



## REVIEW ARTICLE

### EFFECTS OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES IN CULTURAL CENTERS ON CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS: CASE OF BAMBOO NUMÉRIK IN COTONOU

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#### ABSTRACT

The practice of culturalleisure activities is of enormous interest and benefit to children. Indeed, to better understand this phenomenon, this research was part of the perspective of analyzing the beneficial contribution of the practice of leisure cultural activities on children attending the Bamboo Numérik cultural center. To do this, qualitative research was carried out with twenty-one subjects including seventeen parents and four supervisors. Thus, this research was based on the theoretical model "child development and its learning mechanisms" and the theory of "the triarchic conception of intelligence: different ways of thinking" to properly analyze the results. Furthermore, after the analysis and analysis of the response elements, different results revealed that the practice of leisure cultural activities improves personal development and facilitates the social integration of children. It would be ideal through future research to investigate the relationship between the skills acquired in cultural leisure activities and the academic performance of children attending cultural centers in Benin.

## INTRODUCTION

Culture for Delandsheere (1979) represents "The knowledge, beliefs, art, morality, law, customs, techniques and habits acquired by man as a member of society". Including customs, know-how specific to a country, culture is considered as the identity of a people on a national scale and includes cinema, theater, audiovisual productions, painting and plastic arts, music, etc. Thus, "innovative cultural activities are increasingly considered as a driver of social development" (Neggady, 2019). These activities are practiced for better participation in intellectual and artistic life. They support social identities and individualization, allowing each generation to reinterpret the world, become autonomous and play an active role in society. Artistic practices therefore constitute forms of expression that are based on an art (dance, theater, visual arts, writing, etc.) and call upon individual or

collective creativity (National Institute of Youth and Popular Education, 2012). Leisure time provides the opportunity to evolve in other environments, likely to contribute specifically and significantly to cognitive and social development; children and adolescents are not passive (Cécile, 2007). Cultural activities thus allow children to relax, express themselves and raise their intellectual level. Moreover, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), child development is a complex process that takes place in various environments. While family and school are essential, leisure activities also play a significant role in children's living and development environment. UNESCO (2005) considers cultural education as one of the tools for strengthening social potential that stimulates creativity and prepares for active participation in society. Its objective is also to increase the level of participation of different social groups in culture carried out both by schools and other entities such as non-governmental

organizations, churches and religious associations and local and national cultural institutions. The most active in this regard are cultural centers and libraries whose activities, especially in small towns, are essential for cultural development. Cultural education has been approached with various ideologies. It has evolved with civilizations, constituting an essential means for the development of children. It is a question of educating through cultural leisure. Hence the originality of this research which focuses on leisure activities practiced in cultural centers and their effects on children in Benin. Cultural centers such as the Bamboo Numérik cultural center offer activities in almost all artistic categories: dance, plastic arts, theater, cinema, music, etc. Furthermore, for Singly (2006), the transmission of models and values is no longer a consensus (redefinition of the family, socio-economic crises, rise of individualization, etc.) in this changing world. The author goes on to state that cultural spaces are becoming a privileged framework for learning one's own resources and redefining both individual and collective values. In addition, education focused on artistic and cultural leisure aims to train children and adolescents in the ability to take a personal look at the world, thanks to knowledge of the works and artistic movements that have marked the history of humanity. Actions in this area are organized around three major axes: the direct relationship to the works, the analytical and cognitive approach to the works, and finally effective practice in the context of workshops (Enel, 2011). This education takes place in several institutions including the Bamboo Numérik school and cultural center, where various artistic and cultural workshops take place. These places where cultural leisure activities emerge and are organized allow children to express their potential and to be in direct contact with cultural works. Considering all these parameters, what is the contribution of the practice of cultural leisure activities on children and adolescents who attend the Bamboo Numérik cultural center? The overall objective of this research is to analyze the beneficial contribution of the practice of cultural leisure activities on children and adolescents attending the Bamboo Numérik cultural center.

## METHODS

**Framework and type of research:** This is an analytical cross-sectional study carried out within the Bamboo Numérik cultural center located near the 12th District Office of Cotonou. The center is composed of a Library consisting for the most part of African novels and books that promote reading, the digital room where several activities such as music and drawing take place. It is also composed of a restaurant and a large space that allows the organization of several activities such as film screenings, exhibitions of paintings and art objects as well as the organization of cultural events. The target population consists of parents of children and supervisors of the center. The sample of seventeen parents whose children participate in the activities of the Bamboo Numérik cultural center was selected using the volunteer selection technique. The reasoned selection technique made it possible to select the four supervisors (artists) who lead these workshops. They were chosen because they are the people who can provide information about the effects of cultural leisure activities on children.

**Data collection techniques and tools:** For data collection, an interview guide was used to understand the effect of cultural leisure activities on children and adolescents.

As part of this research, a semi-directive interview was chosen with the respondents. A Techno Pova 5G mobile phone - Model LE8 was used to record the interviews before transcription. An observation grid was used to conduct participant observation in order to analyze the behaviors and attitudes developed by children and adolescents during the practice of cultural leisure activities in the workshops of the Bamboo Numérik cultural center.

**Data processing:** During this phase, the interviews were faithfully transcribed based on the questions contained in the interview guide. More or less identical answers are classified by center of interest. Indeed, after listening carefully to the interview recordings, the units of meaning were noted in order to give content to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from all the interviews according to the objectives and hypotheses. The processing of the data collected by observation in the field was done on the basis of the observation grid made up of different categories and subcategories allowing the processing of information related to this research. The processing of qualitative data is done on the basis of the information collected in the field. The data from the interviews and participant observation were processed based on an analysis followed by a thematic grouping to compare the responses obtained with the research hypotheses.

## RESULTS

**Cultural leisure activities offered and children's choices:** Several leisure activities are offered to children in cultural centers such as Bamboo Numérik. One of the center's supervisors stated: "the center offers activities such as choir, plastic arts practice, dance, museum visits, visits to artistic structures and shows according to the projects of the time" (M.T, center supervisor; field data; May 2022). It is possible to understand that these activities are offered in order to allow free choice according to the motivations, tastes and aspirations of each of these children who are mainly students. As a result, each child and/or adolescent makes their choice based on the logic of what interests them by referring to these motivations and their passion. To this end, one of the parents surveyed confided the following: "my child likes drawing, he can imagine and draw what he has imagined. It makes him happy" (P.D, parent of children, field data; May 2022).

**Interest in leisure cultural activities among children who attend Bamboo Numérik:** It should be noted that cultural leisure activities occupy an important place and particular interest in the lives of the children who engage in them. The playful, fun and developmental nature of these activities strengthens the learning, communication, creativity and concentration capacity of the children who attend the Bamboo Numérik cultural center. It is in this logic that a supervisor said that "parents are always amazed by the creation of their little one, which allows children or adolescents to have more confidence in themselves, since they manage to design objects with their hands" (H.E, supervisor; field data; May 2022). Cultural leisure activities promote contact with culture while being vectors of connection between children and recreational culture. It is in this logic that a parent certified that "cultural leisure activities are enormously important, especially since children have access to culture even while having fun" (T.Z, parent of children; field data; May 2022). Cultural leisure activities therefore allow above all equal access to culture.

The practice of these activities makes it possible to observe in children an involvement, motivation and enthusiasm. During an interview with a supervisor of the center, he affirmed: "Children are often admiring of the proposals of cultural works and curious to know how they proceeded. They are invested and enthusiastic" said (J.A, supervisor of the center; field data; May 2022). It should be remembered from this verbatim that the practice of a cultural activity allows one to have fun, to guarantee learning through creativity and imagination, to contribute to the development of the child, to create a sense of belonging and involvement. 3.3- Leisure activities: acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. Cultural leisure activities not only promote access to culture but also the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and the development of relationships with others which influences openness to others, thanks to its transmission of knowledge. To this end, a parent stated: "the child's progress is observable through the knowledge acquired and the skills he develops" (H.O, parent of children; field data; May 2022). In this sense, a supervisor expressed himself in these terms: "Cultural activities allow children and adolescents at the center to strengthen their way of thinking and strengthen their intellect" (B.I, center supervisor; field data; May 2022). By observing children practicing activities at the Bamboo Numérik cultural center, an evolution in their artistic practice was noted. These children who attend the center seem to approach these activities in a more serene, more thoughtful way. The children's abilities and skills expected by the supervisor develop little by little with regular and educational monitoring.

**Cultural leisure activities in the social integration of children:** The ability to take initiative, critical thinking and a sense of responsibility are central concepts in the learning implemented in this type of activity. Children communicate more with each other and are enthusiastic about sharing their feelings. These actions promote their social integration. With this in mind, a supervisor stated that "by practicing manual activities, the child will be able to interact with the others registered in his creative leisure workshop. He can thus gain spontaneity and feel free to express himself" (J.A, supervisor of the center; field data; May 2022). Observations made in the field showed that the children are able to link their own productions and the work of the supervisor, whose intention they have clearly understood. The reflective work, implemented by their creative attitude, is valued in their own eyes. They feel confident and fulfilled. One of the supervisors surveyed confided: "They are very interested and remember the steps taken to arrive at a drawing" (M.T, supervisor of the center; field data; May 2022). Thus, cultural leisure activities then promote the personal, cognitive and sensitive development of children in interaction with the world around them and therefore promote their social integration. It is necessary to recall that these advances and abilities are indeed more visible in the long term. The social behaviors of children during cultural activities are also a representation of their attitudes in the social life of the workshops in the Bamboo Numérik center, and even in their daily lives.

## DISCUSSION

**On the importance of cultural leisure activities:** The diversity of cultural leisure activities requires making a choice among many others according to the interest and the place given to this chosen activity.

Whether musical, artistic or sporting, leisure activities allow children a greater open-mindedness and the development of non-academic skills. Leisure activities can, through their activities, the experience they generate, but also through the notion of education attached to them, become a tool for cultural and social integration for children (Adjizian et al., 2017). The practice of these activities is based on the free choice of each individual. According to Lloyd-Smith (2021), creative activities have the advantage of channeling thoughts into the goal of creating a cultural project. To do this, it is necessary to take the time to think, imagine, and design what you want to create. Practicing leisure cultural activities is therefore an opportunity to embark on new achievements and to apply emotions to a project that you want to create. First of all, it is obvious that the leisure offer must meet the needs of children, just as it must meet the needs and expectations of the population in general (Forde et al., 2015). Through the activities offered, cultural centers transmit multiple and diversified learning and allow the acquisition of knowledge complementary to that of school, which ranges from formal education to informal education (Busy, 2010). 4-2 Effects of cultural leisure on children.

Cultural leisure activities have a noble aim in that they participate in the education of the individual and the members of a society, by going beyond their own instinct and their immediate interest. They are of a beneficial contribution to the children who engage in them. According to Grelot (2016), cultural leisure activities strengthen motor and social skills, creativity, sharing, cooperation, decision-making and conflict resolution, and develop a better understanding of individual and cultural differences. Indeed, acquiring cultural knowledge allows one to be in constant evolution, to communicate, to debate, and thus to progress in society, to build oneself personally and in relationships with others (Hamidou, 2014). Furthermore, it is possible to arouse interest in artistic practice among these students who do not really attach importance to the activities of cultural centers, by making explicit the objectives and resources to be mobilized to give meaning to these activities (Cornaz & Fonio, 2014). Thus, participation in a leisure activity, beyond connecting the child with culture, allows the latter to flourish, interact with his peers and open up to others (Hasmi et al., 2014). Peer interactions, encouraged by artistic and cultural workshops at the Bamboo Numérik cultural center, increase the creative, imaginative and action capacities of these children and adolescents in the presentation, explanation and exhibition of their productions. It is for this purpose that Vygotski (1934) affirmed that social interactions actively participate in the intellectual development of children. Leisure cultural activities therefore generate social bonds that guarantee better overall health and personal development, thus promoting cohesion, socialization and the maintenance of a social network (Ngono, 2021). The interactions, dialogues and confrontations with real group situations observed at the Bamboo Numérik cultural center are highlighted in cultural activities, which lead children to think and learn intelligently.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of this research was based on the analysis of the beneficial contribution of the practice of cultural leisure activities on children attending the Bamboo Numérik cultural center by taking into account two variables including the personal development of children (acquisition of knowledge,

skills) and their social integration. Indeed, this research has shown that children acquire knowledge through cultural leisure and this contributes considerably to their social integration. Consequently, there is a close relationship between cultural leisure which has an important part in the development of children, their personal development and their social integration. These results obtained attract attention and challenge all stakeholders for an education of children through cultural leisure. Future research can focus on the social representations of members of Beninese grassroots communities regarding the effectiveness of cultural leisure in the dynamics of cultural democracy in Benin.

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