Culture Case

The vital importance universal access to in-school arts activities

This research was conducted by **Hei Wan Mak** and **Daisy Fancourt** at **University College London**

Summary

This paper digs into survey data to reveal that while children's out-of-school arts engagement is shaped by parental habits and social class, the same cannot be said for cultural activities that take place in school. The research ultimately concludes that cultural activities provided by schools are 'important to ensuring universal access to the arts amongst young people'.

The data came from three years of the Taking Part Survey

This is government survey of a nationally representative sample of the English population. The researchers analysed the responses of just under 2,000 children aged 11-15 in the years between 2015 and 2018. The key questions from the survey were whether children had engaged in 'performing arts activities', in 'arts, crafts and design activities' and visited 'an archive, a museum or heritage site' in the past year. The survey also asked how frequently those activities were undertaken, and whether they happened in or out of school. It also collected a host of other demographic data about the child and their household. In order to understand the influence of parents on the cultural habits of children the analysis incorporated data on what the respondent's parents had done in the past 12 months, and whether they had engaged in the arts during their own childhoods.

Arts activities in schools are important for overcoming entrenched inequalities in arts engagement

The authors are being as blunt as they can when they conclude that 'there is an intergenerational transmission of cultural capital from parents to children

through tastes and preferences, cultural goods, books or arts’. Other research has shown this kind of transmission is true also for health and academic outcomes. Efforts to widen participation in the arts which rely on families to make choices about how they spend their time and money are only likely to exacerbate existing inequalities. Hence the importance of in-school arts activities.

Keywords

survey **children** **school** **young people** **UK**

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