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**ABSTRACT**

*Since its founding in 1997, the International Child Art Foundation (ICAF) has made a unique contribution to global advocacy for arts education and integrating the arts with science, sport and technology. More importantly, the ICAF has demonstrated how the arts can be applied to achieve important social objectives. The ICAF programs guide schools to encourage children's creativity, instill empathy and understanding, and inspire creative global leadership. Under the ICAF umbrella, teachers bring the world of arts and cultures to their classroom, providing students with an opportunity to experience and appreciate the varied manifestations of human creativity that make earth – a fragile planet in a remote galaxy – still the most wondrous place in the whole universe.*

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the world's leaders defined the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by the target date of 2015. These goals are; (i) eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; (ii) achieve universal primary education; (iii) promote gender equality and empower women; (iv) reduce child mortality; (v) improve maternal health; (vi) combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; (vii) ensure environmental sustainability; and (viii) develop a global partnership for development.

In September 2005 the leaders met again at the UN World Summit and expressed their determination to 'establish a just and lasting peace all over the world' and committed themselves to 'promoting education for peace and human development.' ([www.un.org/summit](http://www.un.org/summit))

Almost two thousand years earlier, the Roman philosopher Seneca in 42 A.D. concluded that world peace will be secured on a permanent basis when we start teaching our children to view the whole world as one: *Omnis orbs terrarumpatria mea est.* (The whole world is my own native land). His advice was ignored and almost every successive century since has been bloodier than the one before. In the bloodiest-ever twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi reminded us that: 'If we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.'

What is the future of this century? Will conflicts and violence mushroom or will creative and cooperative communities bloom across the globe? Children can build a more just, prosperous and non-violent world, but only with the aid of global programs that nurture their innate creativity and intrinsic empathy.

This paper explains the importance of creativity and empathy as key attributes of successful learners and leaders. The links between art and creative development and art and empathic understanding are examined. Global programs of the International Child Art Foundation (ICAF) that promote creativity and empathy are evaluated, and a novel concept of 'artist athlete' is introduced for holistic development of children. Lastly, the social and private benefits of organisations such as the ICAF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) are discussed.

## INNATE CREATIVITY

In 1950, an article titled 'Creativity' in *American Psychologist* described a model for the human intellect that made a distinction between 'convergent' thinking (a single, correct solution to a problem) and 'divergent' thinking (multiple solutions, all of which could be correct and appropriate) (Guilford, 1950: 444-454). This distinction helped neurobiologist Roger W. Sperry in the 1960s to discover the two hemispheres of the brain, the left brain responsible for convergent thinking and the right brain for divergent thinking, which underlies

the ability to be creative (for his discoveries concerning the functional specialisation of the cerebral hemispheres, Sperry was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1981).

Also in the 1960s, educational psychologist E. Paul Torrance launched longitudinal studies to investigate why all children are creative but most adults are not. Later recognised as the 'father of creativity,' Torrance discovered the 'fourth-grade slump' that defines a period when children face a decline in their creativity, which may continue throughout the school years into adulthood (Torrance, 1968). More recently it has been noted that the fourth-grade slump can relate to maturational processes or to an emphasis on conforming behavior, but in either case it can be overcome (Runco, 1999: 743-44).

Nurturing and sustaining creativity is gaining public attention as economies shift their emphasis from productive industrial workers to creative knowledge workers (Homer-Dixon, 2000; Florida, 2002; Mitchell, Inouye, Blumenthal, 2003). It was also observed that most research indicates that schools do not promote creativity; in fact, traditional educational practices may well be a deterrent to creativity (Sternberg, Lubart, 1991: 1-32). UNESCO has found that the instinctive capacity for creativity and imagination found in young people has often been denied or suppressed in their education: 'The encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect – critical ingredients for building a culture of peace.' ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). When education is skewed to the left brain, the right brain does not develop to its potential. A consensus has developed in creativity literature that 'all of us can make better use of the creative abilities we are born with' (Davis, 1991).

Prominent educators view the fostering of creativity as a key component in school reform (Gardner, 1999, Robinson, 2001). Scientists have called for a general creative surge in all areas of life. For them creativity is a major need of each human being and the blockage of creativity eventually threatens civilisation with ultimate destruction (Bohm, Peat, 2000). Joseph Beuys has said: 'creativity is national income.' (Robinson Report, 1999: 54).

## ART AND CREATIVITY

Art has a broader function in defining us and modifying our views of our societies and ourselves. According to cognitive neurobiologist Zeki 'the acquisition of knowledge by registering the constant and essential characteristics of objects is the primordial function of the visual brain. It is also the primordial function of art. That is why many great philosophers concerned with the problem of knowledge, from Plato onward, have devoted large parts of their work to discussion of art.' (Zeki, 2001: 51-2).

Art is the native language of children and children's innate creativity is a provenance of human achievement. Although scientific understanding of creativity is far from complete, researchers claim that a child who is exposed to the arts in school has the potential to become a more creative, imaginative, expressive, confident, self-reliant and critically thinking individual (O' Farrell, Meban, 2003). It has been suggested that it is possible to enhance children's creative skills through art-based programs (Scope, 1999; Robinson Report 1999).

A research review for UK's National Foundation for Educational Research found mixed results that depended upon researchers' definition of creativity and degree of emphasis on creative outcome versus creative process (Sharp, 2001). This particular scoping exercise focused on young children (ages 3 to 6 years), which is not the age group (ages 8 to 12) generally associated with facing the risk of the fourth-grade slump.

An interview of child artists (ages 8 to 14) at the 2003 ICAF festival in Washington DC found that these young artists defined creativity as 'expressive creativity' – where the art itself becomes an indicator or predictor of creativity. Climate and environment – both physical and psychological – emerged as key assisters to the creativity of child artists, while the key detractors were distractions (noise, friends, school) and motivation (laziness, depression, stubbornness) (Murdock et al, 2004).

In a survey of the ICAF alumni in 2005 the focus was on learning these young artists' views on creativity (The ICAF alumni or Art Olympiad finalists are the children selected to represent their home state or country at the ICAF festivals based on global art competitions that emphasise originality and imagination). The young artists were found to value creativity as essential to their living a well-rounded life. For Natasha Janner (age 17 in Oregon, USA), creativity provides good ideas for all areas of life. 'Creativity leads us to innovation, which gives us the power to invent,' says Philbert Tiki Yong (age 13 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia). 'Creativity is important to me because it lets me express what I think and feel in different ways,' says Alejandro Goldzycher (age 15 in Buenos Aires, Argentina). Creativity 'decorates the artwork with a sense of uniqueness,' says Chathura Arachchi (age 17 in Colombo, Sri Lanka). Tamara Mamedova (age 17 in Baku, Azerbaijan) feels that there is something divine about creativity. It is associated with the Creator. 'It gives me the possibility to create my own world.'

## INTRINSIC EMPATHY

Nurturing the innate creativity of children is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a more just, prosperous and non-violent world. The complexity of local and global issues requires cooperative problem-solving, drawing on viable solutions. To be viable, however, solutions must respectfully and transparently address competing equities in a search for common ground and compromise. Individuals who demonstrate empathy are therefore more capable problem-solvers and leaders. Empathy is the ability to understand and

enter the feelings, thoughts and motives of another; it does not imply acceptance or agreement, or losing oneself to become another, but rather identifying with and understanding another's reasons and reactions.

The process of developing empathy involves: emotional literacy, defined as the ability to identify and express one's own emotions; and emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to correctly and comprehensively read another person's emotions. (Goleman, 1995 helped popularise emotional intelligence, just like Florida, 2002 raised public awareness of creativity and the creative class).

A review of the literature on developing empathy in children and youth – some fifty-eight articles and books – concluded that for a growing number of educators the developing of empathy is a key attribute of education (Cotton, 2001). A research-based definition of the successful learner includes being empathetic as a major attribute (Jones, 1990). It can also be argued that empathy fosters both creative and critical thinking (Gallo, 1989: 23, 98-115).

Scholars focusing on the structural conditions necessary for creativity also point to the importance of collaboration. It has been found that creativity seems to thrive within teams and collaborative circles (Tepper, 2004: 51). Creative individuals thrive and feed off the energy of others, laying foundations for industry clusters (Porter, 1990) and for creative communities (Eger, 2003).

## ART AND EMPATHY

Through the arts children can be introduced to the world without coloring their perceptions with conflicts old and new; research indicates that students' attitudes towards foreign cultures are more positive when similarities are stressed rather than differences (Hahn, 1980). The arts can then become a key component in a moral-cognitive approach to education – 'the arts, with their inextricable ties to imagination, have the capacity to provide an unlimited source of possibilities for connecting self to other and for creating a disposition for sympathetic awareness.' (Stout, 1999: 52,2,21-34). Such awareness promotes peer-to-peer learning and a spirit of cooperation.

The decade-long work of the ICAF shows that the process of developing cooperation to advance a common agenda involves the following stages:

Creativity > Communication > Empathy > Cooperation

The ICAF employs the arts as a dynamic channel to foster creativity and as a language-independent media to promote communication (according to the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA, 2004] chairman Dana Gioia, 'a number of research studies over the past several decades have drawn a clear correlation between

early exposure of children to the arts and increased long-term critical reasoning, communication, and social skills.')

The global programs and educational publications of the ICAF open young minds to the world through the arts. Students across the globe benefit from free lesson plans and get to see other children's art online or through art exchanges between schools. Correspondence and email communication between students further cements their international education and understanding.

An underlying purpose of the ICAF festivals is to develop empathy. Creative children from different national, cultural, ethnic, social and religious backgrounds come face-to-face and for a week play, eat, enjoy performances, and make art together. Participation in art activities encourages cooperative learning and pro-social interaction, which has its own attendant academic and social benefits. Through collaborative projects like mural making, they develop meaning and significance together, resulting in 'relational empathy' (Broome, 1991: 40, 235-249). The children make emotional connections that invoke compassion and develop empathy.

Child artists participating in the festivals confirm these observations. Jenna Skophammer represented Iowa at the first-ever national children's art festival in the United States hosted by the ICAF in 1998 in Washington, DC. She wrote: 'I really enjoyed working on the U.S. Mural. It was one of the best experiences of my life!' Carmen Ortiz represented Louisiana in the 2003 World Children's Festival and wrote: 'I met a lot of people from tons of places and learned all about a lot of different customs and languages. I participated in many fun art activities, with a different theme chosen to paint each day. I have kept in touch with many artists I met at the festival by email and letters.'

## STYLES OF EDUCATION

Why is developing creativity and empathy not on the global agenda? The roots of this neglect lie in the European Enlightenment, which 'led to a view of knowledge and intelligence dominated by deductive reason and ideas of scientific evidence. These ideas have been reinforced since then by the styles of formal education, promoted especially through the public schools and universities. These methods of thoughts have had spectacular success in shaping our understanding of the world and in generating technological advances. But there has been a terrible price too.' (Robinson, 2001: 8). One aspect of this terrible price is the lack of empathy in a world that otherwise is fairly well connected because of advances in communications, information, transportation and the omnipresence of the Internet.

To initiate or accelerate scientific and technological development today, policy makers typically focus on science and technology education and overlook the arts. The ICAF advocates integration of art education by demonstrating the interaction between scientific and technological development and arts and cultural development.

In response to the September 11, 2001 tragedy, the ICAF developed a Peace through Art approach in collaboration with psychiatrists, psychologists, art therapists and conflict resolution experts. The objective is to reduce the trans-generational transmission of trauma and hatred by drawing upon the creativity and imagination of young people to learn the ethics of responsibility (Ishaq, 2006: 526-27). The approach calls for peace education and art activities organised under the following four sequential modules:

- *Learning through Experience.* Participants learn to understand their responses to conscious and subconscious resistance and trauma, some of which are reflected in their art;
- *Conflicts and Ethics.* Participants learn the reasons for conflict and methods to alleviate tension through artistic expression;
- *Creativity for Peace.* Participants learn how to use the arts for confidence building and developing empathy, and they collectively create works of art to experience the power of team creativity; and
- *Role Models for Society.* Participants learn to apply their own creativity to build a vision of peace and coexistence in their communities.

To field test the approach, a three-week Peace through Art program was organised in July 2002 in Washington, DC for 10 Greek-Cypriot and 10 Turkish-Cypriot youth aged 14-15 who had grown up on opposite sides of the 'Green Line' dividing the island. The participants have maintained the friendships formed during the program, a benchmark in achieving the methodology's objectives of preparing Cypriot youth for peaceful coexistence and development of the necessary skills to become peace advocates and conflict mediators (The approach has the potential to expand to help overcome and repair other societal stressors besides state conflicts).

## HEALING ARTS

Rebuilding a community devastated by a natural disaster has economic, social and psychological dimensions. In response to the December 24, 2004 tsunami in Asia, the ICAF developed a Healing Arts program to transfer the knowledge and experience gained from the treatment of the child survivors of the 9/11 tragedy and other recent disasters to help the tsunami child survivors.

Scientific studies on the psychological effect of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center found that directly affected children were at risk for a variety of mental health problems including anxiety disorders, post-

traumatic stress disorder and childhood traumatic grief - a condition affecting those who experience a death under traumatic circumstances. Preventing and treating the distress experienced by children as soon as possible is crucial for optimal long-term health and recovery. Parents, caregivers and teachers of these children were found to minimise, ignore, deny and criticise, or be sensitive to the plight of the children, depending upon their own recovery and progress.

Although the circumstances and implications are different for every natural disaster, the knowledge gained from one tragedy is useful in diagnosis and treatment of the survivors of another. Healing Arts programs can be effective tools in community building and reconstruction, be it a town in the U.S. Gulf Coast devastated by Hurricane Katrina or a hamlet in the Himalayas wrecked by an earthquake. The following steps comprise the ICAF Healing Arts program:

- *Develop training materials.* A training manual is prepared which describes best practices and provides practical suggestions on what children should be encouraged to paint or draw, and helpful coping strategies to avoid traumatising children by other children's stories or art;
- *Identify, train and coordinate volunteers.* Enlist and mobilise expert and other volunteers to work on different components of the program; coordinate art therapy workshops in schools, orphanages and shelters;
- *Identify, collect and ship art and school supplies.* Determine what teachers in the affected areas need and ship art and school supplies to them;
- *Promote empathy through encouragement art.* Encourage children not affected by the disaster to create 'encouragement art' that provides hope to other children affected by the disaster. Such art creation, international exchange and exhibitions help promote empathy and awareness;
- *Psychological intervention for the traumatised.* Identify the most severe cases for psychological treatment, in consultation with local teachers and parents; and
- *Evaluation of response.* Evaluate the program and determine the need for program extension and modification.

Like emergency assistance organisations, the ICAF had not planned to organise Healing Arts Programs but did so in response to the three major natural disasters that shocked the world in a ten-month period from December 2004 to October 2005. Unlike emergency assistance organisations, the ICAF is not in the business of disaster relief but responded to the urgent pleas for help from its country partners in Sri Lanka,



India and Pakistan and schoolteachers in the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. However, based on these experiences, the ICAF has acquired a knowledge base to respond to natural disasters more effectively.

## GLOBAL PEACE BUILDING

The Peace through Art methodology underlies the ICAF Arts Olympiad program, which inspires children to be creative and cooperative. A free global program with a four-year cycle, the Arts Olympiad commences in classrooms with free structured lesson plans distributed to schools worldwide. School art competitions on a universal theme follow, and lead to national and regional celebrations. The Arts Olympiad culminates in the World Children's Festival, traditionally held every four years at the National Mall in Washington, DC.

The Third Arts Olympiad (2005-2008) recognises that two ways in which children naturally gain and apply life-skills are through artistic expression and athletic accomplishment. The Arts Olympiad lesson plan and art competition combines these two areas through the theme 'My Favorite Sport.' The Arts Olympiad promotes the Olympic ideals of tolerance and cooperation and celebrates the 'artist-athlete' ideal of a creative mind and healthy body.

Global peace education elements of the Arts Olympiad are outlined below:

- *Community cohesion.* The Arts Olympiad Lesson Plan is designed for a typical classroom comprised of two groups: students interested in sports and students interested in the arts. Each group is urged to examine the motivation and objectives of the other, and discuss the application of the Olympic ideals in sports and art. The athletes create an art project based on sporting gear (a ball, bat or sneaker) while the artists create a sports game based on art tools (a palette, mouse or easel). The concept of 'artist-athlete' is introduced to bring the two groups together, and promote both mental and physical development. The students create art on the theme, 'My Favorite Sport,' and later help their teachers in the selection of the finalists, which enhances their self-confidence, objectivity and visual aesthetics.
- *Nation building.* The national festivals encourage children to apply their creativity to build a vision of peace and coexistence in their communities. ICAF encourages its country partners to host national exhibitions and celebrations, typically bringing together 20 to 50 finalists for a 2- or 3-day-period. First the children bond through common interests, including art and sport. Then they discuss their differences and divisions. Art and sport activities follow to alleviate tensions. Then they collaboratively create a national mural that reflects their national identity. Finally they help select the national finalists who will represent their country at the ICAF festivals. The selection criteria recognise not only exceptional artistic talent, but exceptional abilities in other creative fields –

oration, writing, theatre, music, etc. – as well as academic excellence and emotional intelligence, to identify creative and empathetic children who have leadership potential.

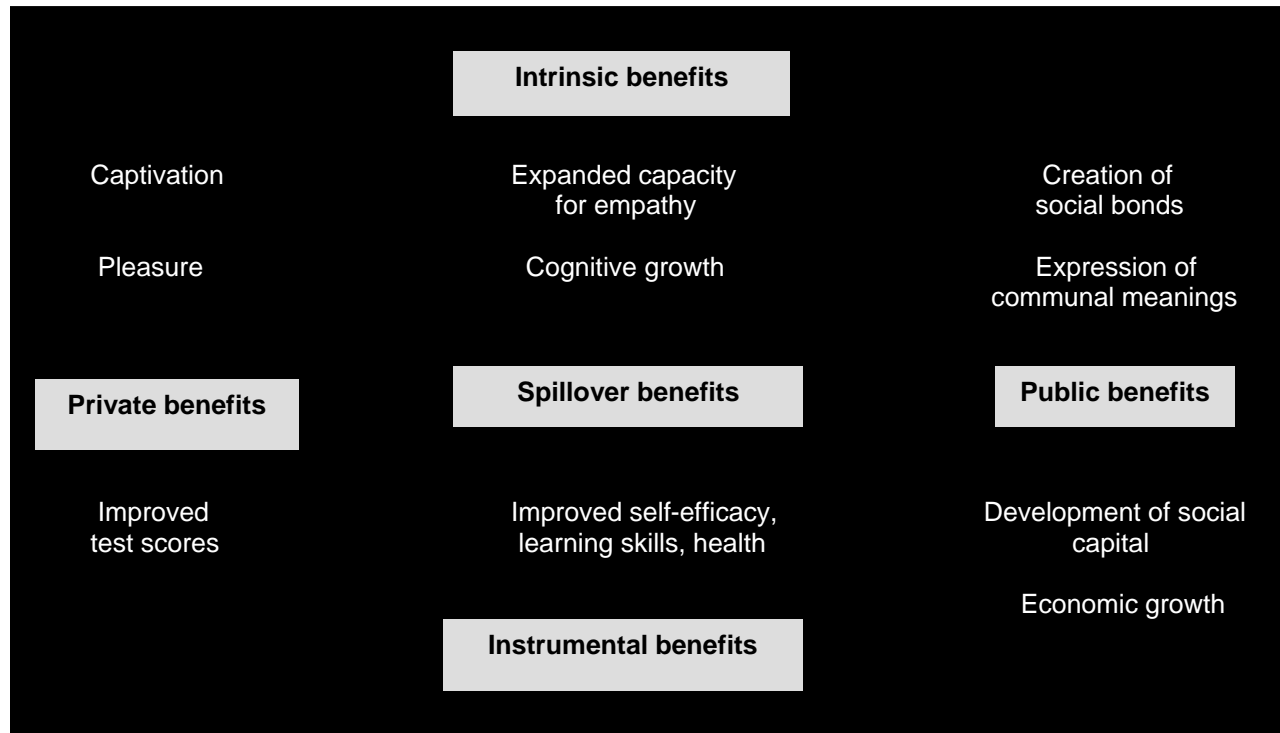
- *Regional identity.* National finalists from each continent come together at regional festivals organised by the ICAF and its partners. The festival objective is to provide children a sense of regional identity and to help diffuse nationalistic zeal in order to facilitate regional union or integration. Teachers and parents accompany the national finalists, as do country partners; over the course of the five-day festival, they participate in special programs to promote cooperation. The children play regional sports and work together to create a large mural on which their region (or continent) is outlined, while the adults have an opportunity to initiate bilateral 'neighbour-our-friend' programs to ease tensions between countries that have common borders.
- *Global understanding.* The national finalists from across the globe come together at the World Children's Festival. The objective of the weeklong festival is to celebrate the 'artist-athlete' and build a nexus for the future. Art and sport serve as common grounds for bonding and relaxation. Art therapy is used to reduce trauma where necessary and to open young minds to new possibilities. Children are encouraged to discuss their differences and commonalities under the supervision of experts where necessary. They participate in workshops on developing empathy and sustaining creativity, sometimes accompanied by their teachers and parents. They display their musical, theatrical and debating talents at the 'world stage' where impromptu performances are encouraged. Equipped with a repertoire of new skills, universal values and newfound confidence, they begin preparations for global leadership roles. (Ishaq, 2005:36-9).

The ICAF is still a young organisation with a global outreach that is steadily growing. More than two million children have already participated in its First Arts Olympiad (1997-2000) and the Second Arts Olympiad (2001-2004). Nearly three million children in 100 countries have participated in the Third Arts Olympiad.

## EVALUATING THE BENEFITS OF THE ARTS

A study on the benefits of the arts provides a framework for understanding the benefits of the arts by distinguishing between intrinsic and instrumental benefits and private and public benefits (McCarthy et al, 2004). The intrinsic benefits are inherent in the arts experience and add value to one's life. The instrumental benefits arise from the arts helping achieve broad social and economic goals that have nothing to do with the arts per se. Private benefits accrue to an individual, while the community shares public benefits. In addition there are spillover benefits, that is, benefits that are both private and public.

The framework is presented below:



**FIG 1: THE RAND/WALLACE FRAMEWORK ON BENEFITS OF THE ARTS**

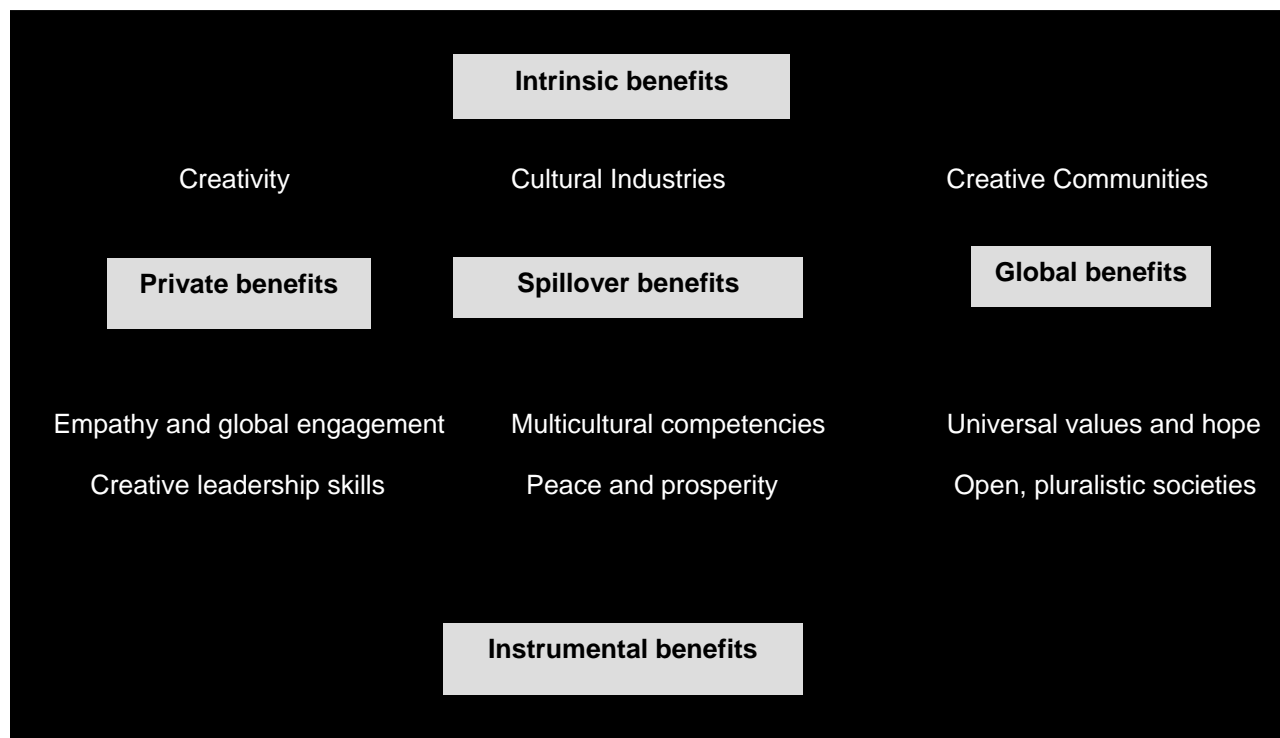
In Figure 1 intrinsic benefits are along the top and instrumental benefits along the bottom. These benefits are arranged along a spectrum of private benefits, spillover benefits and public benefits.

Intrinsic benefits of the arts enjoyed exclusively by individuals are captivation or rapt absorption. Such focused attention connects individuals more deeply to the world and opens them to new ways of seeing and experiencing the universe, with greater intensity; and pleasure, leading to intense imaginative experience, new meanings, and the sense of deep satisfaction. Intrinsic benefits for the public are the creation of social bonds and expression of communal meanings. The spillover benefits are expanded capacity for empathy, an increased receptivity to unfamiliar people, religions and cultures; and cognitive growth, the gaining of entirely new insights and perspectives.

An instrumental benefit of the arts enjoyed exclusively by individuals is the increased learning aptitude that leads to improved test scores. Instrumental benefits for the public are the development of social capital (a sense of community identity) and the arts' economic impact (economic benefits are comprised of direct [employment], indirect [creative communities] and 'public good' [public satisfaction] benefits).The spillover benefits are attitudinal and

behavioral changes that lead to improved self-efficacy and learning skills, as well as therapeutic benefits that enhance healing and public wellness.

The above framework, although comprehensive for school- and community-based arts programs and organisations, does not capture all the benefits provided by innovative global programs of organisations such as UNESCO and the ICAF. In the case of the ICAF, the Arts Olympiad and other programs, festivals and exhibitions, and publications for children such as the *ChildArt* magazine, have actually enhanced the benefits of the arts and art education. The impact of the ICAF includes all the benefits listed in Figure 1. In addition, the ICAF programs nurture a child's innate creativity and provide unique instrumental benefits by employing the arts to heal, inspire and unify children across the globe. In Figure 2 public benefits expand into global benefits and spillover benefits imply those that accrue to a single community or country.



**FIG 1: UNIQUE BENEFITS OF THE ICAF**

An additional intrinsic benefit of the ICAF relates to creativity development, which is different from cognitive development and higher test scores. By introducing children – many of whom do not get to paint or draw unless presented with the Arts Olympiad experience – to the creative process, the ICAF empowers them to develop and sustain innate creativity. Visualizing an image, dipping a brush in paint, and applying color to paper to create meaning for others, is akin to working with text to generate and share ideas, or working with molecules in a laboratory to generate new vaccines.

The ICAF attempts to help sustain the creativity of the Arts Olympian finalists through mentorship, as is the case with the ICAF Youth Board (private benefits), (in 2007 the ICAF Youth Board was comprised of 35 Arts Olympians, creative young people selected as national finalists or U.S. state finalists under ICAF's Arts Olympiads). Creative development leads to innovations and inventions, spurring the development of cultural industries and boosting economic growth (spillover benefits). In fact the cultural industries are the second-fastest growing sector in the UK economy (Arts Council England, 2005). Creative industry clusters are springboards for the development of creative communities worldwide (global benefits).

The arts and creative opportunities provided by the ICAF help transform the way children learn and explore the world around them. Being creative also helps them adapt and respond to a rapidly changing world. Empathy and global engagement through the Arts Olympiad enhances an individual's prospects in a global economy where competition for jobs and entrepreneurial success is becoming more intense (private benefits). Global awareness leads to the development of multicultural competencies that help unite communities (spillover benefits) an example of which is the ICAF Healing Arts programs in response to the Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the catastrophic earthquake in Pakistan. Global understanding promotes acceptance of universal values and the capacity to envision alternative and more hopeful futures (global benefits) – by disseminating the children's artworks through festival properties and licensing agreements, ICAF shares with a world beset by poverty, conflict and lack of opportunity, the hope in a child's eye.

The Arts Olympiad also enhances creative leadership skills (Ishaq, 2005b). Since the traditional national leadership models are limited by their aims and scope, several major multinational corporations have already set up their own global leadership departments to train future corporate leaders. Leadership skills better position individuals for success in life (private gains). Creative leadership abilities are needed to build peace in conflict zones and increase communities' ability to manage social, economic and cultural stressors (spillover benefits). Also, through the ICAF programs children can learn to communicate across language barriers, visualise a peaceful future, and gain the ability to prosper in open, pluralistic societies (global benefits).

Buttressing these benefits is the Arts Olympiad's track record of positive results in the training of teachers and parents. Through their participation in the program, teachers arrange art exchanges with schools in other countries and in the process come into contact with teachers from around the world. Parents, too, become involved, often sharing with and encouraging their children in their work. Workshops on how to sustain creativity and support leadership development are organised at the ICAF festivals for both teachers and parents.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Innate creativity and intrinsic empathy are the two pillars on which human achievement and global security are founded. There is a need to re-evaluate the goals of children's education to measure up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The world's leaders have thus far failed the children and young people who today comprise a majority in the world's population. Global frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals overlook the fundamentals and rely instead on a top-down framework and trickle-down mechanism. The much-celebrated UN Convention on the Rights of the Child neglects the child's right to be creative and to be empathetic. Globalisation and the digital revolution, the benefits of which are yet to fully unfold, can promote not only communication per se but empathy and cooperation, provided that children are free to realise the interplay of humanitarian ideals. A simple common denominator among children, like the arts, has more value today than in the past.

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