exploring the world, investigating, communicating, and understanding. We believe that a

broad and balanced education is the right of every human being and must offer learners of all ages opportunities to think through making, be curious and, importantly, make connections and collaborate with others in socially just spaces (Manifold, Willis & Zimmerman, 2016; Coutts, 2013). The collective purpose of education should be to nurture responsible and creative individuals who can contribute to the common good. We are convinced that the visual art processes are a natural way to develop these attributes.

Our consideration of big ideas as complex scenarios such as sustainability, resilience, deterritorialization, and inclusiveness led us to organize thoughts into the following topics: Decolonizing Learning; Collaborative and Participatory Co-designed Learning; Innovative Learning Spaces; and Creativity and Imagination. In our deliberations, we recognized that students in teacher education programs today are our future educators who will bring transformative ideals into practice in 2050; we hope that the results of this important consultation will underpin a *critical review* of the way that teacher education is conducted both pre- and in-service. The collaborative process of creating this document brought together our diverse experiences and expertise across the continents. Using imagination and resilience we drew our thinking together using technology to facilitate communication and the writing process. In a small way, we think our collaboration models our vision for 2050.

InSEA believes that in 2050, an industrial Western construct of education will be outdated. For example, the compartmentalizing of disciplines, timeframes, assessment, age groupings and the colonization of curriculum and didactic learning will no longer meet the needs of a global society. Education is not a business and learners are not products. In many cultures, particularly Western European countries, we have seen undue emphasis on assessment, league tables, and competition of the most unhelpful kind. This unhealthy obsession with measuring and testing tends to focus on things that are easy to measure and therefore achieve a certain 'value' in political terms. In the visual arts, and particularly in design, traits and attributes are developed that are much more difficult to measure, but will be very valuable to humankind, will be necessary as we increasingly deal with so-called 'wicked problems' (Kolko, 2012). Visual art education nurtures, for example, resilience, empathy, collaboration, tenacity, and tolerance.

The collective purpose of education in 2050, InSEA asserts, should be to develop responsible and creative individuals who contribute to the common good and the preservation of our planet. A broad and balanced education is the right of every human being: visual arts provide learners of all ages, cultures, and ethnicities opportunities with multiple perspectives to apprehend the world and enable use of imagination in problem posing as well as problem solving. In addition, resilience and tenacity are fostered in young people as nimble as engaged learners; resourceful and multidisciplinary as researchers who can empathize, make connections and collaborate with others (InSEA Manifesto, 2018). Drawing and constructing are natural and universal human activities. Visual literacy will be indispensable in 2050. As global citizens will need to continue exploring the world, investigating, communicating, and expressing one's understanding and curiosity using a variety of media.

InSEA envisages innovative learning spaces or 'situations' (not 'schools' as we now think of them) where learners encounter scenarios and work together, including intergenerational groups, to further

the common good. The ability to visualize in order to think, communicate and work together has been central to visual arts education for decades. InSEA's vision of 2050 education includes learning situations that embrace inclusive and intercultural creative and critical thinking, where the learners co-create the educational experience. In our vision of innovative learning spaces, Indigenous and traditional ways of learning and working will co-exist with whatever innovations may come along in 2050 and beyond. Fundamentally, we think that visual arts, visual thinking and making (Hetland et al, 2007; Kallio-Tavin , 2018) will help educate global citizens about living peacefully together and taking care of our world.

Looking at the educational systems we are using today in a great majority of countries, we observe that, at its worst, education is driven by exclusion and competitiveness, bound by evaluation and assessment systems that do not validate or at least, recognize in the same way all fields of knowledge. For example, the arts are often in the marginalized sectors of education, designated as 'soft' subjects, not as important as the 'hard' subjects, in less subjective areas.

We aim for new paradigms of education with a more humanistic perspective that recognize subjective and tacit knowledge; spatial; visual and emotional intelligences. In 2050 learners will develop problem solving skills as forms of emancipation to live in a planet, transformed by climate change and in nomadic societies, for futures that we can foresee, in many countries, as both precarious and fraught with adversity. The following are four themes that we believe are indispensable for a world in 2050 where we can learn to live together and to responsibly live in the natural world.

Decolonizing learning

A Eurocentric perspective has characterized, significantly and unduly influenced education around the world. Our belief is that art education can be a powerful tool in refocusing towards an egalitarian educational scenario that both embraces Indigenous and decolonized knowledge and practices and develops inclusive curricula which emphasize equality, equity, accessibility, sustainability, fair, and social justice. Art education, we believe, will continue taking an active lead in education against racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and speciesism.

Visual arts education represents an area of learning that values different cultural identifications and subjectivities, and appreciates local communities as sites of learning. Art education that embraces Indigenous and decolonized knowledge and practices allow equal learning opportunities with asylum seekers, refugees and peoples living in difficult situations. Most importantly, art education curricula will be informed and rewritten from non-European centralized perspectives. Breaking through the Western canon of learning in the arts need to be troubled and revisited on a regular basis. Ethical and non-violent education includes respect toward other than human species as well. This is a difficult challenge in a world where subjection of other species has become an everyday norm in 2020. Art learning in the contexts of empathy education and critical engagement will guide students in the future to become empathetic to non-human life (Kallio-Tavin, 2020).

We believe collaborative and participatory teaching and learning strategies will be inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and experiences. Educational practice will inherently collaborate with First

Nations people to bring their stories and history into the curriculum as well as their Indigenous ways of pedagogy. The versatility and inclusive nature of the visual arts will contribute to the sharing and understanding of mutual cross-cultural learning and provide access to multigenerational and community engagement.

It is our view schools are not currently responding positively to the challenges of the *Fourth Industrial Revolution* (World Economic Forum, 2020). We hope for a cultural interface, a meeting of knowledge systems and structures that ruptures and shifts knowledge, origins of knowledge, and the origin of stories. Our desire is to see artists, art educators and the arts sector working together to co-design models of democratic education with indigenous leaders. InSEA supports and disseminates excellent examples of community-based art education and models of Indigenous education that can provide starting points for the decolonization of education practices. We recognize, seek to celebrate, and report on Indigenous models of knowing, teaching and learning. We emphasize that there are multiple knowledge systems rather than simply the current Eurocentric focus in many countries. Our belief is that new understandings of community must be explored by decolonizing knowings through investigations which are not white and western oriented for care and ethics.

Unfolding the stories of others will include a deep introspection of “interest convergence principle” to untangle and attend to decolonizing. Future models of curriculum must be pluralist and avoid the polarization caused by innate colonial values to be inclusive. Multiple voices and ways of knowing and representing the world are critical in exploring the human condition that is not recorded in written text, for example tacit knowledge. What stories and knowledge is embodied in the traditions of Indigenous and First Nations Peoples that we need to learn from? Can these stories and knowledge help us work sensitively together for the benefit of humankind? These, we believe, are key questions that should underpin a radical rethinking of learning in the future(s).

Our vision of the future(s) of education is one that is multidisciplinary and project-based with adequate physical and temporal space for the arts in schools. In addition, it is important to have well educated and specialist teachers of art. Teachers of art that are driven by arts-based educational research methods and practice related experiences. This is not to deny the role of artists, rather it is to underline the specialist and distinctive nature of the role of education - it takes time to educate and support good educators throughout their careers. These specialist teachers of art must be drawn from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and thus reflect the changing makeup of society. Teaching and learning in visual arts should be embraced as a collaborative or group experience to encourage understanding of diversity and respect for the cultures of others (education for peace).

Collaborative and participatory co-designed learning

In 2050, we believe the focus of teaching will be on co-designed learning. More than in 2020, education will emphasize the human relationship between student(s) and teacher, collaboration, and shared integrated learning. Inquiry will be inherent throughout the educational process with cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural discovery that address common global issues of complexity. As the InSEA

Manifesto (2018) remarks: “All learners are entitled to an art education that deeply connects them to their world, to their cultural history. It creates openings and horizons for them to new ways of seeing, thinking, doing and being.”

Educators will be innovative in developing strategies that address our abilities as humans to live together and with stewardship, live mindfully within our environment. Learning will integrate the exploration of knowledge with the promotion of empathy, imagination, and inclusion. The discovery of “other” will lead to collaborative experiences of engagement in shared purposes and expand one’s perception on what it means to be human. The common exploration of issues such as social justice, climate change, food and water scarcity will serve as a foundation for the holistic development of each individual (Sustainable Development Goals).

Rather than a separate component of the day, learning will evolve into shared experiences. There will be encouragement to integrate cognitive and sensory ways of exploring and knowing. Through design thinking, deciphering images, differentiating qualities, and developing narrative visual literacy will be an indispensable communication skill for students to engage in critical and creative thinking (Eisner, 2002). In 2050, educational programs and curriculum models will prepare citizens with confident flexible intelligences, and creative verbal and non-verbal communication skills (InSEA Manifesto, 2018).

Teachers in 2050 will explore knowledge not as a singular pre-determined commodity but rather as a plural process of discovery within cross-cultural interface. There will be less didactic hierarchy of a traditional all-knowing teacher and students as inactive participants. We acknowledge here, liberatory education and Paulo Freire (1969), and speculate active shifts against the "banking" model of education. The collaborative learning environment will have engaging and inclusive participants where teachers are learners, students are teachers, and community members are actively involved. Each learner will develop leadership skills as well as the dispositions to both effectively work with others and work independently. Educators will cultivate the “making” of knowledge. Creating space for aesthetic experiences and empathic storytelling will make possible sensitive communication and awareness of positionality, the values adopted by a person within a specific social context (Silverman, 2016). Keen observation and care of our natural environment and perception of and response to, injustice will be seen as a developmental process to bridge meaning with pedagogy.

Innovative learning spaces

InSEA believes that learning spaces in 2050 will reflect an approach to education that embraces active and collaborative engagement of learners, a decolonizing curriculum, an inclusive and plural process of discovery, and a fostering of the imagination and aesthetic perception. The designing of learning environments will emphasize the understanding and development of “the common good” and global mobilization. Educational centers will offer learners easy access to move between community centers, the physical spaces we inhabit on the earth, and digital culture.

There will be a variety of ways of “doing school” in 2050 and beyond. Innovative learning spaces will not only be inclusive, intercultural and creative, they will reflect an entrepreneurial mind set where learners design, co-design and co-create educational environments. The concept of the classroom will be envisioned to be more like a studio. These studio spaces, which may be mobile, will be filled with opportunities for exploring the world and interrogating complex problems. Innovative learning spaces will cultivate artistic inquiry with access to a variety of materials, play-based objects and artefacts. Nonetheless, it will be important for learners to have a separate physical structure, space, and time for collective learning as a permanent, sustainable and open structure.

Learners need to encounter knowledge, experience, and literacy in multiple ways. In 2050, the arts will be indispensable in helping the educational community visualize the environments to best communicate, critically think and creatively respond to local and global sociocultural contexts. There will be increased importance to seamlessly move through technological and three-dimensional space and nourish keen observational skills, flexibility, experimentation, and collaboration (Eisner, 2002).

Creativity and imagination

Throughout history humans have survived and flourished by using their imagination and creativity to face unforeseen challenges. We from InSEA believe that to create a world in 2050 that is inclusive, collaborative, resilient, and sustainable, learning environments will need to cultivate our imaginations. Education in whatever shape it assumes in 2050 will need to critically and intuitively respond to social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues of the time. We will need to release our imagination (Greene, 1995) and envisage different perspectives as we assume the responsibility of living together and protecting our earth. In 2050 learning environments will nurture what Philosopher Martha Nussbaum describes as the “Narrative Imagination” where, by profoundly learning the stories of others in the context of their lives, we expand our own understanding of self (1998). Engaging in the visual arts is a natural communication to attend to the narrative imagination and incorporate the stories of Indigenous, and First Nations people and at the same envision new models of learning spaces.

In 2050 Learning environments will reflect multigenerational and community-oriented learning; integrated curriculum with a focus on experience, inquiry, collaboration, and cross disciplinary approaches; novel ways to conceive educational settings that extend way beyond the structure as we know of schools today; and the symbiotic relationship of science, technology, engineering, and art. Knowledge will be reimagined to be agile to link the past with the uncertainty of the future. Engagement with imagination ideally will lead global citizens to the healthy interplay of vision and humility, wonder and perseverance, empathy and responsibility.

Literacy in 2050 will need to be fluid or include, as educator John Dewey phrased, “flexible purposing” (1938). Rather than emphasizing the transference of knowledge there will be encouragement for the vitality of inquiry where flexibility is celebrated for inquiry process of discovering through investigation that does not compromise goals. In 2050, learning spaces will inspire learners to build supportive and trusting relationships where they imagine possibilities and follow through to address such global issues as water insecurity, poverty, environmental destruction, migration, and injustice. When learning

environments encourage imagination we have an opportunity as Educational Philosopher Maxine Green reminds us, “to work together to unconceal what is hidden, to contextualize what happens to us, to mediate the dialectic that keeps us on the edge, that may be keeping us alive” (1995, p.115). The creative process keeps us on a healthy edge to perceive that which now is imperceptible. Surely 50 years ago it would have been hard to imagine, for example, digital media, world wide web, and zoom. Though we may not be able to conceive the various ways humans will interact in 30 years we can be confident that active participation in the aesthetic experience that enriches observation, perception, and connections will influence how our society interprets “beauty” and all of the social, cultural, and environmental implications of beauty.

One keyway to foster the imagination and aesthetic perception is to open up learning spaces for active engagement with the creative process. The creative process begins with inquiry. Experimenting, discovering, problem posing, and problem solving are the rich pathways to ownership of learning. As we imagine education in 2050, we believe the visual arts optimize the dispositions needed for a healthy global society. Whether actively engaging in drawing, design, digital media, or 3-D construction visual literacy provides learners of all ages and all cultures with the imagination to inhabit and collaborate in new learning spaces of discovery. The visual arts create the habits of mind that are both life affirming and viable to bring a better future in 2050. Dispositions such as visual investigation, addressing problems in nonroutine ways, reframing issues and challenges, noticing patterns, engaging in exploration and analysis, following one’s curiosity, working with ambiguity, reflecting critically, collaborating with people and resources, and utilizing media to widen perspectives are all natural, inclusive, and powerful ways to address complex sociocultural questions and from our perspective will be at the heart of learning in 2050 (Eisner, 2002; Spehler & Slattery, 1999; Taylor, 2011; Tepper & Kuh, 2011).

To break down and discover viable alternatives to outdated compartmentalizing of school structures, subjects, grades, and abilities and to evolve beyond automation, didacticism, and provincial community and cultural parameters we need an approach that welcomes creative minds and creative collaboration. The creative process embraces pluralities and offers learners an evolving way to encounter and communicate with the world. Learning spaces will educate the whole child linking emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual learning in the context of a global society living together and in the natural world. Transformative thinkers in 2050 will be inspired by others and gain experience generating, assessing, modifying, implementing, and reflecting on ideas. Visual literacy liberates the mind and soul to reshape how and what we teach and contributes to the re-identification of self in a global context.

Concluding thoughts

As members of InSEA we foresee an educational system where the values of peace, inclusion, diversity and understanding are implicit in the learning situations for both teacher and learner. Educational experiences will take place in innovative learning spaces that are fit for purpose with highly qualified specialist arts educators. The educational perspectives that will prevail amongst the participants (learner and teacher) will embrace art practice, studio habits of mind ontologies (Hetland, 2007) and posthuman ways of knowing the more than and non-human worlds. Educational systems will recognize and integrate contextual, situated knowledge and the effectiveness of its transmission through non-formal and informal ways of learning.

We further envision education as a set of ubiquitous, flexible and innovative systems that are inclusive and agile enough to integrate people with different abilities without imposing uniform standards for learning and assessment. In 2050, all educators (community-based practitioners, Indigenous Leaders and Elders, parents, multi-disciplinary researcher-educators) will value visual art and design education experience as an integral part of their pre- and in-service professional learning. With visual arts at the heart of learning, our global community will have opportunities to embed inclusiveness and diversity, cultivate innovative pedagogy, nurture creativity and imagination, and redesign learning spaces to address with integrity, the common good and 'real world' issues.

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