AT THE PIVOT POINT OF CULTURAL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT, TEACHING, AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this paper is to examine the paradigmatic shifts in teaching methodologies, educational, cultural, and artistic practices that occurred during the pandemic and post-pandemic with the aim to provide implications of what will be next for these roles during the recovery phase.

Theoretical Framework: The Higher Education system of distributing instruction was disrupted by the COVID pandemic and both crisis and opportunity resulted from these new modalities of learning. New pedagogical approaches were developed, and this paper looks particularly at art education, art making, and cultural management looking at innovation and issues of digital equity. This pivoting caused a paradigmatic shift in the way participants experienced art, culture, and learning with both pros and cons. (Dodson, J. 2021). What is the role of educational and cultural managers, and artists during this next phase of recovery (Leonard, N. 2020)?

Method: The primary source of data was empirical observation and exchange with faculty, staff, and students. This is not a research study, but a historical paper based on an educator’s practice. From this perspective, the logic for constructing knowledge is based on research in the literature supporting themes from the field of art education and those proposed by the author.

Results and Discussion: The results revealed in the research were derived by the author from both their empirical observations and experience in the literature. In the discussion section, these results are contextualized considering the theoretical framework, highlighting the implications and relationships identified. Possible limitations of the research include that no one really knows what the future may hold.

Research Implications: The practical and theoretical implications of this research are discussed, providing insights into how the results can be applied or influence practices in the field of art education. These implications could encompass artistic practice and cultural management as well.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the literature by connecting art education, artistic practice, and cultural management and showing their value as well as projecting the future of emerging technologies and what essential roles art practitioners play in this new world. The relevance and value of this research are evidenced by the implications for education, digital literacy, and equity. I also point the way towards workforce development for arts and technology-related jobs. The paper places a priority on high-end digital skills for every citizen.

Keywords: Pandemic Recovery, Workforce Development, Artistic Practice, Art Education, STEAM.

NO PONTO CENTRAL DA GESTÃO DA EDUCAÇÃO CULTURAL, ENSINO E PRÁTICA ARTÍSTICA

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste artigo é examinar as mudanças paradigmáticas nas metodologias de ensino, práticas educacionais, culturais e artísticas que ocorreram durante a pandemia e pós-pandemia com o objetivo de fornecer implicações do que virá a seguir para essas funções durante a fase de recuperação.

Quadro teórico: o sistema de ensino superior de distribuição de ensino foi interrompido pela pandemia de COVID e tanto a crise como as oportunidades resultaram destas novas modalidades de aprendizagem. Novas abordagens pedagógicas foram desenvolvidas, e este artigo aborda particularmente a educação artística, a criação de arte e a
gestão cultural, olhando para a inovação e questões de equidade digital. Este pivotamento causou uma mudança paradigmática na forma como os participantes experimentaram a arte, a cultura e o aprendizado com prós e contras. (J. Dodson 2021). Qual é o papel dos gestores educacionais e culturais, e dos artistas durante esta próxima fase de recuperação (Leonard, N. 2020)?

Método: A principal fonte de dados foi a observação empírica e o intercâmbio com professores, funcionários e estudantes. Este não é um estudo de pesquisa, mas um documento histórico baseado na prática de um educador. Nessa perspectiva, a lógica para construir o conhecimento se baseia em pesquisas na literatura apoiamdo temas do campo da educação artística e aqueles propostos pelo autor.

Resultados e Discussão: Os resultados revelados na pesquisa foram derivados pelo autor tanto de suas observações empíricas e experiência quanto de sua pesquisa na literatura. Na seção de discussão, esses resultados são contextualizados considerando-se o marco teórico, destacando-se as implicações e relações identificadas. As possíveis limitações da pesquisa incluem que ninguém sabe realmente o que o futuro pode secar.

Implicações da pesquisa: As implicações práticas e teóricas desta pesquisa são discutidas, fornecendo insights sobre como os resultados podem ser aplicados ou influenciar práticas no campo da educação artística. Essas implicações podem englobar também a prática artística e a gestão cultural.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo contribui para a literatura, conectando educação artística, prática artística e gestão cultural e mostrando seu valor, bem como projetando o futuro das tecnologias emergentes e quais papéis essenciais os profissionais da arte desempenham neste novo mundo. A relevância e o valor desta pesquisa são evidenciados pelas implicações para a educação, a alfabetização digital e a equidade. Também aponto o caminho para o desenvolvimento da mão de obra para empregos relacionados com as artes e a tecnologia. O documento dá prioridade às habilidades digitais de ponta para todos os cidadãos.

Palavras-chave: Recuperação da Pandemia, Desenvolvimento da Força de Trabalho, Prática Artística, Educação Artística, STEAM.

EN EL PUNTO DE INFLESIÓN DE LA GESTIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN CULTURAL, LA ENSEÑANZA Y LA PRÁCTICA ARTÍSTICA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este trabajo es examinar los cambios paradigmáticos en las metodologías de enseñanza, las prácticas educativas, culturales y artísticas que ocurrieron durante la pandemia y la pospandemia con el objetivo de proporcionar implicaciones de lo que será el próximo para estos roles durante la fase de recuperación.

Marco teórico: El sistema de educación superior de distribución de la instrucción se vio interrumpido por la pandemia de COVID y tanto la crisis como la oportunidad resultaron de estas nuevas modalidades de aprendizaje. Se desarrollaron nuevos enfoques pedagógicos, y este artículo se centra particularmente en la educación artística, la creación artística y la gestión cultural, abordando la innovación y los problemas de la equidad digital. Este giro causó un cambio paradigmático en la forma en qué los participantes experimentaron el arte, la cultura y el aprendizaje con pros y contras. (Dodson, J. 2021). ¿Cuál es el papel de los gestores educativos y culturales y de los artistas durante esta próxima fase de recuperación (Leonard, N. 2020)?

Método: La principal fuente de datos fue la observación empírica y el intercambio con profesores, personal y estudiantes. No se trata de un estudio de investigación, sino de un artículo histórico basado en la práctica de un educador. Desde esta perspectiva, la lógica para construir conocimiento se basa en la investigación en la literatura que apoya temas del campo de la educación artística y los propuestos por el autor.

Resultados y discusión: Los resultados revelados en la investigación fueron derivados por el autor tanto de sus observaciones empíricas y experiencia como de su investigación en la literatura. En la sección de discusión, estos resultados se contextualizan considerando el marco teórico, destacando las implicaciones y relaciones identificadas. Las posibles limitaciones de la investigación incluyen que nadie sabe realmente lo que puede depar el futuro.

Implicaciones de la investigación: Se discuten las implicaciones prácticas y teóricas de esta investigación, proporcionando información sobre cómo se pueden aplicar los resultados o influir en las prácticas en el campo de la educación artística. Estas implicaciones podrían abarcar también la práctica artística y la gestión cultural.
**1 INTRODUCTION**

During the Pandemic artists were faced with having to find virtual solutions to their artistic and teaching practices to sustain them (See Figure 1). Managers for cultural and academic institutions had to swiftly convert programmatic activity to remote experiences to continue. This pivoting caused a paradigmatic shift in the way participants experienced art, culture, and learning with pros and cons. Through this crisis, much innovation has occurred and a new normal has arrived (Dodson, 2021). What is the role of educational and cultural managers and artists during this next phase of recovery?

This paper will identify the key factors that occurred during the pandemic that led to a paradigmatic shift in educational, cultural, and artistic practices. That will be followed by a description of the post-pandemic new normal that we have arrived at its sustainability and the role of educational and cultural managers and artists. Finally, with a view to the future, the paper will project how these roles will continue to change during recovery as technology evolves and safeguards remain in place (Leonard, 2020).

In my role as a Center Director for a Digital Arts Center, our team had to virtualize our classes immediately upon lockdown. Teaching classes remotely was not a technical issue as the college already had a CMS (course management system) in place and we adapted to Zoom for synchronous learning soon after (Kraehe, 2020). Our issue was that the center teaches high-tech arts technology courses such as 3D animation, game design, etc. that required the latest industry software and hardware and some of our students were not privileged enough to have this equipment at home. The college then allowed us to make many software licenses available remotely for others we tried using free trials or freeware. However, hardware issues remained. The digital divide remains a real equity issue.
Our community is very diverse and even though we lent out many laptops the equipment we had to loan did not equal what we had to offer on-site. The center did loan out production equipment such as cameras (both video and DSLR, light kits, etc.). Equipment is something we would like to work on in the future to ensure that students in need can participate equally in their classes.

These are some of the pivot points that occurred during the pandemic that will be of discussion in this paper. These are the types of changes that impacted programming for educational managers and also impacted cultural events and teaching artists (Ardalan & Iozzo Adler, 2021). A more in-depth discussion will follow.

The transition to remote teaching upon lockdown was a steep learning curve and faculty were re-writing their syllabi. Most faculty were using course management systems to some degree but for many teaching via distance learning was a new experience. Classes requiring physical materials, like mine, that used materials, such as paper circuits, replaced projects because the students did not have supplies at home. Fine arts courses had challenges to work remotely in terms of students losing facility access, and supplies, and conducting studio critique at a distance. However, I was feeling very positive about the opportunity to adapt my Technology in Art Education course to remote learning. For our class using technology was already expected, there was a base skill level, and working remotely enabled students to develop skills they could rapidly adopt and use in their internships.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 TECHNOLOGY IN ART EDUCATION

My students, graduate students in a Master’s of Art Education program presented their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) curriculum plans and taught application (App) lessons. These projects required them to design a unit lesson plan that combines any two or three components of STEAM and teach an applications based project with a lesson plan and demonstration that would take place on a smart phone or tablet. I demonstrated Scratch with Makey Makey. Scratch is a web-based interactive animation and game building program that teaches children how to program with block code. Makey Makey is an external interface that attaches to the computer via USB and connects to everyday objects with alligator clips to turn objects into a keyboard. You can turn a drawing into a piano etc. Scratch codes for Makey Makey. It has Makey Makey code blocks that allow you to interact with the Makey
Makey board and send commands to it so you can create sounds and play virtual drums, for example.

The ability to both demonstrate software and physical interfaces over Zoom was challenging and fun. One of the advantages of doing this remotely was the screen-sharing feature, which not only allowed students to see my Makey Makey demo up close but also enabled peer-to-peer screen sharing of their Scratch presentations so we could learn from one another. The remote learning format suited the class content and also gave my students the pre-service training to support them as they started to teach online. One student stated that the course was the most useful of the courses they had taken and I think that was probably because of the situation that COVID-19 had put them in. It intensified the reliance on technology.

2.2 ANXIETY

My students were anxious about the pandemic and disappointed that they did not have access to their academic facilities. They were concerned about their final exhibition and their graduation. They did not bargain for a remote learning experience. These were just some of the issues they were dealing with aside from their own well-being and concern for their family and friends.

As an administrator, there has been a lot of uncertainty. We have gone through decision-making incrementally. The Center for the Digital Arts, where I am an administrator, was closed for eighteen months. The facility had capacity limitations imposed based on classroom square footage, facility capacity, and social distancing. The current goal is to address the digital divide amongst our students and re-open for lab/studio access and equipment checkout. It has been difficult to predict the next step, as it is dependent on the state and local government. 2020 though Summer 2021 was a very difficult time for students and their chief concern was knowing when they could return to campus for in-person learning. Our recovery plan was iterative and continues to evolve with vaccine mandates and the increase in in-person classes.

2.3 LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC

The reality was going to the grocery store at 6:00 am to help my father shop, checking in on my sister who is an ER nurse at a local hospital, and managing the Center for the Digital Arts from home at the same time my kids were homeschooling. Meeting up with people going in the wrong direction in the food store was a common occurrence. Children interrupting Zoom
meetings, dog barking, and other constant disruptions were a part of the workflow. Through video conferencing, I’ve been introduced to colleagues’ homes, babies, and pets. This has made us more connected. Yet, the chaos of family life swirling around my makeshift work desk overwhelms me. Zoom has eliminated my commute and made some things much easier and faster. I can be there for the bus, extracurricular activities, dinner, and other community meetings back to back. In some ways, it has made me more flexible and busier than before. My counterbalance in taking advantage of Zoom is to do Zoom yoga. It is safe, mindful, and a way to handle the new challenges COVID has presented.

2.4 INNOVATION

This very fluid situation has also brought innovation across higher education and within my team. We transformed our art courses to remote experiences in a short time, which spoke to the dedication and passion the team has for education and the arts.

The center moved quickly to using Zoom and teaching remotely to foster live synchronous interaction between faculty and students. The painting faculty assigned students to work on location in plein air independently and then met up on Zoom to share their work for peer feedback. Professor Shute, instructor of painting, “when students are willing to use Google DRIVE, this is the optimum way for the studio art of the students to be shared! A studio community really is encouraging, when they share comments, pasting comments onto other students’ artworks (L. Shute, personal communication, September 21, 2020).“ Shute was earnest in adapting her fine arts students to remote learning. One other way she did this was by giving them a break. She would conduct a demonstration and then give students an allotted time to do an assignment and then come back together. One draw back was using the figure; it was not possible to work with models in an online environment.

The staff had to address many technical issues including access to software. It was decided to convert the curriculum to freeware (Krita, (krita.org), Blender, (blender.org), Maya, (autodesk.com), Unity, (unity3d.com), TinkerCAD, (tinkercad.com), etc.) that could accomplish the same learning outcomes to avoid burdening students with extra costs. This particular software is all downloadable from the Internet. Some are web based and some require you to have a configuration that can support these free trials/subscriptions. Krita, digital imaging, and TinkerCAD, 3D forms/circuits/etc., are completely free as is Scratch (scratch.mit.edu) animation/gaming, Unity, 2D/3D gaming platform. You can download a student or personal account for free.
This innovation including new ways to deliver remote technical support continued post-pandemic, online synchronous courses using Zoom has continued as an option to students. The center is planning to install new technology (hyflex) to support a hybrid model that will enable a teacher to teach live to both students in-person and remote simultaneously. Students will have more learning options and scheduling flexibility and this change in education will, not only expand the market, but change the way people learn.

Leonard (2019) proposes that non-humans and machines are co-creators in a post-human curriculum that facilitates learning with arts technology. He asserts that AI is capable of creating art and that art educators need to evolve with this new trend. Digital imaging tools can now create new content without human intervention. Arts technology education is changing rapidly in the classroom and this coupled with distance learning only further supports Leonard’s (2019) point of the need to factor in the non-human and the computer into curricula design.

2.5 ART EDUCATION AT THE FULCRUM OF THE FUTURE

Higher Education is embarking on what Forbes (2018) says is a fourth industrial technology revolution. This is a time when the transformation of work by automation is being accelerated by this pandemic. New jobs, as indicated by The 100 Jobs of the future report (Ford Australia, Deakin University, & Griffith University, 2019), such as Virtual Assistant Personality Designer, Innovation Manager, Virtual and Augmented Reality Experience Creator, Drone Experience Designer, Human Habitat Designer, and AI Educator, etc. will emerge and our students will need to be prepared for them. I believe art education is at the fulcrum of this design revolution. In order to prepare for any of these new professions you will need the critical thinking skills that only art education can supply.

2.6 CULTURAL EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT DURING A PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

My role as the Center Director of the Center for the Digital Arts requires me to wear many hats as an academic administrator who also plays a role as a cultural educational manager due to the specialty focus of the center. The City of Peekskill is located in the Hudson Valley in the county of Westchester, New York. It is a beautiful part of the state with a lot of natural resources as well as being metropolitan and in proximity of New York City. Peekskill is a
small, diverse, underserved city that has a significantly lower socio-economic population that struggles with a digital divide and a lack of transportation and employment opportunities.

As a cultural educational manager, the gallery turned to virtual lecturers of artists and regional celebrity chefs to serve our community. This was something we had never done before. It enabled us to widen our audience and work with people we hadn’t worked with before. This came out of wondering how to fill the void of losing our gallery and lecture program due to the facility closing. The Center for the Digital Arts does not only serve the college but is very much in service to the City of Peekskill in which its located. It is a community resource.

In the role of an administrator/cultural educational manager/community representative we are very much a part of what is happening in the city. During the Summer 2020 there was a Unity March for social justice in Peekskill that commemorated the life of George Floyd and other victims of police violence. The protests that went across the country touched us all and the Peekskill community also expressed itself. The role of the artist in these times is to reflect the contemporary in their work. The role of the administrator/manager is to make it possible. What we tried to do is to make it possible for artists to continue to practice during the time of the pandemic and create programming for our community.

The behind the scenes administrative work was quite complicated and what we liked to refer to as “fluid” during the pandemic. Our systems, policies, and procedures have been changing at a rapid pace since the pandemic began. I have been awaiting the onset of my promised virtual life by futurists from the 1990’s and now it’s finally here with remote classes, telework, telehealth, and self-care via Youtube and Zoom. There is very little you need to be in person for. Students have also caught onto this and now they’ve gotten used to it, post-pandemic they are not so sure they want to be back in person. They are hesitant to return and are demanding more educational options. Now with vaccine mandates there is an increased load on facilities and access management. The college will continue to monitor vaccination status and Covid-19 testing to ensure the safety of our campus. Mask mandates and social distancing are also a part of our new phase. This is what the new normal in a post-pandemic reality looks like.

Cultural educational managers have an opportunity to look at the national landscape and shape the national discourse to fit their own community. How can social justice activism make transformational change in this community? How did the pandemic impact your particular location? These are specific questions. In our area local restaurants were very hard hit but some more than others. For instance, pizza places and delis did wonderfully during the lockdown but fancier restaurants and health food did poorly. Overall, small businesses suffered. Our center
lost some of our non-credit adult classes, a large portion of our youth classes. Post-pandemic our adult non-credit students came back. This is how the pandemic is interacting with our market. We are in a highly diverse population. How could we look at ourselves to answer the questions above and chart a new way to practice?

The next phase of cultural educational management will not be based on technology it will be based on a change of mindset. If we are going to have a real 21st Century paradigmatic shift, and we need one, then we need to change our practices. Before we can change our practice we must change the way we think. Diversity, equity, and inclusion must be in focus as guiding principles for moving forward from this point in charting our future and as we do so we need to be thinking how these essential values work with the in demand skills for the 21st Century.

During the pandemic, managers had to develop new ways to communicate with staff and conduct daily operations. My team started to meet weekly via Zoom to keep connected and keep on top of projects and deadlines. This maintained our communication channels and made sure we didn’t get bogged down in emails. We lost our water cooler conversations and turned instead to Trillian, a SMS solution, this provided the quick chat feature that answered questions immediately. The team also relied on texting and cell phone appointments to get one another’s attention and touch base throughout the week. Upon returning this fall we kept our virtual weekly meeting because it has been so effective.

ArtsWestchester, a regional arts administration and artist organization, brought leaders from various cultural groups from across Westchester County together to share solutions on re-opening our facilities. The discussion spent a lot of time on air quality. How to control the heating and cooling systems and what air filters to get to reduce the transmission of the virus. We discussed with a professional in the heating and cooling field whether it was best to leave the windows open or shut for circulation. I had written several times to the organization asking about how to handle art openings and cultural events including how to handle refreshments. Certain museum and gallery directors who had been the first to open and host events shared on their tactics for hosting visitors in their space. It was very helpful.

The Center for the Digital Arts Gallery in Peekskill was finally challenged with having its first opening in the summer of July 2021. The center was still closed. The Peekskill Arts Alliance, a local arts council, turned to us to have their first in-person show since the COVID-19 pandemic. They were eager to bring their members together after such a long hiatus. We were limited to having eight visitors at a time for five-minute showings. There was a line in front of the building on the sidewalk to enter and no refreshments. However, the Peekskill Arts
Alliance was very grateful for the opportunity. Artists throughout the pandemic had been restricted from showing their art and had mostly online opportunities.

We are now hosting more exhibitions and many of our restrictions have eased. The Center for the Digital Arts Gallery can now accommodate its regular audience. Looking towards future programming, we are seeking ways to combine our experience in creating virtual events with celebrating our return to in-person experiences. Our students are now both remote and in-person. We do not want to exclude anyone from our programming we would like to continue to expand our audience. If we could strategize ways to both host in-person and virtual events simultaneously I think it would be a splendid way to serve more students and the community. We are also expanding our notion of arts from just visual arts.

The center is known for its visual arts programming and arts technology lectures that have an industry focus. For the first time during the pandemic, we offered programming that showcased culinary arts with local celebrity chefs. I think that we can expand cultural programming to include architecture, mixed reality, film screenings, and more. As our educational and workforce training expands our cultural programming should reflect that development.

From our children’s program that works with students seven to seventeen through our adult workforce development training certificates, we develop curricula with a view toward the future skill sets needed by the 21st Century worker. In the Youth Arts Technology program students take robotics, game design, programming, 3D animation etc., and take away a portfolio piece with the hope that they gain a sense of what the field is about and whether they like the experience. Hopefully, from a STEAM curriculum, they are inspired to have more STEAM experiences. Literature suggests that STEAM yields pathways to STEM careers and opens the door for girls and minority students (Jones, 2020).

On the workforce development front for adults, we are constantly canvassing the job market and developing short-term certificates such as Social Media Specialist, User Experience Design (UX), Mixed Reality (VR and AR), 3D Animation, Digital Photography, Historic Preservation etc. We are looking to expand in other emerging and in-demand fields beyond arts technology such as culinary arts, data engineering, artificial intelligence, and robotics. The center has recently brought together officials from partnering high schools and local industry to gain feedback in regard to future development. It is crucial for us to develop programming with our community partners and keep in conversation with them continually. One of the biggest things a cultural educational manager does is develop relationships with the community, which for me has included other arts centers and artists, high schools, local industry, chambers
of commerce and government. It has been the conversations and meetings with these stakeholders that have led to vital partnerships, program development, and other opportunities.

2.7 AT THE PIVOT POINT OF ARTISTIC PRACTICE

During the pandemic many artists including myself were exhibiting online, for instance, *Stay at Home, Make Art*, Dorsky Museum, New Paltz, NY on Instagram, visit [https://www.instagram.com/stayhome.makeart/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/stayhome.makeart/?hl=en). Artists are survivors and extremely resourceful. They will adapt to any and all situations. The pandemic was no exception. I am a practicing artist, primarily a painter (sherrymayo.com). I have a history of integrating technology with traditional media but of late have been mostly painting and drawing. Certainly, technology based artists were taking advantage of this period of time as the Internet is their exhibition space, e.g. Rhizome.org. There are new Virtual Reality (VR)/Augmented Reality (AR) artists emerging and showing on applications that are moving to the forefront and able to garner more attention in this type of scenario such as the Museum of the Moving Images Activatar project (no longer live) or Anna Dreambrush ([https://www.annadreambrush.com](https://www.annadreambrush.com)). But, traditional artists that depend on the physical, the visceral, the viewer in person, suffered a loss. The connection of the viewer and the work and the transcendence that happens in that moment really needs actual presence. That was suspended by the pandemic. You don’t get that experience in an online show.

However, online exhibitions were an interesting innovation. It brought people together. It got people talking and collaborating. Artists were very isolated during the pandemic, working alone. The online shows were a welcome point of contact. On one hand there was more time to work and less distractions. There weren’t so many events to go to taking away from studio work. There was a lot more studio time. I, personally, got a whole show completed. However, the show I exhibited was right when the space just opened post-pandemic and there couldn’t be an opening reception and I don’t think very many people saw the exhibition. Covid constraints early on really impacted viewship and the compromises were a challenge.

Artistic practice is a site for research (Sullivan, 2005). All of these changes, challenges, and responses could be a research paper by itself. Artists made a lot of work in response to the pandemic, to the murder of George Floyd, to the protests sweeping the nation in response to his death and the need for social justice, it was a time of great churn and it is still unresolved. How artists play a vital role in communicating the times we are living through and reflecting the personal consciousness of an individual makes an impact on our society locally and globally.
There have been multiple exhibitions now of artist’s work that was made during the pandemic and that work is an opportunity for research. It was an extraordinary time of lockdowns, economic impact, personal loss of loved ones, and national and worldwide crisis. All of this is recorded in the work of artists.

This time of intense isolation impacted artists. It wasn’t just that they were working alone it was that they were separated from their communities. There were no art openings or events to attend; no studio visits with other artists, and no coffees with friends. It is very important to maintain an artistic discourse around the work in order to keep making. The painting above (FIGURE 2) explores a division and the void in between. It came out of isolation and division that I felt immersed in and was reflective of our collective experience during the lockdown.

There was social media to the rescue during the pandemic crisis, which increased significantly during that period. Users increased their time during the pandemic to 65 minutes a day from 54 minutes per day, see Statista.com. Tiktok had the largest jump up in use at 38%. However, all platforms increased in usage especially video conferencing as people turned to this medium to fill the void in visiting with family and friends. “At the same time, the field of culture and society will be easier to access and exchange than politics, national defense, and security, or health and well-being (Phuong, L.V., Du, V.T, 2024).” This was good for artists and people in my field but this was still something that I resisted. I spend so much time screen time for work that I try to live unplugged as much as possible in my personal life. That is partly why I have moved to painting and drawing in the studio. I very lightly use social media even during the pandemic. I relied on old-fashioned phone calls and texting until I felt comfortable enough to see people outside and go hiking. I even received postcard art from another artist. There are still alternate ways to connect other than Facebook, X, Instagram, and TikTok. It is important to remember this. Andy Warhol’s Factory didn’t happen on Facebook.

Rhizome.org announced the Internet in ruins in 2020 (Bolton) that the open, fun, democratic web of the 1990s was dead. Instead the future gave us a dismal future with an Internet dominated by big tech. These platforms erode our flexibility and privacy. This is a dispossession and is also leading to an erosion of the digital media environment. Artists are responding to this dispossession and new media works are looking quite different than the hopeful enthusiastic works of the 1990s such as Paper Rad, Olia Lianina, etc.

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Post-pandemic we are co-hosting a juried exhibition entitled, *Grass + Roots: Peekskill to Poughkeepsie*, this regional exhibition is in person in two locations but also online. Artists want this; it gives them wider exposure. It also enabled us to include more artists than we could accommodate physically in the galleries. In addition, the show will have a digital online flip-book in lieu of a printed catalog. This has greater appeal to the artists because they can quickly distribute the link and show it to collectors and gallerists to promote their work at no cost.

Artists like David O’Reilly, (davidoreilly.com), and Wong Ping, humorous artist from Hong Kong ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcD0KWdFCpI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcD0KWdFCpI)), investigate their environment through animation and distribute their work in numerous ways. David O’Reilly is one of the most collected digital artists right now. While art spaces struggle with the conservation of digital pieces, collectors are going mobile with their art. They can take the work anywhere. The work may be shown everywhere in flexible ways adapting to a variety of mobile and Internet solutions as well as physical space. Artists are no longer limited to a single exhibition space today and the new normal in the post-pandemic world. Frederic Duquette has just sold “Broken Beauty (2020)” on Instagram for $12,000 within 24 hours of being posted. And while many of these developments are wildly exciting, there are other concerns such as digital and media artists being predominantly male. This is and will continue to expand as it has with all previous mediums but as with all STEM and STEAM fields the medium needs diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The maker movement, the first Maker Faire was in 2006 in the U.S., began to bring artists and technologists together in one forum. It attracted educators from K-12 and higher education as well. It launched a cascade of maker space construction in schools across America. What is still needed are artists at the center of those spaces. In order for a maker space to really work you need professional artists and technicians to be working side by side. They might be one person depending on the skill sets required. This person or persons are not typically the teacher. Maker spaces provide space to house industrial level specialized equipment to realize projects outside the classroom. These spaces have materials such as wood, specialty papers, large color printers, sewing materials, conductive tape, electronics, 3D printing etc. It is a space where material learning can take place (Justice, 2017). In order to run a maker space studio you need an artist. You may not be making an artwork with students but you are certainly designing something and solving a creative problem with materials.

The role of the artist in a post-pandemic society is multi-faceted. Daniel Pink (2006) envisioned an artist in every boardroom. I would go further and say there is a role for an artist in every room. Tomorrow is about solving design problems. In applying the design thinking
process to any project a team is required to have at least one creative artist/designer. The Stanford d.School’s process of design thinking, see FIGURE 3 below, includes the following stages: emphasize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. This process requires creative thinking and art and design skills. The process may also involve engineering and programming skills depending on what the project entails. The output of the process is a prototype, which must be tested. Design thinking is an iterative research based process. Art and design skills are in demand and these are an extension of art education. Artists by virtue of their studio practice are adept at solving these problems. We are in an age of exponentially increasing technology, an age of globalism, datism, and interconnectedness. The virus taught us that anything that happens in one corner of the earth will affect the rest of us. These design teams of the future need to design and create with sustainability in mind.

Artists all over New York State and specifically in the City of Peekskill have followed Richard Florida’s model in his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). In this model artists and creatives move to underserved lower socio-economic areas and invest in them. They settle in these areas and participate in the community and rejuvenate them. They get active civically and contribute artistically in community projects, activism, and arts exhibitions, performances, and events. This then attracts other businesses to invest in the area and further real estate development and what soon follows afterwards are restaurants and shops and then more residents move in. This is a pattern of gentrification that follows artists wherever they go. They are early adopters of neighborhoods that need love. The ability to work remotely provides creative workers with more options. The reduction of travel time provides artists with the opportunity to have flexibility and better access to studio space and time. It helps them live in more affordable housing. It gives them the ability to work out of their studio and expands the options of whom they can work for and widens their client base. The projection is that there will be less full-time labor and more freelance labor in the near future. This could be a boon for artists. Part of what I do with my many hats as manager, educator, and artist is to help ensure that artists get to remain in creative jobs and apply their artistic skills. I have always been very passionate about making opportunities for artists from developing programming and curriculum for artists, to exhibition opportunities, and workforce development.

3 METHODOLOGY

This paper was based on empirical observation and first hand experience by the author who exchanged with faculty, staff, and students. In Figure 4 the Pandemic Progress and
Transformation of the Triad Cultural Manager, Teacher, Artist Relationship into Design Research/Design Thinking Model is depicted. Before the pandemic I occupied all three of these roles in person and the overlapping of roles and repurposing of skills was hard to share with other people. However, once the Pandemic occurred online tools facilitated my three roles being seamless and iterative allowing me to go back and forth and make rapid relationships providing me with the opportunity for more testing of ideas and more curricula experimentation. This was a real application of Design Thinking and Design Research. It was no longer a messy Venn diagram of roles but an organized balanced triad of identities that supported one another and was interconnected with Technologies.

I also looked at the GIAPEE subsystem model used by Quelpo, E.A.B, Pe´rez, Y.G., Salazar, L.R., Arboleda, V.R. (2024) regarding the Higher Education system of access, retention, graduation, and employability which we ultimately are also working towards. They were examining high dropout rates post-COVID-19 in Latin America. GIAPEE is a University Institutional Management System a part of its (SGUI) that tracks and manages the vocational development of its students from kindergarten through University. It is supposed to decrease dropout rates.

In our efforts we were throughout the pandemic and in recovery concerned with the same KPIs for Higher Education. These metrics show our student success and also the impact the pandemic on our institution which as the study on Latin America above has shown (Quelpo, E.A.B, Pe´rez, Y.G., Salazar, L.R., Arboleda, V.R. (2024)) is a global situation. They on average are down 20-40% of their University students post-pandemic.

4 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The artist will need more design and technology skills during the next phase and will need to get ready for a world that is immersed in AI. The quicker and more agile artists can be in upskilling for the workforce the better prepared they will be for what is coming. Artists will be in demand but they will also need skills to support them in being work ready. As an artist, I work very locally and I have a very small radius in which I work and serve. It is important to zoom out and get a larger national and international perspective on cultural production, arts education, and world events. How are we connected with how the pandemic is playing out in other countries and what can we learn? How can we find out more about what innovations others are implementing in their studios and centers?
I think that artistic practice is a sacred individual idiosyncratic pursuit to know thyself in the world. Some say that the future will be post-human (Leonard, 2020) due to the takeover of AI and robots. I do not think cyborgs will replace artists and scientists even though there will be many jobs eliminated between 2020-2030 and others created (Kelly, 2021). The new Leonardo’s of the 21st Century combining art, science, and technology will envision and invent this future. It is looking like a mixed reality future whereby every surface is embedded with a computer. At the same time, I would predict that things made by hand will be valued at a premium as they become increasingly rare.

In 1999, Mark Osborne screened an animated short entitled, More, with a cover track by New Order (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCeeTfsm8bk). It was about drained beings with magic stuff in their bellies that they put inside their goggles when they worked all day in the factory. All day long they looked through their goggles and saw a beautiful rainbow vista but when they took the goggles off everything was bleak and dismal and eventually they ran out of the magic stuff in their bellies. That’s the future without artists. We are at risk. Art education is underfunded and under valued in the United States. Without artists, the dispossession of the Internet which reflects the impact of climate change and our issues with diversity, equity, and inclusion could lead to our merely having rainbow colored goggles. We are at a pivot point and artists are at the fulcrum just as they transform struggling neighborhoods into hipster destination locals on a small scale. The creative class generates creative capital, which on a collective scale is a powerful force. Other countries e.g. U.K. have articulated their performance and investment in this sector (Beech, 2021). The United States has not prioritized creative capital in the same way. However, there has been a congressional caucus on STEAM created. The first session finally met in 2019. This bipartisan caucus is focused on integrating STEM pathways with arts education. Hopefully, this is a first step in generating a national dialog on arts education, the value of artistic practice, and creative capital in the United States.

5 CONCLUSION

In terms of cultural educational managers, teachers, and artists pivoting at this point in the post-pandemic period, I think we need to accept that many of the precautions that we have taken and the new requirements that have been mandated will continue. What we need to radically accept is that the new normal will make these changes in our social norms lasting and that many of our jobs will not be coming back but will be replaced by emergent technology positions that our workers are not ready for.
That said, I am hopeful that based on how much we’ve learned that we will turn into a safer, healthier, more empathetic world that understands better how to share and vet information. If we come together in these roles to work for environmental, climate, socio-economic, and data network sustainability, there is a brighter future possible for generations to come. Seeking equity in the digital divide is crucial in this quest. The digital divide is not just about hardware, software, and WiFi, although this remains a significant issue; it is about digital literacy and the skills to become a high-end user. Pew Research determined that a small minority of Americans fell into the high-end digitally literate category. Pew (Standsberry, Anderson & Rainie, 2019) forecasts that in the next 50 years, life will improve due to digital technology but only for the elite. Lev Manovich (2017) did a study of Manhattan and social media use and found that usage was very uneven. Even in a city like Manhattan with ample WiFi access, there were some neighborhoods where access to social media platforms was very low. I would assert that the digital divide is a priority that it drives the pathway to employment, a living wage, housing, food, and education in the 21st Century and should be a top priority. It is a local issue for us but is a significant worldwide issue. If there is one item that we could begin with moving forward as managers, teachers, and artists, I would suggest selecting this one.

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FIGURE TITLE

Figure 1

Never Stop Learning, Miranda Jang

Figure 2

Chasm, 2020, 3x2 feet, oil on wood, Sherry Mayo
Figure 3

*Design Thinking Process, Standford d.School, dschool.standford.edu*

![Design Thinking Process](https://dschool.standford.edu)

Figure 4

*Pandemic Progress and Transformation of the Triad Cultural Manager, Teacher, Artist Relationship into Design Research/Design Thinking Model*
REFERENCES


