

6.2 Legitimization: Cultural mediation promotes cognitive performance and other forms of intelligence

Engagement with the arts initiated by cultural mediation is held to be ideally suited to promote cognitive performance as well as emotional, social, visual-spatial or physical-kinaesthetic intelligence. Proponents of this argument point out that today's information society is, and future societies especially will be more dynamic and more heterogeneous than their predecessors. For this reason, they say, the contents and forms of learning are undergoing rapid change. Concepts such as lifelong learning and informal learning are essential for designing contemporary education. From this viewpoint, cultural mediation is particularly well-suited to prepare people to face the challenges of → *cognitive capitalism*. In 1993, American researchers conducted a study intended to prove that listening to music composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart resulted in superior cognitive performance, particularly in the area of spatial and mathematical reasoning – dubbed the “Mozart effect” (Rauscher et al. 1993). A 1992–1997 study conducted at Berlin primary schools claimed to have documented the beneficial effect of music classes on the social behaviour and concentration skills of children (Bastian 2002). Notwithstanding the fact that comparative studies failed to confirm the results of both of the original studies, and methodological objections were raised about both (→ *Jansen-Osmann 2006*), the two studies have continued to provide the central arguments for promoting cultural mediation since their release.

Since 2005, Germany's national association for cultural mediation for youth, Bundesverband für Kulturelle Jugendbildung, has been developing a → *certificate of cultural competence*, which is intended to serve as an instrument allowing the documentation of knowledge and abilities acquired in non-school cultural mediation. The categories it uses, which encompass social, cognitive, emotional/psychological and creative aspects, outnumber even the → *50 social impacts of participation in the arts*, published by François Matarasso in 1997, which at that time were highly influential in steering English funding for culture towards cultural mediation (Matarasso 1997). The research team led by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill at the University of Leicester developed a lucid set of arguments in favour of beneficial learning effects from cultural mediation in their → *Generic Learning Outcomes*. Hooper-Greenhill's team believes that learning increases can be documented in the following areas: knowledge and understanding/skills/attitudes and values/enjoyment, inspiration and creativity/activity, behaviour and progression. Developed as an instrument for use in the self-evaluations of cultural institutions, especially museums and libraries, the Generic Learning Outcomes were also the objects of criticism by other scholars who pointed

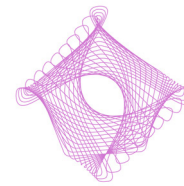
→ *cognitive capitalism* see Glossary

→ *Jansen-Osmann 2006* http://www.psych.uni-duesseldorf.de/abteilungen/aap/Dokumente/mtk_petra.pdf [21.2.2013]; see Resource Pool MFE060202.pdf

→ *Certificate of cultural competence* <http://www.kompetenznachweiskultur.de> [13.4.2012]

→ *50 social impacts of participation in the arts* http://mediation-danse.ch/fileadmin/dokumente/Vermittlung_ressources/Matarasso_Use_or_Ornament.pdf [13.4.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE060201.pdf

→ *Generic Learning Outcomes* <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/tooltemplates/genericlearning> [13.4.2012]



out that because the learning effects to be documented were defined in such “generic”, such very general, terms, the instrument, although quite easy to use, failed to yield particularly meaningful results. Nevertheless, Generic Learning Outcomes are now being used in cultural institutions throughout Europe.

The validity of the evidence put forth by proponents of these approaches has been challenged again and again by scholars who have suggested that their outcomes are the results of self-fulfilling prophecies rather than evidence of positive effects from engagement with the arts (→ [Mirza 2006](#)). Another point is that in the context of such legitimization strategies one very seldom hears anyone ask who defines what is or is not a “beneficial effect”, from what perspective. Another potentially problematic aspect is that the neurological approaches, at least, have tended to apply only conservative concepts linked with the canon of high culture in their definition of art – pregnant women should play Mozart for their fetuses, not Lady Gaga. In the context of these critiques, researchers have suggested that it would be wise to concentrate less on the “transfer effects” of cultural mediation and instead recognize the acquisition of art-specific knowledge and skills as a value in its own right (Hetland et al. 2007).

→ [Mirza 2006](http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/culture%20vultures%20-%20jan%202006.pdf) <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/publications/culture%20vultures%20-%20jan%202006.pdf> [21.2.2013]