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Art Education In Schools

BY the word "art" (Kunst) we mean pictorial or visual art (bildende Kunst) i.e. painting, drawing, sculpture and — as a special subject — the history of architecture. Apart from one or two necessary additional inclusions (photo film video) this represents the aims of art as a school subject. The dividing line between Kunst (art in the accepted sense) and Werkunterricht (manual training), often amalgamated as Kunst und Werken, or similar, remains fairly fluid.

Craft instruction emphasises, first and foremost, technical-practical (manual) skills. It is not taught at grammar schools (Gymnasien). The term musische Bildung (training in the creative arts in the widest sense) does not mean here art in the educational sense but art instructional programmes and artistic practice available outside formal teaching — such as optional courses, out-of-school activities etc.

Art is not restricted to "visual or pictorial art" in the narrower sense; it also embraces literature and music, i.e. subjects dealt with in language and music lessons. The literature of other languages is the subject of foreign language instruction.

Art is an integral part of school education in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The teaching of German provides a certain amount of comparative study of literature.

There are manifold opportunities in schools and higher education in the Federal Republic of Germany to voluntarily engage in artistic activity (as a supplementary or independent subject) in optional courses or activities — or to experience artistic practice in the form of art education. Such facilities are provided partly by school teaching staff themselves or by outside personnel after consultation with the school or higher education establishment concerned.

Primary schools for instance, provide courses in handicraft skills such as pottery.

The activities are, as a rule, not restricted to year groups; more often than not pupils from various schools take part in such organized events. Activities of this nature include school orchestra, drama, puppets — as well as (visual) art, film, photography and video. Reliable statistics in this connection are not available. Suffice it to say that there many such activities

and clubs.

But there is no reliable information available as to which persons take part, i.e. whether they are, in the main, those who availed themselves of such facilities in school — or other persons. The former seems more likely.

The importance of these activities is best illustrated by way of an example. In a report published by a teacher, long active in this field, he states that, between the years 1938 and 1970, he produced over 80 puppet plays performed by pupils and seen by more than 70,000 people.

In this connection the artistic standard was more than acceptable, as a glance at the programme reveals it includes Dr. Faust, Andersen's Galoschen des Glucks, plays by Puccini (The Magical Accordion) and Jules Verne's Around the World in 80 Days.

The educational value of these activities is very great: in addition to the intrinsic value of such involvement in drama, puppet theatre, music etc. it also offers proof of commitment to

something outside the field of scholastic compulsion. The experience gained here is well able to provide pupils with a qualification for subsequent life situations and may be regarded as a component in the self-realization process. The latter, in particular, is of great importance because of the lack of compulsion, the voluntary participation in general and the stimulus provided by something done by personal choice, this represents an indispensable part of the educational endeavours by schools.

Art in preschool and at primary level: The preschool area is relatively free from regimentation. The kindergartens (normal and special), run by local authorities, have laid down no curricular requirements for art instruction — a subject which enjoys an important place in the overall preschool programme. The organization of the latter is basically the responsibility of the person in charge of the kindergarten. Expert advice is also provided by the municipal authorities. Particular value is attached to the therapeutic qualities of art in special kindergartens. Even the kindergartens run by

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the various religious denominations have not set out curricular requirements in regard to art teaching; the elaboration of relative programmes is left entirely to the principal. Greater formulation of concept is to be found in kindergartens run by independent bodies — such as the Waldorf or Montessori kindergartens — in which an attempt is made to realize a comprehensive educational