

Visual Arts Subject in High School Education in Croatia in the Context of Educational Changes and Reforms from the Mid-20th Century to the Present Day

Jasmina Nestić

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb

Abstract

*The contents of art history in Croatian grammar schools had initially been included within the Drawing subject. From the mid-20th century, they were combined with the contents from history. From 1960, both Visual Arts and Music had been equal components within the Art course, but in 1994 it formally became a full independent subject in grammar schools. The last educational reform generated a new subject curriculum in 2019 that completely reorganized the subject and brought it closer to contemporary educational principles. In vocational schools during the 1960s, however, a large number of teaching programs contained contents implemented from visual arts as a part of Croato-Serbian Language and Literature course, together with the basics of aesthetic education. However, they were left out in the later programs from most schools during the 1990s, which happened again in the most recent educational documents that were issued in the last several years. The aim of this paper is to discuss the position and specific qualities of Visual Arts subject or topics from the field of visual arts (art history), as well as the changes this subject has undergone during various educational reforms, by means of analysing the teaching programs of grammar and vocational schools in Croatia from the mid-20th century to the present day.**

Key words: *grammar school; teaching programs; art history; vocational schools.*

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Introduction

The fundamental starting point for considering the objectives of visual arts education have remained, even to this day, the same deep-rooted ideas that experts have accepted for decades, like education through arts, the importance of teaching visual thinking and visual speech as a means of intercultural communication, the integration of knowledge through art or the ideas about the need for placing art in the centre of education (Arnheim, 1969; Efland, 2002; Perkins, 1994; Read, 1943; Turković, 2001; Turković, 2009), as well as aspirations of experts to emphasize the importance of visual speech and bringing awareness to sensory perception, as a large and often unused human potential (Damjanov, 1991, 1998). Nowadays, when a highly significant extent of information is received via visual messages and when our everyday life is filled with various visual content most often communicated via new media and social networks which are indirectly implied in the processes of learning and education (Greenhow et al., 2001), the visual arts education is of high importance. In Croatian elementary and secondary school teaching system, this is implemented via Visual Culture subject in elementary schools and Visual Arts subject in grammar schools, or related theoretical subjects in vocational schools. A new curriculum for Visual Arts subject for grammar schools was approved within the *Comprehensive curricular reform* in 2019 and combined with a curriculum for Visual Culture subject into a comprehensive document *Curriculum for Visual Culture in elementary schools and Visual arts in grammar schools in the Republic of Croatia* (*Kurikulum za nastavni predmet Likovna kultura za osnovne škole i Likovna umjetnost za gimnazije u Republici Hrvatskoj*, 2019). It was based on the principles of contemporary educational theories that have been built upon the competence system and change of focus from content to pupil, as well as the development of competences required for lifelong learning (Council Recommendation, 2018). Hence, this document changed the educational paradigm of a subject in which the emphasis has been given to active learning, analytical thinking, the development of critical attitudes and visual literacy.

Starting from the present-day position of visual arts in education in terms of the new curriculum document, the initial interest has spread on the research in the history of the subject itself within the Croatian secondary education, from the first introduction of art history topics in the teaching programs to the latest documents. Therefore, this paper analyses the selected teaching programs in grammar schools and vocational schools in Croatia from the mid-20th century to present-day, in order to consider specific qualities of the Visual Arts subject and its position within comprehensive programs, bearing in mind the socio-historical connotations of educational changes and reforms that produced them. Art schools are omitted from this analysis due to the length limitations of the paper itself, so they remain a topic for some further research.

On the beginnings of learning art history in Croatian grammar schools within the Drawing course

Until the mid-20th century, the topics of art history had been taught only to a lesser extent within the Drawing course in the teaching programs of grammar schools in Croatia, and its timetable and content had changed over the years. The subject started from the first year of (lower) grammar schools, but the lectures from art history within the subject were delivered mostly in higher grades (higher grammar schools). For example, the temporary teaching plan in 1944 included Drawing and the history of visual arts subject, and its explanation emphasized: "Drawing and the history of visual arts should be most closely connected, so while pupils develop the talent for artistic experience, they also develop the possibility and talent for artistic expression. Teaching the history of visual arts should build pupils' understanding and accurate comprehension of artistic manifestations throughout history, their social determinations and connections with all social and cultural movements of an era." (Teaching plan and programme, 1944, p. 36). The contents of art history were lectured only in the last two years of grammar schools, in such a way that they alternated with drawing (2 lessons every other week). They included an elaborate overview of art history from Palaeolithic to modern times and gave prominence to the examples of national art heritage, with the following instructions: "In each social era one should emphasize the social position of an artist and his relationship to a commissioner in a broader sense. To highlight the social need of a work of art" (ibid. p. 37). The Teaching plan and program in 1945 proposed lecturing the contents from the history of visual arts within the Drawing course throughout three years in higher grades of grammar school (1 lesson a week in the 5th, 6th and 7th grade.) Besides the timetable and the title of the course, the changes with the previous program included the sequence of content. The content was still lectured in chronological order, but only after the pupils were introduced to certain types of visual arts on selected examples. Even this brief elaboration of modest contents demonstrates that the intent was to connect theoretical and practical parts: "Studying these artistic unities is connected with drawing and taking notes on the most characteristic stylistic features of individual artistic groups." (Teaching plan and programme, 1945, p. 5). The same content also remained in the Drawing course in the program from 1947, but with changes in its timetable – 2 lessons a week in the fifth grade and 1 lesson a week in the sixth grade (Teaching plan and programme, 1947). The program made the following year extended the contents from the history of visual arts to another year of learning, so they were incorporated within the subject in the 4th, 5th and 6th grade, with more detailed and elaborated contents and prescribed timetable that was specially separated for them – a total of 45 lessons throughout three years of learning (Teaching plan and programme, 1948).

At that time, classical grammar schools were an exception by being more strongly oriented towards classical languages and culture. Additionally, they had *Art* as an independent subject already in the 1930s (Programs and teaching-method instructions, 1936). Over

the next decade, in the programs of classical grammar schools, there were different titles and timetables for the subject in which art history was lectured. In the program from 1945, it was still under the title *Art* (2 lessons per week in the 7th grade; Teaching plan and programme, 1945), whereas in 1947 it was titled *Art history* (1 lesson per week in the 5th grade, 2 lessons per week in the 6th grade; Teaching plan and programme, 1947). From the elaboration of the prescribed content of this program, it is evident that it did not significantly differ from the former program for grammar schools (1947), but larger timetable certainly enabled a more detailed elaboration of topics.

The analysed grammar school programs with their frequent changes and often temporary nature, especially during the war and post-war years, revealed unstable socio-historical circumstances of the time. The more substantial educational changes were yet to come in the decade that followed.

History with cultural history and basics of social and state organization of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) – multidisciplinary construction of fundamental social subject in grammar school programs in the 1950s

After the Second World War, the intention and need for economic and cultural renewal and further progress of the country included steps to improve the educational system. Apart from restoring school buildings that had been damaged in the War, and building and equipping new schools, the system also required internal, structural renewal of school programs themselves (Franković, 1958; Tomich, 1963). Significant changes in grammar school programs, together with a more distinct positioning of visual arts in them, took place in the mid-1950s. To begin with, in 1953, the teaching plan project for grammar schools had presented program structures for two types of grammar schools, natural sciences and language-humanistic (while keeping the classical grammar school as an independent type). Both types of grammar schools incorporated *Art history* subject with the same timetable of two lessons per week in the 5th and the 6th grade of grammar school. The program's explanation did not offer contents of the subject, but general guidelines. In terms of the language-humanistic type, the following was pointed out: "The committee wanted to give more instruction time to art history and philosophy in the teaching plan for this type, but the total number of hours did not allow for this intention to fulfil without compromising the principle that the total number of lessons could not be larger than 32 lessons a week or to reduce the number of lessons of other courses on account of these courses." (Curriculum project, 1953, p. 17). This suggestion was put on a public hearing and a new *Teaching plan for the 5th grade in grammar schools* was proposed in 1954, which offered a somewhat different organization of the courses. For the first time, a new division into four groups of courses was proposed: the first group consisted of subjects from the social sciences (Croatian or Serbian language; History and Art history; Philosophy, Sociology, State organization of FPRY; Seminar for social sciences). The second group

included natural sciences (Mathematics; Physics; Chemistry; Biology; Geography; Seminar for natural sciences). The third group included foreign languages (First foreign language; Second foreign language; Latin), while the fourth, unidentified group encompassed Physical Education, Pre-military training and Drawing. The contents of art history were integrated with the contents from history within History and Art history subject. An explanation for a more systematic introduction of contents from visual arts (art history) in grammar schools independently from Drawing was given in the very introduction of the program: "From the point of view of general education of grammar schools, one cannot ignore such an important sector of cultural activities such as art. One cannot consider himself or herself a cultural or versatile individual if he or she doesn't understand art at all and doesn't have a developed sense and need for experiencing art works." (Teaching plan and programme, 1954, p. 95.). Furthermore, it was pointed out that by the end of the grammar school education pupils had a rather low level of aesthetic culture and remained on the level of kitsch, which was a problem of former grammar school that failed to provide pupils with a wide-range education. This is what was perceived as one of the reasons for this failure:

Hitherto the history of art was taught too early and together with drawing. [...] There is no teaching of art history after the 6th grade, so the education is stopped at a time when, regarding their age, the young people are more mature for understanding and enjoying art works. [...] In terms of the aesthetic culture of pupils, which is rather low at the end of their grammar school education, one part of responsibility lies on the course of drawing and singing, which insufficiently succeeds to develop aesthetic culture and taste, among other tasks." (p.95).

The program also explained that art history was not established as an independent subject – which was pointed out as a necessity by the Chair of Art History (Faculty of humanities and social sciences, Zagreb) – due to the initial "concept of connecting history with all forms of activities of social consciousness" (ibid.), but it was emphasized that experts would lecture it whenever possible. The subject's program implied a chronological approach to visual arts that simultaneously followed prescribed historical themes. For example, art of the Palaeolithic era, Egypt, Classical Greece and Rome, Middle Ages, Byzantium, Islam and Pre-Romanesque era in Croatia had also been lectured in the context of historical periodization. It also included music art, even though it was not mentioned in the title of the subject itself. The comprehensive program for grammar schools was issued in the following year of 1955, in which contents for all four higher grades were described in detail. Following the principle of subject division according to their scientific fields that had been generated in 1954 program, the humanistic group of subjects introduced a new subject: History with history of culture and basics of social and state organization of FPRY. It included topics from history, visual and music arts, philosophy and religion. The introductory chapter in the document repeated the explanation from the previous program from 1954 and indicated that it was also just

antecedent to a more holistic reform of school system which was necessary and yet to take place. It highlighted the need to increase the commitment of pupils in teaching all subjects and to abandon the former dominant lecturing type, with an explanation that the pupils were passive receivers of knowledge that was of no use. The Draft of the new curriculum (1955) instructed to suppress traditional formalism and introduce better and contemporary teaching methods:

In many of our grammar schools the fight against verbalism achieves excellent results thanks to using modern teaching means which enable pupils to work actively, experiment, observe and work on real material that they study etc. [...] so this way pupils indirectly learn about the structure and organization of our society, fight for socialist-direct democracy, that is, involvement of as large number of people as possible to manage our society, fight for the development of socialistic social relationships.” (p.1)

Therefore, the obligatory Seminars in social or natural sciences had been introduced (2-4 lessons per week) which aimed to encourage the use of new methods and active forms of work in teaching, that is, to orient pupils to individual or group study research of particular themes and problems, reading literature, developing discussions and presentation of results of problem research, and they also included scientific excursions. This program's propositions revealed the intention that grammar schools should cease to be a school that would direct their pupils only to higher education, but to make them also qualified to choose other vocations. Given the increase in the number of grammar school pupils at the time, the intention was for grammar schools to expand their educational character and to separate them from elitism of sorts, that is, to make them a place where one can “gain more real knowledge, work habits and work culture, as well as reduce the opposites between manual, or production, and intellectual work” (Draft of the new teaching plan, 1955, p.2). In that sense, former grammar schools were criticised for basing their programs on encyclopaedic knowledge, in which subjects were “as a science in a nutshell” (ibid., 1955, p. 2), and where pupils were asked to listen, remember and reproduce content (Tomich, 1963). The highly elaborate content of this program repeated those for the 5th grade from the previous program (1954), and the initiated chronological interpretation of history of visual arts continued through the next three years of schooling: from the Romanesque art to modern times, with simultaneous examples from national heritage. The approach emphasized critical thinking and contextualization, distance from facts and pure learning, with functional connection of comprehensions of various fields, especially between subjects of the same group. The makers of educational politics of that time recognized the need that within grammar schools as a general knowledge schools, a bigger space should be given to visual arts than before, out of the aforementioned intention to develop aesthetic culture and holistic development of pupils, but they combined it with history, as a framework of social field of educational program.

Teaching plan and program in 1960 – affirmation of Visual Arts subject in grammar schools

General Law on Education in 1958 proposed a compulsory eight-year-long elementary school, after which education could be continued in either vocational schools or grammar schools. This also put an end to the former structure of eight-year-long grammar school (lower and higher grammar school), which then remained only on the level of secondary education. A major reform of high school system in Croatia was implemented over the following years, which resulted in the new teaching programs of grammar schools and vocational schools. In 1960, a new program for grammar schools with Art subject was developed, which included Visual Arts and Music Arts, set as a sort of sub-subjects. Although they were joined under one roof subject, each of them had autonomy in content and equal share in timetable. In social-language type of grammar school, it was given two hours a week in the first and fourth grade and one hour a week in the second and third grade, whereas in mathematics-natural science type, two hours a week in the first and one hour a week in the second grade. Therefore, with this program the art subjects were separated from history, which in the previous program was the backbone of the humanistic group of subjects. The program emphasized that the tasks of Visual Arts subject were “to create and further develop possibilities of pupils to feel, experience and understand works of art, and thereby influence the development of their emotional life; to contribute to the deepening of general education of pupils using materials from art history”, and these should be achieved “by harmonious intertwining of teaching materials as well as means of approaching these materials, avoiding one-sided insisting on either historical information only, or formal analysis” (Teaching plan and program, 1960, p. 173). A three-part concept can be recognized in the elaboration of contents according to grades in social-language type, according to which the first grade pupils should be taught with “the basic means of expression of particular branches of art”, together with constant stimulation of interest in pupils, development of pupils’ receptive abilities and visual cultures, as well as the power of observation. It was advised that, in doing so, “one should insist on active participation of pupils in conversations, discussions, comments on art works” (Teaching plan and program, 1960, p. 175). The introduction of such fundamental contents of visual arts in the first grade was certainly possible because of its separation from history, with which an overview of art history also had to start from the first year of learning, and such model would remain in the programs that followed. The contents in the second and third grade contained a historical overview of art, with an incentive to learn additional literature and deliver reports in extracurricular time due to short timetable which was insufficient for more detailed teaching. Contemporary art (international and national) was taught in the fourth grade, as well as the protection of cultural heritage. The focus was given to practical work, direct contact with works of art in galleries and art workshops, analysis of artworks,

comparisons with previous eras with equal attention to all art types, architecture, urban planning and art in everyday life. Art contents were elaborated extensively and in detail, with underlined problems that accompanied stylistic periods. They also included hitherto undiscussed topics such as the primitive arts of Africa and Polynesia, India, China and Japan, as well as the protection of heritage. In further description of specific qualities of teaching all subjects, it was advised “to develop individual work of pupils as much as possible, stimulate writing reports, discussions, organizing contacts with art workshops, schools for applied arts, etc.” (ibid.). For fulfilling the program in grammar schools of mathematics-natural sciences type, it was recommended to teach the content prescribed for the first and fourth grade of the social-language type.

Combining visual and music arts under one joint subject soon took place in classical grammar schools. In 1963, a new teaching program was proposed with Art subject (Teaching plan and additional teaching program, 1963), which consisted of Visual Arts and Music Arts, like in other grammar schools, only with significantly larger timetable (2 lessons per week throughout all four years). The tasks and content were almost completely the same as the grammar school program for social-language type from 1960.

Visual Arts and Music Arts as completely separate, individual subjects were introduced for the first time in the program in 1962. It was designed for grammar schools of teacher education type, which, apart from general educational tasks, offered special tasks of preparing pupils for teacher programs on academies and faculties. The mentioned subjects were part of the social-language field of program, and they were given the same timetable – two hours a week during the first two years, one hour a week in the third year, whereas in the fourth year they shared a prescribed timetable of one hour a week (2 hours a month for each subject). The tasks of Visual Arts subject were: “to develop pupils’ ability to experience and understand works of art and thus influence the development of their emotional life; to contribute to the deepening of general education of pupils through practical work and learning about visual arts” (Teaching plan and program for grammar schools, 1962, p. 134). The detailed contents, as well as the mentioned tasks, indicate its theoretical and practical basis, which is understandable given the profile of the grammar school that should provide pupils with knowledge and skills required for their future education and teaching vocation. The first three years of learning were primarily oriented to practical work through prescribed art fields and elements, with smaller part of history of visual arts that should accompany practical tasks. The contents of the fourth year of learning were exclusively connected to the history of art, but with prescribed visits to exhibitions and lectures and conversations with renowned artists. The extended content in relation to the grammar school program from 1960 was made by considering the developmental progress of high school pupils, who should be provided with further creative development with an intention to achieve: “mastering the actual design and shaping of object through systematic teaching by mastering the artistic elements which are the basis of every

form in the past and today; practical mastery of drawing; supporting artistic freshness and the power of excitement in front of artistic phenomenon in nature; learning art history and building the need and positive attitude towards art today” (ibid. p. 153.).

Educational reform in 1974 and Visual Arts subject within the program of vocation-oriented education

The major school system reform that took place in 1974 had abolished grammar schools. The high school system was based on the *Basics of the teaching plan and program for high school education (Osnove nastavnoga plana i programa za srednjoškolsko obrazovanje, 1973)*, which were meant to be the starting point for all high schools for the development of their oriented education profile: “Starting from the fact that there is no strict separation between general and vocational education due to them being intertwined, that is, that the general education also provides vocational education and vice versa, a part of the content of the basics, or some subjects, could be integrated in the appropriate vocational subjects” (Basics of the teaching plan and programme, 1973, p. 159). This document prescribed minimal mandatory teaching contents and the smallest number of teaching lessons required for teaching all subjects organized under teaching fields: general culture, socio-economy, natural sciences and mathematics, and health and physical education. Each school, considering its own special objectives and tasks, had to expand the prescribed basics with appropriate contents and create new, specific programs of appropriate orientations. The social and ideological foundation of the reform manifested itself in the very explanation of the program:

The conceptual basis of our educational system is Marxism. By this we want to emphasize that the entire educational system in its broadest sense (including all of its dimensions and structural elements) must be based on and permeated with Marxism in order to achieve the ultimate goal of education; an all-round personality who has adopted Marxist way of thinking and perceiving the world, and who is ready to build his or her relationship with the world, that is, his or her social and human activities, on that.” (Ibid. p.155).

Within this program, the Art subject was grouped together with Croatian or Serbian language and literature and foreign language within the field of general culture. Its total timetable was (at least) 70 hours, with an indication that contents could be lectured within the individual subject or within Croatian or Serbian language and History. The explanation of the course showed that it kept the concept of the program from 1960 and that the course consisted of Visual Art (35 lessons) and Music (35 lessons). The tasks of the Visual arts subject were given in the explanation: “to introduce pupils with art issues and the most important artistic achievements of certain periods; to develop pupils’ sensitivity to artistic achievements; to develop criteria for the evaluation of works of art, especially contemporary ones” (Basics of the teaching plan, 1973, p. 172). Its contents consisted of three bigger units: An approach to art work implied a theoretical approach through basic division of arts into painting, sculpture and architecture; the

second unit, Historical overview, encompassed art from the Palaeolithic to 19th century; and the third unit, Modern art, implied the art of the 20th century subdivided into Urban planning, Architecture, Painting and sculpture, Abstraction and new tendencies and Design. Such three-part organization of contents was meant for pupils to develop “sensitivity for art and visual phenomena as an introduction to art issues of the past and the present and a special approach towards contemporary art” (ibid.). In terms of elaborating themes and examples, it relied on the program from 1960, although in a narrower range of content. The possibility of expanding the program was aimed at increasing the number of art examples and better articulation through analysis and synthesis, comparisons and other methodical activities, at the same time bearing in mind both international and national art: “The selection of teaching material should be characterized by contemporariness. The emphasis should be given to that which is of permanent value, what is current in modern life, what is built on contemporary understanding and views, what can be applied in the modern world.” (ibid. 1973, p. 159).

Law on vocation-oriented education came into force in 1982. Its implementation implied a review of former educational programs and ordered the establishment of common program bases as well as executive educational programs. Pursuant to this Law, in 1984, *Common program basics for vocation-oriented secondary education* was published for all subjects that were grouped and elaborated according to their educational fields. A high school subject *Visual Culture* was included within the language-artistic field, with an explanation that it was “logically derived from the program of elementary school: it summarizes and systematizes themes, upgrades what was tested in practice and theoretically devises a comprehensive introduction to contemporary art issues in historical continuity” (Common program basics, 1984, p. 4). The program was based on the idea of interdisciplinarity and strong correlations of subjects within an educational field, which consisted of Visual culture together with Croatian or Serbian language, literature, performing arts and film, foreign language and Musical culture. The course was based on three years of learning: its timetable in the first two grades was 17 lessons combined together with Musical culture, and in the third grade, 10 lessons within Croatian or Serbian language course. Content wise, the course represented a crucial shift from the previous concept of learning history of visual arts to a formal approach to art works, which was noticeable already in its title. The contents encompassed art language, practical exercises, correlations with contents from other subjects and art works whose selection indicates possibilities of their synchronous linkage (Alviž, 2019). *Common program basics* was the result of the initial *Proposition of the plan and program of elementary and general education* published in *Delegatski vjesnik* in 1980. It included programs of pre-school education, compulsory elementary school education and a common basis for secondary vocation-oriented education in Croatia. Its principle was a logical link between all levels of education based on common grounds: “For the first time in the history of our schooling system we try to build not only a unique, but organically connected and continuous program

of education for all children from their birth to 16 or 17 years of age, or from birth until their vocational education in the most narrow sense of that word” (Proposition of the plan and programme, 1980, p. 28). The program’s explanation referred to the integral education through life, a departure from pure formalism of content that created “human-lexicon”, the importance of practical knowledge and polytechnic content, developing skills on valuable educational material, erasing strict borders of subjects within educational fields, in which attention was given to thematic units with a greater possibility of correlations, the need to rationalize contents and other. However, it also indicated the need for educational reform of future teachers who would be trained for the implementation of such program, that is, for the mandatory upgrade and training of teachers.

The teaching plan and program for Visual Arts subject (1994)

Fundamental new changes took place during the 1990s after Croatia’s independence when new state and political context also started with the institutional changes of the schooling system, that is, teaching programs with accompanying new textbooks, especially for high school education (Baranović, 1994). The reform re-introduced grammar schools and vocational schools into the high school system, and a new teaching program for general, classical, language and natural sciences-mathematics type of grammar schools was developed in 1994. The program’s structure no longer grouped similar subjects into larger units, but prescribed a common part for all grammar schools and an elective part for each of the grammar school types. In this program, Visual Arts was an independent subject of the common part with a timetable of one lesson per week throughout all four years of schooling in general, classical and language type of grammar schools, whereas in natural sciences-mathematics type, it spanned throughout the first two years. The didactic instructions of the program encouraged distancing from the factual learning and giving attention to cognitive processes and changes in art, interdisciplinarity, teaching with compulsory visual base (original art works, reproductions, slides). It was pointed out: “The basic method of visual arts subject in grammar schools is based on the constant contact with a work of art in order to enable young people with the experience of works of art” (Teaching programmes for grammar schools, 1994, p. 91). The program revealed a thorough reflection on numerous educational tasks that it had been assigned with, such as developing opportunities for pupils to experience art works and enrich their emotional life, introducing them to the most important works of art (of international and national art), developing sketching skills, encouraging pupils to engage in cultural and social activism in their environment, to visit museums and galleries, to develop an active relationship towards the protection of heritage and the environment. The four-year subject program with the prescribed content had relied, to some extent, on the program from 1960. The contents in the first grade covered art basics from

the field of drawing, painting, sculpture, architecture, urban planning, photography and film, while in the next three years it consisted of the chronological overview of art history from the Palaeolithic to the contemporary time, with topics from visual communications, design, protection of heritage, protection of environment and art theories. The first year of the two-year program repeated the contents of the first year of the four-year program, but in the second year, the emphasis was put on the themes of architecture and urban planning in chronological approach. The introductory part of the program noted that the listed contents were not obligatory for any subject, as well as not for Visual Arts. They were more of a framework according to which each professor prepared an executive program. However, regardless of this freedom in the choice of content, the densely listed themes in program led to their detailed elaboration, so the practice revealed that the contents in the last two years in particular, which explored the themes from Romanesque art to contemporary times, had been too extensive for lecturing within the short timetable (1 lesson per week). Consequently, the full implementation of the program in schools was often lacking.

In the history of Croatian high school education, this entire grammar school program will certainly be remembered for its longevity – it has been in progress since its approval in 1994 until the end of the school year 2020/2021, or more than two and a half decades. This longevity, especially over the last decade, seems somewhat unjustified at a time of massive changes in educational approaches and strategies, rapid development of technologies and profound changes in daily life. This can also be considered a result of slowness and unwillingness of former educational system to make fundamental changes.

Curriculum for Visual Arts (2019) – paradigm shift in teaching and learning

Except for the Visual Arts program in 1984, all of the programs analysed so far, whether they taught the contents of visual arts within independent subjects or as part of certain symbioses with drawing, history or music, were designed to follow a chronological approach and give attention to the contents which needed to be lectured. The paradigm shift in the teaching and learning of visual arts in our grammar schools took place with the new Curriculum (2019), which has been theme and problem based, in which chronological approach has been enabled, but no longer mandatory. The set topics and subtopics have been developed over the four years of subject learning: the first grade focuses on the topics of Art and Man (subtopics Human body in art and Worldview); the second grade covers the topics of Man and Environment; the third grade the topics of Art and interpretation of the world (subtopics Art and Spirituality and Arts and Sciences); the fourth grade the topics of Art and Power and Art and Creative process. The themes have been set in a logical order so that even the pupils in natural sciences grammar schools, who are taught the contents of the first two grades (due to twice less hours), within their formal education receive the basic knowledge

and skills which can serve as an excellent foundation in further development of their interest in artistic content.

The program has been based on educational goals and outcomes elaborated through three conceptual frameworks, or three domains: Creativity and Productivity, Experience and Critical Attitude and Art in Context. Within the first domain, it has been planned for pupils to carry out independent research and presentation of particular problem solving during each year of learning. The domain Experience and Critical Attitude has implied the analysis of works of art, as well as knowing the terminology and expressing critical attitude, learning in direct contact with art works, knowing national art heritage, discussing different artistic approaches to the same problem. The third domain has implied observing art works and art problems within the appropriate social-historical context. The general educational outcomes related to the three domains have been further elaborated by a number of even more detailed outcomes, with additional recommendations for their implementation. The same domains extend through the Visual Culture curriculum in elementary schools, which has contributed to stronger vertical connections between these two courses than it was in the program from 1994. In addition, the inclusion of new themes such as visual culture, pop culture, art and science, art and propaganda, art censorship, institutionalization of art and other, has surely contributed to the topicality of the subject itself.

A more flexible program which has given emphasis to the greater autonomy of teachers in the selection and sequence of content and selection of art works examples and teaching methods; which has highlighted the activities of pupils in terms of individual research and presentations; where analytical thinking, developing critical attitudes and creativity have become important; which has modernized the subject which is now more equal in comparison with those in the developed Western countries (Alviž & Nestić, 2019). These propositions have certainly contributed to subject's main goals of grammar school education, listed in the still unapproved version of *The national curriculum for grammar school education – proposition* (2017), which involves the holistic development of pupils, thorough general education and preparation for the continuation of education, as well as lifelong learning. What remains an indisputable problem in its implementation has been the short timetable with only one lesson per week in grammar schools, whereas in mathematics and natural sciences-mathematics grammar schools the timetable has even been reduced by half. Of course, a concrete success analysis of this curriculum can be made only after a certain period of its implementation in whose beginnings the entire internal system must adapt to new propositions of the subject. Given its massive changes in content and methodology, the lifelong improvement and training of teachers is necessary since, during their higher education, they have been trained for the program valid at that time. Additionally, it has become increasingly important to equip classrooms, pupils and teachers with appropriate tools and aids for its implementation.

Teaching programs of vocational schools in the 1960s: the integration of visual arts contents in the course of literature and language

In the context of representation analysis of visual arts contents within the programs of vocational schools, it is interesting to first begin with those made around sixty years ago during the 1960s. The aforementioned major school system reform, which also included vocational schools, took place on the basis of *General Education Law* (1958). The important changes that came about were, first of all, connected to the status of vocational schools. In order to continue education in industrial and vocational schools, it was necessary to finish the eight-year elementary school, just as it was for the continuation of education in grammar schools. This way, schools were set on the same (high school) level of education (Tomich, 1963). Such equalization of educational levels of general education schools and vocational schools was also intended to even out the chances of pupils of all high schools to continue their education at institutions of higher education (Baranović, 1992).

During the 1960s, the teaching programs *with Literature of the basics of language and aesthetic culture* subject had been established among the vast varieties of vocational schools. For example, in 1961 programs for vocational school of agriculture (Teaching plan and programme for vocational school of agriculture with, 1961) and school for nurses (General teaching plan and program, 1961); in 1962 programs for schools for paediatric nurses (Teaching plan and programme for nurses, 1962), schools for child nurses (Teaching plan and program for paediatric nurses, 1962) and vocational school of forestry (Nastavni plan i program za šumarske škole, 1962). In 1964, there were programs for vocational schools for skilled shoe workers and skilled rubber workers (Temporary curriculum, 1964) and school for dental technicians (Temporary curriculum, 1965). A similar subject of a somewhat modified title, i.e. Croatian-Serbian language and literature with the basics of aesthetic culture had been established in the program of vocational school of business administration (Teaching plan and program for vocational school of business administration, 1962). The Croatian-Serbian language and literature with the basics of aesthetic education subject had been established in the programs for vocational schools of general economics (Teaching plan and program for vocational school of general economics, 1967), vocational schools of commerce for salespersons (Nastavni plan i program trgovinske škole, 1967), vocational schools for woodworking technicians of final orientation (Teaching plan and program for vocational schools for woodworking technicians, 1967), vocational schools of economics for tourism, sales and bookkeeping (Proposition of the teaching plan and program for vocational school of economics for bookkeeping, 1968; Proposition of teaching plan and program for vocational school of economics for sales, 1968; Proposition of the teaching plan and program for vocational school of economics for tourism, 1968), vocational school of administration (Proposition of the teaching plan and program for vocational school of administration, 1969), vocational schools of commerce for

warehousepersons (Proposition of the teaching plan and program for vocational school of commerce, 1969), vocational school of business administration (Proposition of the teaching plan and program for vocational school of business administration, 1969). This subject was prescribed in 1967 for programs of all four-year (according to the program for vocational schools of general economics in 1967) and three-year vocational schools (according to the program for salespersons in 1967). Content wise, the aforementioned subjects implied a diachronic approach to the history of visual and musical arts which were taught together with simultaneous examples from literature, with prescribed contents and with an exact timetable for each subject field mentioned only in some instances. For example, in the program for vocational schools for woodworking technicians (1967), out of a total of 108 hours per year in all grades, 33 lessons were provided for contents from the artistic field. This content intertwining was also the result of the intention to enrich the general education of pupils and to open up new possibilities in aesthetic education, in order to develop a wholesome personality: "Literary and artistic encounters in education open new opportunities in the aesthetic education of pupils. A complete personality who will be able to enjoy the fruits of artistic creations cannot be developed at all within just one branch of art. Aesthetic education in contemporary education is set on broad foundations, pupils learn about the most prominent achievements in all fields of art" (p.24).

When connecting artistic contents, the teaching programmes in vocational schools relied on the experience of the grammar school program at that time, in which the subjects' symbiosis had already taken place at a certain level. The leading methodologists, Jadranka Damjanov and Koraljka Kos, perceived such principle of connection as positive:

Connecting different artistic fields can contribute to a more complete understanding of the great stylistic eras, in which particular arts, using their own means of expression, manifest similarities in syntax and exploration aspirations. We believe that discovering such similarities in the teaching process is much more valuable than connecting individual artistic branches according to a theme or a motif, because it penetrates deeper in the core of artistic narration and creates a more active relationship of pupils towards art." (p. 24).

Even though the programs in all aforementioned vocational schools were not completely the same in terms of contents and timetable, the general foundations of the subject can be presented through two selected cases. The first is the program for paediatric nurses in 1962, in which Literature with the basics of language and aesthetic culture subject (a part of the socio-economic field) was taught during all four years of schooling (scheduled 3/I, 2/II/III/IV). Its task, among others, was "to raise the general and cultural level of pupils, develop ethical and aesthetic emotions and understanding for subject matter and artistic expression" (Teaching plan and program for paediatric nurses, 1962, p. 74). In terms of visual arts contents, they were closely connected with literature to which they were directly referred and followed a historical overview from medieval art to the present day. The program for dental technicians (1965) with the

subject of Croatian-Serbian language and literature with basics of aesthetic education (a part of general education field) was somewhat different in contents. It was taught in all four years of schooling (3 lessons a week) and its task was “to introduce pupils to the most valuable accomplishments in the field of literature, visual arts and music based on the analysis of the artistic text; to enrich their emotional life and develop their ability to evaluate artistic values” (Temporary teaching plan and program for dental technicians, 1965, p. 10). The order of contents from the Croatian language, visual arts and music over the years of learning had been based on parallelism of sorts, from the introductory and core contents to the chronological overview. The listed contents were arranged separately within each year of learning and were defined under the following units: Literature, Culture of Written Expression, Music and Visual Arts. In the first grade, the analysis of works of art (architecture, painting and sculpture) was emphasized in visual arts, with the attention given to the elements of forms and art works from national and international art. For the second grade, there was a prescribed content related to the selected examples of architecture and urban planning from Classical antiquity to the 19th century, from the national heritage explicitly. Selected themes from architecture and urban planning of the 20th century were prescribed for the third grade, whereas themes from film and television were prescribed for the fourth grade.

According to Jadranka Damjanov, visual arts entered the program of vocational schools “on the initiative of professor Mara Zuber, one of the rare advisors in the Institute for the Advancement of Education, who understood artistic contents and new approaches. She made possible the printing of three manuals for pupils and a methodical manual for teachers, as well as organized a large number of seminars across Croatia” (Damjanov, 2004, p. 343). The educational policy of vocational education of that time was based on *Resolution on the principles of building a vocational education system* (1965), which specified that every form of education, regardless of its vocation orientation and profile, should contain “elements that provide a basis for further education and self-education throughout the entire working life, which contribute to a conscious and mature inclusion into the socio-political life of the country” (Resolution, 1965, p. 113). At that time, over two thirds of the total number of high school pupils attended vocational and technical programs of education, whose status was often inadequately appreciated: “It can be concluded that, despite social concern, vocational schools, even though they have always been the first in terms of number of pupils, didn’t always receive a certain social and economic treatment they deserved according to the importance of their function in the development of the economy, and not only it” (Bulović, 1975, p. 89). The new possibility for pupils to continue their education at higher education institutions after finishing vocational schools, which did not exist in the pre-war education system (Tomich, 1963), called for a more comprehensive general and cultural development of pupils, within which the contents of art were by no means to be bypassed.

The disappearance of artistic contents from the general education field of vocational school teaching programs from the 1990s to the present day

This paper already mentioned the major school system reform in 1974, which involved all high schools of that time with the idea of oriented education through the same general education basics prescribed for all schools, and which also included Art subject (Visual Arts and Music). The next major changes that took place in the teaching programs of vocational schools were those brought in by the reform in the 1990s that introduced vocational programs from which visual arts contents were completely cut out. These included a very large number of technical, industrial and crafts schools, that is, programs for education in the fields of economy and commerce, chemical technology, personal services, agriculture and food, geodesy, transport and logistics, forestry, health, mechanical engineering, etc. According to the *Framework for curricula of general education programs in high schools* (1997), the general education part of the program in these schools consisted of the following subjects: Croatian language, History, Foreign language, Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Politics and Economy, Physical and Health Education, Ethics and Religious Education. Compared to the previous programs, the scope of this part of the program was greatly reduced (almost halved in the programs of industrial and craft schools), but also depleted in content, which seriously undermined the thoroughness of education, especially in social sciences and humanities, as Baranović (1994) stated:

Unlike grammar schools, the general education field in vocational and art schools is reduced and its content significantly depleted [...] Given the experience of developed countries, this high reduction in general education raises the question of how new educational programs can create appropriate general education conditions, not only for the acquisition of vocational education but also for the transfer of socio-humanistic knowledge needed to understand modern processes in society, train young people to participate in shaping social life and take responsibility for its democratic development.” (p.207).

Visual arts contents at that time, but also during the following decades, and even until today, had taken place only in the programs that educate professional staff related to cultural heritage or some segment of aesthetic design. Among them, for example, there was a program in the field of catering and tourism during the 1990s, in which History of art and cultural-historic heritage (2 hours per week in the fourth grade) was prescribed for education of hotel and tourism technicians, whereas History of Croatian Cultural Heritage (2 lessons per week in the third grade) was intended for the education of hoteliers, chefs, waiters and confectioners (Teaching plans and general programmes, 1998). In the programs from the field of construction and geodesy, the

contents of visual arts were planned only within the program for the education of civil engineering technicians (History of architecture and arts subject, 2 lessons per week in the third and fourth grade) and stonemason technicians (Styles in architecture, 2 lessons per week in the fourth grade; Teaching plans and general programmes, 1997). Visual Arts subject was planned in the programs from the field of graphic technology that took place in the first decade of the 21st century (graphic designer of multimedia contents, 2003; web designer, 2006) during the first two years of learning (2 lessons a week). In all these programs, the aforementioned subjects were not a part of the general education group of subjects, but of the group of vocational subjects. Therefore, the contents from the field of visual arts were regarded as a part of the package of vocational subjects and were adjusted to the vocational profile, which, of course, can be considered justified. However, according to this principle, artistic contents were completely absent from extremely large number of curricula of schools in other vocational fields and specializations, and this situation is still present today.

The current reform of vocational schools is highly complex due to the large number of vocations and orientations, as well as to the development and changes in the economy and market demands. Moreover, one can say that there have been continuous changes at the micro level in vocational education in Croatia over the past two decades, in terms of refining certain curricula, creating new occupational profiles, designing and implementing experimental curricula and the like. The aforementioned reform, based on the *Programme for Development of the Vocational Education and Training System (2016 – 2020)*, as well as *The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology (2015)*, has generated the umbrella document, *Curriculum of vocational education (2018)* and certain standards of occupations and qualifications. Based on them, new vocational curricula for the acquisition of certain vocation qualifications have been published in the Official Gazette over the last few years. For example, curricula for environmental technician, geodetic and GIS technician, mechanical computer technician, agricultural technician, economist and road traffic technician were published in 2017, and dual models of education for beautician, chimney sweep, and salesperson were published in 2020. Only few of the newly adopted documents contained prescribed contents from the field of visual arts, for example, in the curricula for stonemasonry technician (Decision on the introduction of vocational curriculum for acquiring the qualifications of stonemason technician, 2017), media technician (Decision on the introduction of vocational curriculum for acquiring the qualifications of media technician, 2017), carpentry technician designer (Decision on the introduction of vocational curriculum for acquiring the qualifications of wood technician designer, 2017) and web designers (Decision on the introduction of vocational curriculum for acquiring the qualifications of web designer, 2017). The need to modernise vocational programs is, of course, completely understandable in terms of their foundation on the system of professional competences and qualifications, dual models and stronger connections to practical teaching and labour market. As a result, it is difficult to find equal time

for all the contents within such a dense timetable and workload of pupils. However, the absence of any artistic content in the majority of vocational schools even in the most recent programs reveals a situation of insufficient sensitivity in rethinking the entire upbringing and education of young people.

Final thoughts

Croatian education system has underwent complex changes over the last several years, starting with the *Comprehensive curriculum reform* in 2015, which also brought in visible shifts in terms of secondary education. Modern educational theories have oriented the development of new teaching curricula towards their foundation on the competence system, emphasizing horizontal and vertical harmonization and fluctuation, as well as on special consideration regarding the development of generic competencies and lifelong education and learning, that is, the holistic development of a person. In the context of modern day, the goals mentioned in the new grammar school Curriculum for Visual arts (2019) – like shaping the personal and social identity of pupils; refining and enriching the image of ourselves and the world in which we live; developing an active and positive attitude towards cultural heritage, developing the ability to think and act creatively; developing aesthetic culture and creative potential as well as artistic and visual literacy of pupils – certainly support these principles. The major content and methodological changes that affected the subject by the mentioned document have been much needed, maybe much more than they had ever been before. This does not imply that former grammar school programs in Visual Arts had not been well conceived, but that they are no longer appropriate today. In the context of their time, they were thoughtfully elaborated, from the very beginnings of the subject and then through the decades in which the subject was clearly profiled within high school programs. It is important to point out that the programs of Visual Arts, through various educational changes and reforms, were less subject to political and social ideologies, which were more visibly implemented in other subjects – which is also another contribution to the perception of art as a universal communication system of all time. Regarding education in the field of visual arts in Croatian vocational schools, the most comprehensive elaboration was carried out by the aforementioned teaching programs in the 1960s, in which the approach to contents was basically similar to those in grammar schools, but to a lesser extent, given their assigned timetable. The step towards the decrease of general knowledge programs occurred with the reform in the 1990s, when the artistic contents were completely cut out from a large number of vocational programs, and the new reform has not changed this situation. Such organization of vocational programs has led to the fact that young people in most vocational schools during their high school education, or approximately from the age of fifteen, have lost any contact with fine arts and visual culture, which are extremely important for the development of aesthetic sensibility, cultural awareness and expression of pupils, that is, for a comprehensive personal development and self-improvement. When we

look at the ratio of the number of students in high schools and vocational schools in Croatia – according to the data from school year 2017/2018, grammar schools were attended by 31.28%, vocational schools by 65.34%, and art schools by 3.38% of the total number of high school pupils (Guidelines, 2019) – it becomes clear that certainly almost 50% of the total number of pupils don't come into contact with the contents from the field of visual arts during their high school education. The focus of vocational education on both generic competences and lifelong learning competencies, except for competencies for acquiring specific qualifications, as is indicated in the *National curriculum for vocational education* (2018), cannot be considered comprehensive without such an important field as art. Nowadays, when the tendency to continue education at higher levels of education after vocational schools is increasing, this situation is certainly not justified.

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In conclusion at the end of this paper, it is illustrative to emphasize the results of research *Curriculum Evaluation and Model Development of the Curriculum for Compulsory Education in Croatia*, which was conducted by the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb in 2003. The research showed that, from the perspective of pupils, the primary school subject of *Visual Culture* was placed somewhere in the middle of the scale in terms of its interesting features compared to other subjects, but in the last place in terms of its usefulness in the present life and importance in the future (Curricula evaluation, 2004). Similar research for high schools has not been conducted yet, but with the experience of Visual Culture, which in the previous school system often had to accept a “subordinate role (fun and recreational) next to ‘serious’ subjects” (Damjanov, 1998, p. XII), the odds are high that the answers for this subject would be similar to the mentioned ones. We can all hope that the new reform has laid the foundations to change such opinions, at least in regards to grammar schools, not only about art subjects in schools but also about the importance of art in society.

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Jasmina Nestić

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Ivana Lučića, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia

jasmina.nestic@ffzg.hr

Likovna umjetnost u srednjoškolskom obrazovanju u Hrvatskoj od sredine 20. stoljeća do danas u kontekstu obrazovnih promjena i reformi

Sažetak

*Sadržaji iz povijesti umjetnosti u hrvatskim su gimnazijama prvotno bili predviđeni u sklopu predmeta Crtanje, a zatim su se sredinom 20. stoljeća našli u predmetnoj simbiozi sa sadržajima iz povijesti. Od 1960. Likovna umjetnost zajedno s Muzičkom umjetnosti ravnopravna je sastavnica predmeta Umjetnost, a od 1994. kao predmet u gimnazijama i formalno se posve osamostaljuje. Posljednja obrazovna reforma iznjedrila je novi predmetni kurikulum 2019. kojim je predmet temeljito reorganiziran i približen suvremenim obrazovnim načelima. U pogledu strukovnih škola, tijekom sedmoga desetljeća 20. stoljeća izrazito veliki broj nastavnih programa imao je implementirane sadržaje iz likovne umjetnosti unutar predmeta Hrvatskosrpski jezik i književnost s osnovama estetskog obrazovanja, a koji su u kasnijim programima tijekom 1990-ih u većini škola posve izostavljeni, što se ponovilo i u najnovijim obrazovnim dokumentima nastalima u zadnjih nekoliko godina. Cilj je ovoga rada, kroz analizu nastavnih programa gimnazija i strukovnih škola u Hrvatskoj u periodu od sredine 20. stoljeća pa do danas, tematizirati položaj i specifičnosti predmeta Likovna umjetnost, odnosno sadržaja iz područja likovnih umjetnosti (povijesti umjetnosti) te promjene koje je predmet prošao tijekom raznih obrazovnih reformi.**

Ključne riječi: gimnazije; nastavni programi; povijest umjetnosti; strukovne škole.

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