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**The Limits and Possibilities of Art Activism Pedagogy: A Critical Examination in the Turkish Context**

Sanat Aktivizmi Pedagojisinin Sınırları ve İmkânları: Türkiye Bağlamında Eleştirel Bir İnceleme

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## **Abstract**

This study critically examines the limitations and possibilities of arts activism pedagogy in the Turkish context. For many years, arts education in Turkey was limited to aesthetic production and technical skills; however, in recent years, interest in arts activism has increased with educational visions centered on themes of social justice, environmental awareness, and citizenship. Arts activism is a contemporary pedagogical approach that views art as a tool for raising social awareness, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering transformation. The purpose of this research is to theoretically discuss the applicability of arts activism in schools, its pedagogical contributions, and the challenges encountered. The research was conducted using the Systematic Thematic Synthesis method, and the literature was examined within three theoretical frameworks: Social Learning Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Social Participation Theory. Three main themes were identified from the analysis: Philosophical and Scientific Foundations, Pedagogical Principles, Methodological Practices, and Challenges. Findings indicate that arts activism supports the development of self-efficacy, empathy, critical awareness, and leadership in students, while teachers, through their 'artist/educator/activist' identities, assume a transformative role. Practices such as recycled art, community art, and digital tools expand the pedagogical potential of arts activism. However, curricular limitations, teacher training deficiencies, political/administrative resistance, and resource constraints remain key obstacles to implementing arts activism in schools. Consequently, arts activism pedagogy holds significant potential in developing critical thinking, environmental awareness, and civic engagement skills in Turkey; however, to realize this potential, educational policies and teacher training programs must be restructured in line with transformative pedagogies.

**Keywords:** Arts Education, Activism, Social Learning, Social Participation, Critical Pedagogy, Transformative Pedagogy, Teacher Autonomy.

## **Öz**

Bu çalışma, sanat aktivizmi pedagojisinin Türkiye'deki uygulama olanaklarını ve karşılaşılan sınırlılıkları eleştirel bir çerçevede incelemektedir.

Türkiye’de sanat eğitimi uzun süre ağırlıklı olarak teknik beceriler ve estetik üretim odağında yürütülmüş olsa da son yıllarda sosyal adalet, çevresel duyarlılık ve yurttaşlık temalarını içeren eğitim yaklaşımlarının güçlenmesiyle sanat aktivizmine yönelik ilgi artmıştır. Sanat aktivizmi, sanatı toplumsal farkındalık geliştirme, eleştirel düşünmeyi destekleme ve dönüşüme imkân tanıyan bir öğrenme alanı olarak ele alan çağdaş bir pedagojik yaklaşımdır. Bu araştırma, sanat aktivizminin okullarda uygulanabilirliğini, eğitim ortamlarına sağlayabileceği katkıları ve uygulamada ortaya çıkan zorlukları kuramsal bir temel üzerinden tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, Sistematik Tematik Sentez yöntemiyle yürütülmüş; literatür Sosyal Öğrenme Kuramı, Eleştirel Pedagoji ve Sosyal Katılım Kuramı ekseninde analiz edilmiştir. Sentez sonucunda üç ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır: kuramsal/felsefi arka plan, pedagojik ilkeler ve uygulamaya dönük yöntemsel yaklaşımlar ile zorluklar. Bulgular, sanat aktivizminin öğrencilerde öz-yeterlik, empati, eleştirel bilinç ve liderlik becerilerini desteklediğini göstermektedir. Öğretmenlerin “sanatçı/eğitimci/aktivist” kimliğiyle üstlendikleri rolün bu süreci dönüştürücü bir nitelik kazandırdığı görülmektedir. Geri dönüştürülmüş materyallerle üretim, topluluk sanatı ve dijital araçların kullanımı gibi yöntemler, sanat aktivizminin pedagojik potansiyelini genişletmektedir. Bununla birlikte, müfredatın sınırlı esnekliği, öğretmen eğitiminin yetersizliği, politik ve idarî hassasiyetler ile kaynak eksiklikleri, sanat aktivizminin okullarda yaygınlaştırılmasının önündeki temel engeller olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, sanat aktivizmi pedagojisi öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünme, çevresel farkındalık ve toplumsal katılım becerilerinin gelişimine önemli katkılar sunma potansiyeline sahiptir. Ancak bu potansiyelin hayata geçebilmesi, eğitim politikalarının ve öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının dönüştürücü pedagojileri destekleyecek biçimde yeniden yapılandırılmasını gerektirmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sanat Eğitimi, Aktivizm, Sosyal Öğrenme, Sosyal Katılım, Eleştirel Pedagoji, Dönüştürücü Pedagoji, Öğretmen Özerkliği.

## 1. Introduction

For many years, art education in Türkiye has been shaped by a traditional approach focused on aesthetic skills and technical production.

However, in recent years, initiatives to raise awareness of social issues, environmental problems, and children's rights through art have generated growing interest in art activism<sup>1</sup>. The national educational vision supports this shift: an examination of National Education's 2023 Education Vision<sup>2</sup> reveals that the themes of creative thinking, environmental awareness, and participatory citizenship are prominent. This trend has been further strengthened by the Turkey Century Education Model<sup>3</sup>, which focuses on critical thinking, aesthetic sensitivity, and social responsibility competencies. These visions position the goals of creativity (Design and Skills Workshops) and environmental awareness (Sustainability), which are fundamental components of art activism, as national imperatives. In this context, researching the applicability of art activism in schools is a pedagogical and political necessity that can contribute to the transformation of art education in Türkiye.

Art is increasingly viewed not just as an aesthetic field but as a transformative pedagogical tool for social justice, environmental awareness, and critical consciousness development<sup>4 5 6 7</sup>. This approach moves art beyond the boundaries of traditional education, positioning it as an instrument of action—art activism—that aims to transform individuals from passive observers into active agents of social change.<sup>8</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> H.M. Akboğa, A. Z. Kılıç ve G. Durmuş (2015). *Türkiye'de okullarda çocuk katılımı çocuklar için güncel durum raporu*. (İstanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015),34.
  - <sup>2</sup> Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, "2023 Eğitim Vizyonu", Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (2018),13.
  - <sup>3</sup> Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, "Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli: Öğretim Programları Ortak Metni (2025)",4.
  - <sup>4</sup> Dipti Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", *The Radical Teacher* 131 (2025), 28-29.
  - <sup>5</sup> Marit C Dewhurst, *A Pedagogy of Activist Art: Exploring the Educational Significance of Creating Art for Social Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Doctoral Dissertation, 2009),141-149.
  - <sup>6</sup> Stephen Duncombe, "A Theory of Change for Artistic Activism", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 81/2 (August 2023), 260-268.
  - <sup>7</sup> Karen Frostig, "Arts Activism: Praxis in Social Justice, Critical Discourse, and Radical Modes of Engagement", *Art Therapy* 28/2 (2011), 50-56.
  - <sup>8</sup> Hilary Inwood - Alysse Kennedy, "Conceptualising Art Education as Environmental Activism in Preservice Teacher Education", *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 39/3 (August 2020), 585-599.

Despite its potential, the limited literature in this field and the lack of fundamental sources on applicability, particularly in the Turkish context, necessitates in-depth research. Therefore, this study aims to question the applicability of art activism in schools, discuss its potential contributions and challenges, and offer recommendations. To this end, it aims to examine art activism within a theoretical framework from a pedagogical perspective, bring together existing international studies in this field, and offer a perspective that will guide future research to be conducted in Turkey. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by maintaining its thematic synthesis that integrates arts activism in Türkiye with three theoretical foundations (Social Learning, Critical Pedagogy, Social Participation) and by dividing its findings by local obstacles from central structures.

### 1.1. Theoretical Framework

Art activism is a set of practices that uses the aesthetic and creative power of art as a tool for raising social awareness and demanding change. Art activism has played a key role in the cultural and political actions of significant social movements throughout history, from the Civil Rights Movement to the present day.<sup>9</sup> In the school context, art activism offers an alternative model to traditional art education based on the ‘artist/educator/activist’ model, which explores the intersections between art education, education, and activism.<sup>10</sup> This approach encourages reimagining education not only through words but also through art and activism. Art activism also manifests itself in current social issues, such as encouraging children to participate in discussions on topics like violence<sup>11</sup> and schools and teachers responding to climate crisis activism.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> T. V. Reed, *The Art of Protest* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 1-5.

<sup>10</sup> Alina Campana, “Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities”, *Studies in Art Education* 52/4 (July 2011), 278-291.

<sup>11</sup> Hervör Alma Árnadóttir - Martha María Einarsdóttir, “Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence”, *Participatory Research on Child Maltreatment with Children and Adult Survivors: Concepts, Ethics, and Methods*, ed. Maria Roth - Ravit Alfandari vd. (Leeds: Emerald Publishing, 2023), 145-162.

<sup>12</sup> Lynda Dunlop, “The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism”, *Children’s Geographies* 19/3 (2021), 298.

Within this framework, three fundamental theoretical foundations will be examined to investigate the applicability of art activism in schools with children of different age groups: Social Learning Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Social Participation Theory. These theories will enable a multidimensional assessment of the potential contributions of art activism to students' social, cognitive, and affective development, as well as the pedagogical challenges that may be encountered during implementation.

### **1.1.1. Social Learning Theory**

Social Learning Theory posits that individuals learn within a social context by observing and imitating others. Inwood & Kennedy<sup>13</sup> demonstrated that integrating environmental activism with arts education fosters observational learning and behavioural change in students. Art activism projects strengthen children's belief in their own abilities and in their actions' potential to create social change (self-efficacy)<sup>14</sup>. Actions carried out through art reinforce children's belief that they can be active agents of change rather than passive observers through 'mastery experiences' in Bandura's theory. Observing activist behaviours allows students to model attitudes towards social issues and discover their own ways of social participation. This process contributes significantly to the development of a sense of social purpose in young people.<sup>15</sup>

### **1.1.2. Critical Pedagogy**

Critical Pedagogy views education as a political and transformative action aimed at ensuring students develop critical consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Frostig<sup>17</sup> defines art activism as 'the practice of radical forms of participation and

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<sup>13</sup> Inwood - Kennedy, "Conceptualising Art Education as Environmental Activism in Preservice Teacher Education.", 585-599.

<sup>14</sup> A. Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change", *Psychological Review* 2/84 (1977), 191-215.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Malin, "Arts Participation as a Context for Youth Purpose", *Studies in Art Education* 56/3 (April 2015), 268-280.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Michael Reyes Duncan-Andrade - Ernest Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy* (B.y.: Peter Lang US, 2008), 2-6.

<sup>17</sup> Frostig, "Arts Activism: Praxis in Social Justice, Critical Discourse, and Radical Modes of Engagement.", 50-56.

critical discourse,' which parallels Freire's<sup>18</sup> critical pedagogy. The core principle of art activism is 'praxis' (the unity of thought and action), defined by Freire, where theory (critical analysis) and action (artistic production/activism) are inseparable

Art creates a praxis space for students to question power relations and develop collective awareness against injustices. It provides a powerful tool for translating critical pedagogy from theory into practice.<sup>19</sup> This enables students to gain activism experience through 'learning by doing'.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, art activism can be thought of as 'learning through action,' as defined by Dewhurst.<sup>21 22</sup>

### 1.1.3. Social Participation Theory

Social Participation Theory posits that learning is a social process occurring through involvement in actual practice within a community, rather than the transfer of abstract knowledge.<sup>23</sup> The theory emphasizes that individuals' active roles and responsibilities are central to their learning and identity development.

Art activism transforms learning into a collective experience, fostering hope and solidarity (Desai's<sup>24</sup> 'Pedagogy of Hope' model) and reinforcing the concept of 'communities of practice'. Duncum<sup>25</sup> speaks of a 'public pedagogy' that links art education to the public sphere, enabling students to actively

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<sup>18</sup> Paulo Freire et al., *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, ed. Donaldo Macedo, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (B.y.: The Continuum International Publishing, 2005), 13.

<sup>19</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

<sup>20</sup> Sophie Watson, *Student Activism: Learning through Doing* (B.y.: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2022), 1, 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Dewhurst, *A Pedagogy of Activist Art: Exploring the Educational Significance of Creating Art for Social Justice*, 141-149

<sup>22</sup> Marit Dewhurst et al., *Social Justice Art Education: A Framework for Activist Art Pedagogy* (B.y.: Harvard Education Press, 2023), 1-15.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Lave - Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning* (B.y.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 29-40.

<sup>24</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 30.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Duncum, "Engaging Public Space: Art Education Pedagogies for Social Justice", *Equity and Excellence in Education* 44/3 (July 2011), 348-363.

participate in social issues. This participatory and practice-based process enables students to construct their identities as active citizens.<sup>26</sup> This identity formation aligns with Lave and Wenger's<sup>27</sup> concept of Situated Learning. Art activism embodies the theory's concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'; students may initially contribute ideas as peripheral participants, but as the process progresses, they become central participants involved in production and decision-making. This transition transforms children from passive recipients into 'artist-activists' who act for social justice.

**Table 1.**

*The Learning–Consciousness–Participation Cycle in the Context of Arts Activism*

<b>Process</b>	<b>Theoretical Basis</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Pedagogical Reflection</b>
Social Learning	Bandura (1977) Social Learning Theory	Students internalize social behavioral models and values by observing teachers, peers, or art-ists in arts activism practices.	Modeling, empathy, observational learning, and behavioral change.
Critical Consciousness	Freire (1970) Critical Pedagogy	Students question social structures, develop awareness, and develop a desire to take action through art.	Critical thinking, praxis (unity of thought and action), and awareness of social justice.
Social Participation	Lave & Wenger (1991) Situated	Learning becomes permanent through active participation and responsibility within the community.	Community-based learning, collaboration, citizenship skills.

**2.Method**

This research was designed using the Systematic Thematic Synthesis method from Qualitative Research approaches to examine the contributions,

<sup>26</sup> D. M. Kohfeldt, *Children as Activist Artists: Constructing Citizenship through Social Justice Arts-Based Participatory Action Research* (Santa Cruz: University of California, Santa Cruz, 2014), 30–40, 52–56.

<sup>27</sup> Lave - Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 29-40.

challenges, and pedagogical principles of applying art activism in schools with children of different ages. The study was designed using the Systematic Thematic Synthesis model, which requires the systematic and repeatable synthesis of existing academic knowledge under three fundamental theoretical perspectives (Social Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and Social Participation).<sup>28</sup> Thematic synthesis allows for the creation of new and higher-level themes by deeply interpreting qualitative findings from different studies, rather than merely describing them.<sup>29</sup> Within this framework, the present study seeks to address the following research question:

What are the theoretical and practical implications of integrating art activism into school education within the Turkish context?

### 2.1. Data Collection and Screening Process

The data source for the research consists of national and international academic publications (articles, books, theses, conference papers, and reports) covering the topics of art activism, art education, activism, and child/youth participation. The literature review was conducted using a systematic protocol via internationally reputable databases such as Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and ERIC, as well as Google Scholar, to ensure the comprehensiveness of the findings.

The systematic review protocol focused primarily on the foundational texts of the field (e.g., Duncan-Andrade & Morrell<sup>30</sup> for Critical Pedagogy) and then addressed current (2015-2025) applications to ensure the reliability and validity of the qualitative research.<sup>31</sup>

During the search process, the following basic keyword combinations were used with Boolean operators (AND/OR) to cover the entire relevant

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<sup>28</sup> Maria J. Grant - Andrew Booth, "A Typology of Reviews: An Analysis of 14 Review Types and Associated Methodologies", *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 26/2 (June 2009), 91-108.

<sup>29</sup> Virginia Braun - Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3/2 (January 2006), 77-101.

<sup>30</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161-184.

<sup>31</sup> E. G. Guba - Y. S. Lincoln, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N. K. Denzin - Y. S. Lincoln (B.y.: Sage Publications, 1994), 105-117.

literature: ('Art Activism' OR 'Artist Pedagogy' OR 'Social Justice Art'); AND ('Critical Pedagogy' OR 'Social Learning' OR 'Youth Participation'); AND (School OR Children OR Youth OR 'Teacher Training').

The following criteria were used to determine the sources during the search and selection process:

**Direct Relationship:** The source must be directly related to at least one of the topics of art activism, critical pedagogy, or child/youth activism.

**Theoretical Basis:** The work must be based on one of the theories that form the theoretical framework of the research: Social Learning, Critical Pedagogy or Social Participation.

**Contemporaneity and Balance of Fundamental Sources:** In addition to current studies, the inclusion of foundational sources that constitute fundamental theories such as Critical Pedagogy (e.g., Duncan-Andrade and Morrell<sup>32</sup>) in the literature.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Studies that exclude the pedagogical dimension of the subject and focus solely on art history or political science philosophy were excluded.

The number of sources identified in the search that met the criteria and were used for synthesis is 17 (Table 2).

## **2.2. Data Analysis**

The analysis of the collected data was carried out using content analysis and thematic synthesis methods. During the analysis process, to increase the transparency and traceability of the study's findings, the findings were coded independently of the theoretical framework and then related to the theoretical structure.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the thematic synthesis, manual coding and theme development were conducted through a transparent and iterative process. Although the researcher performed the coding independently, reliability was strengthened through constant comparison, reflexive memo

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<sup>32</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161-184.

writing<sup>33</sup> and theoretical cross-checking across Social Learning, Critical Pedagogy, and Social Participation frameworks. An audit trail documenting coding decisions and theme refinements further supported dependability and confirmability.<sup>34</sup> Each selected source was systematically examined in a manner that served the purpose of the research, and the findings were analysed in the following two stages:

### 2.2.1. Content Analysis

Each source was systematically examined in the context of its contributions and challenges regarding the applicability of art activism in schools. During the coding process, conceptual codes were created in the context of the contributions offered by art activism (e.g., self-efficacy, critical consciousness, leadership) and challenges (e.g., administrative resistance, teacher inadequacy, curriculum limitations). This analysis defined the methodological practices (e.g., community art, recycled art) presented by the sources regarding the age groups (preschool, primary school, secondary school, high school) and purposes (e.g., environmental activism, social justice) for which art activism is applied.

### 2.2.2. Thematic Synthesis

The codes created were subjected to a thematic synthesis in relation to the theoretical framework of the study. This process was carried out in line with pre-determined theoretical themes, as required by qualitative synthesis methodology.<sup>35</sup> As a result of this correlation, three main themes emerged, forming the findings section:

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<sup>33</sup> Lorelli S. Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16/1 (December 1, 2017), 7.

<sup>34</sup> Guba - Lincoln, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research", 105-117.

<sup>35</sup> Grant - Booth, "A Typology of Reviews: An Analysis of 14 Review Types and Associated Methodologies", 91-108.

**Table 2.**

*Systematic Synthesis Analysis of the Research*

<b>Main Theme</b>	<b>Subtheme</b>	<b>Sources</b>
Philosophical and Scientific Foundations of Arts Activism	Critical Consciousness and Transformative Action	(Duncan-Andrade & Morrell <sup>36</sup> ; Hemmerich <sup>37</sup> ; Kohfeldt <sup>38</sup> )
	Self-Efficacy and Sense of Social Purpose	(Malin <sup>39</sup> ; Torres-Harding et al. <sup>40</sup> ; Watson <sup>41</sup> )
	Attitude Change and Empathy Development	(Szubielska al. <sup>42</sup> ; Torres-Harding et al. <sup>43</sup> )
	Multidimensional Participation and Leadership	(Cruz al <sup>44</sup> ; Kramer <sup>45</sup> )

<sup>36</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161–184.

<sup>37</sup> SJ S. Hemmerich, “Art as Activism and Allyship: Black Lives Matter Student Murals”, *Art Education* 74/5 (September 2021), 25–31.

<sup>38</sup> Kohfeldt, *Children as Activist Artists: Constructing Citizenship through Social Justice Arts-Based Participatory Action Research*, 43–50.

<sup>39</sup> Malin, “Arts Participation as a Context for Youth Purpose”, 268–280.

<sup>40</sup> Susan Torres-Harding, “Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project”, *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 13/1 (March 2018), 4, 12–15.

<sup>41</sup> Watson, *Student Activism: Learning through Doing*, 4–6.

<sup>42</sup> Magdalena Szubielska, “Does Art Activism Affect Pre-School Children’s Attitudes towards Individuals with Blindness?”, *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 69/2 (2022), 372–379.

<sup>43</sup> Torres-Harding, “Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project”, 4, 12–15.

<sup>44</sup> Jessica A. Cruz, “Creating Change: Art Activism and Leadership Development”, *New Directions for Student Leadership* 185 (March 2025), 61–65.

<sup>45</sup> Julian Kramer, *Art Activism in the Elementary Art Classroom: A Case Study* (Kearney: Faculty of The Graduate Program of the Department of Art, Design at the University of Nebraska Kearney, Master Thesis, 2022), 72–86, 181–193.

Pedagogical Principles of Arts Activism	The Artist/Educator/Activist Model	(Campana <sup>46</sup> ; Campana <sup>47</sup> )
	Age-Appropriate Critical Dialogue	(Árnadóttir & Einarsdóttir <sup>48</sup> ; Kramer <sup>49</sup> )
	The Role of the School	(Dunlop al. <sup>50</sup> ; Cruz al. <sup>51</sup> )
	Artist Childhoods	(Lasczik al. <sup>52</sup> ; Torres-Harding et al. <sup>53</sup> )
Methodological Practices and	Methodological Practices Challenges in Implementation	(Campana <sup>54</sup> ; Kikuchi <sup>55</sup> ; Lee <sup>56</sup> ) (Árnadóttir & Einarsdóttir <sup>57</sup> ; Campana <sup>58</sup> ; Desai <sup>59</sup> ; Dunlop

<sup>46</sup> Alina Campana, *A Portrait of Possibility: Examining the Artist/Educator/Activist as an Alternative Model for Art Educators* (Tucson: The University of Arizona, Master of Arts, 2008), 34-36, 95-97.

<sup>47</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>48</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

<sup>49</sup> Kramer, *Art Activism in the Elementary Art Classroom: A Case Study*, 59-61, 181-182.

<sup>50</sup> Dunlop, "The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism", 291-299.

<sup>51</sup> Cruz, "Creating Change: Art Activism and Leadership Development", 61-65.

<sup>52</sup> Tahlia Lasczik, "Artist Childhoods", *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 44/2 (May 2025), 462-478.

<sup>53</sup> Torres-Harding, "Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project", 12-16.

<sup>54</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>55</sup> Ryunosuke Kikuchi, "Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation-a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art," *International Journal of Art & Design (IJAD)* 7/1 (2023), 71-72.

<sup>56</sup> Eunji J. Lee, "Art as Pedagogy: A Multiple Case Study of Participatory Socially Engaged Art", *Visual Arts Research* 49/1 (June 2023), 88-106.

<sup>57</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

<sup>58</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities" 278-291.

<sup>59</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 28-36.

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Challenges

al.<sup>60</sup>; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell<sup>61</sup>; Kikuchi<sup>62</sup>)

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### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. The Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations of Art Activism

Art activism represents not only a teaching method but also a philosophical stance that aims to develop the individual's social and critical consciousness.

Critical Consciousness and Transformative Action (Critical Pedagogy): The findings reveal that art activism functions as a pedagogical process through which students develop critical awareness of social injustices and transform this awareness into action. This aligns with Dewhurst's<sup>63</sup> notion of activist art pedagogy, where artistic creation becomes a medium for cultivating critical consciousness. Similarly, Desai<sup>64</sup> emphasizes that art activism enables learners to question dominant narratives, engage in collective reflection, and build solidarity through artistic praxis.

Art activism offers art as a tool for developing critical consciousness, which forms the basis of critical pedagogy. In the studies reviewed, through artworks or actions, students analyse power relations and injustices, finding opportunities to transform their theoretical knowledge into concrete praxis (the unity of thought and action).<sup>65</sup> For example, Hemmerich<sup>66</sup> has made art a tool for solidarity and social justice with the murals they produced as part of the global Black Lives Matter movement. When critical pedagogy uses art as a tool, children not only reflect on social issues, but also become active implementers and researchers of their own change projects, like the principles

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<sup>60</sup> Dunlop, "The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism", 291-299.

<sup>61</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161-184.

<sup>62</sup> Kikuchi, "Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation- a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art", 71-72.

<sup>63</sup> Dewhurst, *A Pedagogy of Activist Art: Exploring the Educational Significance of Creating Art for Social Justice*, 141-149.

<sup>64</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 28-36.

<sup>65</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161-184.

<sup>66</sup> Hemmerich, "Art as Activism and Allyship: Black Lives Matter Student Murals", 25-31.

of Participatory Action Research (PAR).<sup>67</sup> This is the pedagogical counterpart of praxis, as emphasised by Freire<sup>68</sup>

Self-Efficacy and Sense of Social Purpose (Social Learning Theory): Participants across multiple studies reported a heightened sense of self-efficacy and empowerment after engaging in activist art projects. Malin<sup>69</sup> found that students who created art addressing environmental and justice themes experienced a greater belief in their ability to influence change. Similarly observed that participation in art activities functions as a context for a sense of social purpose, particularly among young people. Art activism projects strengthen children's belief in their own abilities and in the potential of their actions to bring about social change (self-efficacy).<sup>70 71</sup> These findings parallel the current analysis, where students' engagement in art activism not only fostered creative confidence but also shaped their moral reasoning and sense of responsibility. Collectively, these studies affirm that self-efficacy in art activism emerges through authentic participation, reflection, and dialogue within socially relevant contexts.

Attitude Change and Empathy Development: Several studies identified empathy as a key affective outcome of art activism. Art activism has the potential to positively change children's attitudes towards specific groups or social issues.<sup>72</sup> For example, art activism studies conducted with preschool children have been able to influence attitudes towards blind individuals. Similarly, Torres-Harding<sup>73</sup> found that school-based activism projects strengthen children's self-efficacy and awareness of social participation. The

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<sup>67</sup> Kohfeldt, *Children as Activist Artists: Constructing Citizenship through Social Justice Arts-Based Participatory Action Research*, 43-51.

<sup>68</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> Malin, "Arts Participation as a Context for Youth Purpose", 268-280.

<sup>70</sup> Watson, *Student Activism: Learning through Doing*, 4-6.

<sup>71</sup> Torres-Harding, "Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project" 4, 12-15.

<sup>72</sup> Szubielska, "Does Art Activism Affect Pre-School Children's Attitudes towards Individuals with Blindness?", 372-379.

<sup>73</sup> Torres-Harding, "Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project", 4, 14-16.

findings suggest that empathy in art activism is not incidental but cultivated through guided critical dialogue and collective artmaking.

**Multidimensional Participation and Leadership:** Art activism encourages multidimensional forms of participation that extend beyond the classroom. Art activism supports leadership development by positioning students as agents of change, transforming them from passive participants into active agents.<sup>74</sup> Kramer<sup>75</sup> observed that elementary students involved in art activism projects transitioned from passive learners to active cultural contributors, taking leadership roles in school exhibitions and community events. In the reviewed research, art activism was found to nurture leadership by inviting children to take ownership of projects addressing real-world concerns. This finding resonates with Lave and Wenger's<sup>76</sup> theory of situated learning, in which learners move from peripheral observation to full participation within a community of practice. Through this process, art classrooms evolve into spaces where leadership, agency, and collaboration are fostered simultaneously.

### **3.2. Pedagogical Principles of Art Activism**

The successful implementation of art activism in schools relies on specific pedagogical principles that go beyond traditional art education. These principles redefine the teacher's role and transform the learning environment:

**Artist/Educator/Activist Model:** The reviewed literature, the teacher to go beyond the traditional role of educator and act as an 'artist/educator/activist'. Campana<sup>77</sup> conceptualizes this triadic role as essential for bridging artistic practice and social advocacy. This model offers an alternative model that explores the intersections between art, education, and activism.<sup>78 79</sup> This pedagogical stance underscores the ethical and political

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<sup>74</sup> Cruz, "Creating Change: Art Activism and Leadership Development", 61-65.

<sup>75</sup> Kramer, *Art Activism in the Elementary Art Classroom: A Case Study*, 59-61, 72-74, 181-182.

<sup>76</sup> Lave - Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 29-40.

<sup>77</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>78</sup> Campana, *A Portrait of Possibility: Examining the Artist/Educator/Activist as an Alternative Model for Art Educators*, 34-36, 95-97.

dimensions of art education, reaffirming its potential as a vehicle for democratic participation.

Age-Appropriate Critical Dialogue: Implementing art activism with younger learners requires developmentally appropriate approaches. When working with different age groups, it is essential to open critical topics (violence, climate crisis, etc.) for discussion using age-appropriate community art or participatory research methods.<sup>80</sup> For example, Kramer<sup>81</sup> showed that arts activism practices at the elementary school level strengthen students' social awareness and community engagement skills. Community art is an effective tool for encouraging children to participate in discussions on sensitive topics such as violence. The findings of this review echo these conclusions, showing that students as young as elementary level can engage meaningfully with issues of fairness, diversity, and sustainability when artistic activities are scaffolded appropriately. Árnadóttir and Einarsdóttir<sup>82</sup> further argue that dialogic teaching—encouraging open-ended questioning and emotional engagement—supports children's moral reasoning. Thus, critical dialogue in art activism must be flexible, emotionally attuned, and grounded in age-sensitive pedagogical design.

The Role of Schools: Schools play a critical role in nurturing and responding to children's activism on issues such as climate crisis activism.<sup>83</sup> Teachers and school administrators creating an environment supportive of activism encourages student participation. They also highlight that community partnerships increase the originality of student projects and transform school arts programs into civic engagements. Collectively, these

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<sup>79</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>80</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

<sup>81</sup> Kramer, *Art Activism in the Elementary Art Classroom: A Case Study*, 72-74, 181-182.

<sup>82</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

<sup>83</sup> Dunlop, "The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism", 291-299.

findings confirm the strong commitment to preserving activist arts education within school culture and policy<sup>84</sup>.

**Artist Childhoods:** Engaging children in art activism redefines traditional notions of childhood as passive or apolitical. Practising art activism from the earliest ages (preschool) enables children to experience ‘Artist Childhoods,’ which develop their critical thinking and social awareness skills.<sup>85</sup> In the studies reviewed, young participants demonstrated a sense of agency by selecting topics relevant to their lived experiences—such as environmental sustainability or inclusion—and translating them into visual narratives. This corresponds with Torres-Harding et al.’s<sup>86</sup> argument that youth empowerment emerges when children are treated as collaborators rather than beneficiaries. The evidence suggests that fostering ‘activist childhoods’ requires both trust and structured opportunities for children to act meaningfully within collective artistic processes.

### **3.3. Methodological Practices and Challenges of Art Activism**

While the practices used in implementing art activism projects vary, these applications also bring certain challenges in the school environment:

#### **3.3.1. Methodological Practices**

**Recycled (Junk) Art:** Recycled (junk) art practices, which combine environmental activism and art creation, are an important methodological tool for increasing students' ecological awareness and encouraging their creativity in the use of materials.<sup>87</sup>

**Community Art Projects:** Art activism projects are often carried out in the format of community art, where students work together towards a common goal rather than individually.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cruz, “Creating Change: Art Activism and Leadership Development”, 61-65.

<sup>85</sup> Lasczik, “Artist Childhoods”, 470-473.

<sup>86</sup> Torres-Harding, “Children as Agents of Social and Community Change: Enhancing Youth Empowerment through Participation in a School-Based Social Activism Project”, 14-16.

<sup>87</sup> Kikuchi, “Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation- a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art”, 71-72.

<sup>88</sup> Campana, “Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and

Use of Digital Tools: In the age of digital transformation, art activism can be approached within the context of Global Citizenship Education using EduTech tools.<sup>89</sup> This broadens the reach and impact of artistic action.

The reviewed studies demonstrate that art activism in education employs diverse methodological strategies that integrate creativity, ecological awareness, and community participation. One common approach is recycled (junk) art, which merges environmental activism with artistic expression. Kikuchi<sup>90</sup> emphasizes that working with discarded or repurposed materials helps students develop both ecological consciousness and material creativity, transforming waste into visual narratives of sustainability. Such practices not only cultivate artistic innovation but also engage learners in reflecting on consumer culture and environmental responsibility—showing how artistic process itself becomes a form of ecological activism.

Another widely adopted method involves community art projects, which prioritize collective creation over individual production. Campana<sup>91</sup> describes community art as a participatory framework that enables students to collaborate toward shared social goals, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and civic agency. Through these projects, students learn negotiation, teamwork, and leadership—skills that extend beyond the art classroom. The emphasis on collaboration aligns with Lave and Wenger's<sup>92</sup> concept of communities of practice, in which learning occurs through active participation within a shared social endeavour.

The third methodological trend centers on the use of digital tools to enhance the reach and relevance of art activism. Lee<sup>93</sup> highlights how the integration of educational technologies within Global Citizenship Education

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Activism in Communities", 278–291.

<sup>89</sup> Lee, "Art as Pedagogy: A Multiple Case Study of Participatory Socially Engaged Art".

<sup>90</sup> Kikuchi, "Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation—a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art", 71–72.

<sup>91</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278–291.

<sup>92</sup> Lave - Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 29-40.

<sup>93</sup> Lee, "Art as Pedagogy: A Multiple Case Study of Participatory Socially Engaged Art", 88–106.

frameworks allows students to connect local issues with global discourses. Digital exhibitions, online campaigns, and interactive platforms enable learners to disseminate their creative messages to broader audiences, making the activist dimension of art education more visible. Collectively, these methodological practices illustrate that art activism operates at the intersection of environmental awareness, social collaboration, and digital engagement—each reinforcing the transformative potential of art-based pedagogy.

### **3.3.2. Challenges in Implementation**

**Curriculum Constraints:** The critical and political nature of art activism makes it difficult to find sufficient space within the limitations of the school curriculum<sup>94</sup> and time constraints.<sup>95</sup>

**Teacher Training and Competence:** A significant challenge is that teachers lack sufficient knowledge of both activist and critical pedagogy principles beyond traditional art education pedagogy.<sup>96 97</sup>

**Political and Administrative Resistance:** The fact that art activism addresses controversial<sup>98</sup> or sensitive social issues<sup>99</sup> carries the risk of political or administrative resistance from school administrations or parents.<sup>100 101</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278–291.

<sup>95</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161–184.

<sup>96</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278–291.

<sup>97</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice".

<sup>98</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145–162.

<sup>99</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 29.

<sup>100</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278–291.

<sup>101</sup> Dunlop, "The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism", 291–299.

Resource Constraints: Even when recycled materials are used, finding budgets and spaces for art supplies and large-scale community projects can be problematic.<sup>102 103</sup>

Despite its pedagogical promise, implementing art activism within formal education settings presents several interrelated challenges. One of the most persistent barriers lies in curriculum constraints. The inherently critical and political nature of art activism often conflicts with standardized curricula and limited classroom time. Campana<sup>104</sup> and Duncan-Andrade and Morrell<sup>105</sup> note that teachers struggle to allocate sufficient space for politically charged or socially engaged art within rigid instructional frameworks, where measurable outcomes and exam preparation dominate. This structural tension restricts the depth and continuity of activist projects, pushing them to the margins of formal schooling.

A second obstacle involves teacher training and competence. Campana<sup>106</sup> and Desai<sup>107</sup> both argue that many art educators lack adequate preparation in activist methodologies and critical pedagogy. Traditional art education programs tend to focus on technique and aesthetics rather than social critique or advocacy, leaving teachers uncertain about how to facilitate projects that engage with sensitive or controversial issues. Consequently, professional development in this area remains a pressing need if art activism is to become a sustainable pedagogical approach.

The third major difficulty concerns political and administrative resistance. As Árnadóttir and Einarsdóttir<sup>108</sup> observe, addressing emotionally

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<sup>102</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>103</sup> Kikuchi, "Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation- a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art", 71-72.

<sup>104</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>105</sup> Duncan-Andrade - Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, 161-184.

<sup>106</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>107</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 28-36.

<sup>108</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

charged or controversial themes—such as inequality, violence, or social justice—can provoke discomfort among administrators and parents. Desai<sup>109</sup> and Dunlop et al.<sup>110</sup> similarly report instances where activist projects encountered institutional censorship or public backlash. Campana<sup>111</sup> contends that such resistance reflects broader anxieties about politicizing education, yet also underscores the urgency of cultivating teachers' advocacy skills to defend the pedagogical value of activist art.

Finally, resource constraints pose a practical limitation. Even when recycled materials are employed, schools frequently face shortages of funding, workspace, and logistical support for large-scale community projects. *Metin girmek için buraya tıklayın veya dokununuz.*<sup>112</sup> These material limitations can curtail student creativity and hinder project sustainability. Nonetheless, the reviewed literature suggests that educators often respond to such constraints with innovative, low-cost solutions—turning scarcity itself into a catalyst for creative problem-solving.

#### **4. Discussion And Conclusion**

This study examined the applicability of art activism in schools across different age groups and addressed the transformative role of art in education through three theoretical axes: Social Learning Theory, Critical Pedagogy, and Social Participation Theory. The findings reveal that art possesses a powerful transformative potential that goes beyond being merely an aesthetic pursuit, fostering critical awareness, self-efficacy, and a sense of social purpose in children. However, realising this potential in Turkey requires seriously questioning existing pedagogical roles and the structure of the centralised education system.

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<sup>109</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice.", 32.

<sup>110</sup> Dunlop, "The Role of Schools and Teachers in Nurturing and Responding to Climate Crisis Activism", 291-299.

<sup>111</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>112</sup> Kikuchi, "Multidisciplinary View on the Link of Environmental Activism with Art Creation—a Case Study of Recycled (Junk) Art", 71-72.

#### 4.1. Intertheoretical Holistic Model

Our research demonstrates that the act of art activism serves as a single methodological interface that links three theoretical foundations that enable individual and collective development. These three theories form a 'synergistic activism model' that feeds into each other in practice.

This cycle begins with what Bandura (1977)<sup>113</sup> refers to as the 'mastery experience.' For example, the visible success of a concrete action, such as students preparing and displaying a poster on an environmental issue, instantly boosts self-efficacy. This experience reinforces the child's belief that 'my actions can make a difference' (2022)<sup>114</sup>, and this self-efficacy triggers the sense of social purpose emphasised by Malin (2015).<sup>115</sup>

This rising belief in self-efficacy builds a strong bridge to the field of Critical Pedagogy. Praxis (the unity of thought and action), the fundamental goal of Critical Pedagogy, is concretised through artistic activism.<sup>116</sup> Abstract critical thinking (the source of the problem) is transformed into action by being turned into an artistic output (a protest sculpture or performance). argue, this transformation offers a practical model that moves critical consciousness from a mere way of thinking to transformative action.

Finally, this self-efficacy and critical action occur within the Theory of Social Participation. The collective nature of art activism projects enables students to belong to a community. According to Lave and Wenger's<sup>117</sup>, students may initially be 'peripheral participants' who contribute ideas, but as the process progresses, they become 'central participants' involved in production and decision-making. This process enables them to construct their identities as 'activist citizens'. This model is a single pedagogical approach that integrates individual psychological development, critical thinking, and identity construction within the community.

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<sup>113</sup> Bandura, "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change", 191-215.

<sup>114</sup> Watson, *Student Activism: Learning through Doing*, 4-5.

<sup>115</sup> Malin, "Arts Participation as a Context for Youth Purpose", 268-280.

<sup>116</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 13.

<sup>117</sup> Lave - Wenger, *Situated Learning*, 29-40.

## 4.2. Pedagogical Repositioning

The effective implementation of art activism pedagogy in schools requires a fundamental redefinition of the traditional role of the teacher. Findings indicate that the key to success in this model is for the teacher to move beyond being merely a transmitter of technical skills and embrace the identity of 'Artist/Educator/Activist'.<sup>118</sup>

This three-dimensional role demands not only artistic knowledge from the teacher, but also social sensitivity, critical dialogue management, and action facilitation skills. The teacher is no longer an aesthetic authority; they are an 'agent of possibility' who enables children to confidently express their own critical voices through artistic language.<sup>119</sup>

This new pedagogical position also changes the purpose of art education. In the traditional model,<sup>120</sup> the artwork is the goal, whereas in art activism, the artwork is a tool; the real goal is the social dialogue and transformation that takes place in the creative process itself. This approach aligns with Desai's (2025)<sup>121</sup> concept of the 'Pedagogy of Hope,' which aims to foster feelings of hope and solidarity rather than helplessness when dealing with complex social issues.

Furthermore, pedagogical repositioning highlights the necessity of 'age-appropriate critical dialogue'<sup>122</sup> in art activism. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students gain critical awareness without being traumatised by addressing critical issues in a language and artistic method appropriate to children's developmental level. In this context, it is critically important that teachers are supported not only in the field of art education but also in critical pedagogy and social psychology.

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<sup>118</sup> Campana, "Agents of Possibility: Examining the Intersections of Art, Education, and Activism in Communities", 278-291.

<sup>119</sup> Campana, *A Portrait of Possibility: Examining the Artist/Educator/Activist as an Alternative Model for Art Educators*, 34-36, 95-97.

<sup>120</sup> Kürşat Azılioğlu - Meliha Yılmaz, "Toplumsal ve Kültürel Değişimlerin Sanat Eğitimine Yansımaları", *Eğitim ve Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8/2 (Aralık 2021), 443-461.

<sup>121</sup> Desai, "Collective Art Activist Practice", 33.

<sup>122</sup> Árnadóttir - Einarsdóttir, "Using Community Art to Encourage Children to Participate in Discussions about Violence", 145-162.

### 4.3. Turkish Context

The applicability of art activism pedagogy in Turkish schools is both supported by institutional vision and tested by structural barriers. On the positive side, the Ministry of National Education's 2023 Education Vision<sup>123</sup> and its official emphasis on themes such as 'sustainability' and 'participatory citizenship' provide a strong foundation for legitimising this model in schools.<sup>124</sup> This offers the advantage of positioning art activism as an extension of national education goals. In Turkey, art activism is mostly carried out through civil society (such as Greenpeace and TEMA) or independent groups;<sup>125</sup> environmental and social-themed workshops aim to develop students' artistic awareness through extracurricular activities.<sup>126</sup>

However, findings reveal that the biggest obstacle in practice stems from the centralised education system. While art activism, by its nature, requires a flexible, long-term, and interdisciplinary curriculum, schools in Turkey are focused on a centralised examination system<sup>127</sup>. This structure limits teachers' autonomy to use and adapt the curriculum at their own initiative.<sup>128</sup> As highlighted in the OECD's TALIS 2024 report, the fact that Turkish teachers' representativeness in pedagogical decisions is below the OECD average supports the seriousness of this structural problem.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, "2023 Eğitim Vizyonu," Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (2018), 13.

<sup>124</sup> Ayşe Nihan Zengin - Nur Ütkür Güllühan, "Exploring Activist Art Studies: Enhancing Visual Literacy through Critical Engagement and Interpretation", *International Journal of Art and Design Education* (2025), 12-14.

<sup>125</sup> M. Y. Yorulmaz, "Sanatta Aktivizm: Aktivist Sanatçıların Sanata Etkisi", *İdil Sanat ve Tasarım Dergisi* 94/12 (2023), 86-88.

<sup>126</sup> Eylül Ganiz - İsmail Erim Gülaçtı, "Afiş Tasarımındaki Görsel Tasarım Öğelerinin Sanat ve Aktivizm İlişkisi Bağlamında İncelenmesi", *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10/5 (2024), 85-87

<sup>127</sup> Sezgin Kızılcılık, "An Evaluation of the Turkish Education System outside the Conflict between Old and New." *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 59, (2015), 154-156.

<sup>128</sup> Meryem Tokgöz Can - Nilay T. Bümen, "Turkish Teachers' Autonomy in Using and Adapting Curriculum: A Mixed Methods Study", *Issues in Educational Research* 31/4 (2022), 1272-1273.

<sup>129</sup> OECD, Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2024 Conceptual Framework (2025), 50.

This lack of autonomy leads teachers to be cautious about artistic productions with political content that transcend the centralised system and results in creative pedagogical approaches remaining 'superficial'. Art activism projects risk being reduced to one-off 'awareness-raising events' that lack critical inquiry. This creates a cycle that repeats the traditional model,<sup>130</sup> which focuses solely on aesthetic production, rather than the true praxis advocated by Freire.<sup>131</sup>

Consequently, for the pedagogy of art activism to reach its full potential in Turkey, the centralised structure must be loosened, and teachers must be supported in using artistic action as a tool for activism. This model can help the Turkish education system gain not only an aesthetic but also an ethical and political dimension, transforming students from passive recipients into transformative citizens.

## 5. Recommendations

**Policy Reform:** The arts education curriculum needs to be made more flexible to develop students' critical thinking, social awareness and creativity skills. In this regard, it is important for teachers to have more say in pedagogical decisions and for space to be made for arts-based social projects. This highlights the need for policy-level regulations that support more effective participation of teachers in decision-making processes and curriculum flexibility. To translate these recommendations into sustainable educational policy, collaboration between the Ministry of National Education, teacher training institutions, and cultural organizations is essential. National curriculum reform should incorporate explicit references to arts-based social learning outcomes and allocate funding for community-based art projects within schools. Additionally, establishing professional development frameworks that recognize and support teachers' autonomy in integrating art activism into their lessons will ensure that such pedagogical innovations are not isolated practices but embedded in the broader educational policy landscape.

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<sup>130</sup> Azılıoğlu - Yılmaz, "Toplumsal ve Kültürel Değişimlerin Sanat Eğitimine Yansımaları", 453.

<sup>131</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 13.

**Teacher Training:** Art education teachers must be trained not only as knowledge transmitters but also as critical thinkers, socially aware and action-oriented individuals. In this context, it is recommended that teacher training programmes adopt the 'artist/educator/activist' model. This model strengthens teachers' abilities to use art as a means of expression, discuss social issues through aesthetic forms, and raise awareness among students. Furthermore, integrating art-based social learning activities (e.g., poster design, performance art, digital art projects) into teacher training will reinforce the practical application of critical pedagogy.

**Areas of Application:** To disseminate the art activism approach, it is recommended that educational institutions develop joint projects with civil society organisations, local authorities and cultural institutions. Such collaborations enable students to engage with social issues through art and create learning environments based on real-life experiences. Furthermore, the effective use of digital platforms (e.g. virtual exhibitions, online art campaigns, interactive media applications) will enable students to raise awareness both locally and globally. In this context, art activism-focused digital pedagogies support teachers' creative freedom and develop students' 21st-century skills.

## 6. Limitations

Although this study was conducted through a systematic and transparent thematic synthesis process, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the analysis relied on the researcher's manual coding and interpretation, which may introduce subjective bias despite efforts to ensure trustworthiness through reflexive memoing and theoretical triangulation. Second, the scope of the synthesis was restricted to publications focusing on school-based art activism, and therefore, broader community or higher education contexts were not included. These limitations suggest that future studies could expand the dataset across different educational levels and cultural contexts to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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