Traversing the Flood of Images

A Lacanian Perspective to the Reasonings for Art Education in the Finnish Schooling System

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Helsinki, 2011
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** 1

- Introducing the Event
- Setting the Ground

**Theoretical Background** 17

- Lacan and the Subject of Art Education
- An Introduction to the Lacanian Subject
- Subject and Ideology
- Summing it up: Fantasy of Art Education

**Methodology** 36

- Lacan and Discourse Analysis
- Language and Ideology
- Conclusion on Methodology

**Research Material** 48

- Covering the Subjective Lack 52

- Subjective Lack in the “Basic education 2020” Report
- Subjective Lack in the Critical Responses
- Knowledge and Skills (Revisited)
- Covering the Lack of Children and Youth: Media Literacy
- Conclusion on the Subjective Lack

- Covering the Lack in School and Society 73

- The Otherness of Art Education
- Lack of Culture in the Knowledge of School

- Lack in the Societal Knowledge and Skills 94

- Conclusion on the Societal Lack

**Mapping the Phantasm of Art Education** 94

- Historical Overview
- Structuring a Fantasy
- Discursive Limits of Fantasy
- Knowledge as Domination
- Conclusion on the Structure of Fantasy

**Transgressing the Limits of Fantasy** 146

- Unraveling the Symptom
- Hysterical Questions
- Beyond the Hysteric
- Conclusory Note
- References
Introduction

This master thesis stems from a personal dilemma that I encountered in the summer and fall of 2010. At that time, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture had published a proposal for the new national lesson hour distribution for basic education, which was very unnerving for the Finnish art educators. The report proposed to cut compulsory visual arts education in the secondary school by 50 percent. However, this was just half of the aforementioned dilemma. The other half concerned the ways that art education was defended in several public discussions. Although I could agree with most of the reasoning for a stronger position of visual arts in the comprehensive school, I felt that these discussions were turning in circles: Art educators and other people who were advocating for art education were emphasizing things that are obvious, that is, things that we already know (and subsequently, we want others to know the same things). Thus, as an art education student, I found myself in a situation where I wanted to speak for art education, but the words that were there for me, did not fit into my mouth.

After finding myself in this difficult situation, I wanted to grasp the uneasiness that I was feeling. In the previous spring, I was introduced to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory by Dr. Kevin Tavin at The Ohio State University during my six month stay there. Through Lacan, I had started to question my own position as an art educator as, following a Lacanian trope, someone who was supposed to know. In
this respect, I became curious to broaden the scope of this questioning to include discourses that I was surrounded by and, most importantly, participating in. Here, writings of Lacan-influenced political theorists such as Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, and Yannis Stavrakakis came to be helpful tools for examining the socio-political dimension of these discourses.

I started to collect my research material in August 2010 and continued until January 2011. The current era of social media made this process rather easy. Usually, my research material was literally one click away. I also went through various newspapers in order to find letters to the editor, where writers would defend the place of art education in the Finnish educational system. In addition, I wanted to put the current discussions in a historical context, hence, I examined Stylus magazines (the only professional art education magazine in Finland) from the 1980s onward and searched for discussions related to the previous lesson hour distributions. Overall, I focused on writings that gave reasons for the existence of art education in the Finnish schooling system. These reasonings could describe, for example, what would happen if art education was excluded from the basic education, or what would the compulsory schooling be like if there was enough art education. After collecting the data, I divided my material in two: texts that focused on individual processes and writings that reasoned art education through societal or institutional perspective. Although these areas were often overlapping, the division helped me to discern different discursive positions that were inherent in my material.

As a theoretical backdrop, Lacanian theory helped me to turn the obviousness that I was uneasy with into obscuresness. For me, the discursive order that these discussions were trying to restore precipitated again into disorder. In this respect, this study is not to be interpreted as an attempt to tell art educators what they really meant by using certain words, but to push the oft-repeated discourses to their limits and to question discursive safe havens that were visible throughout my research material. Although disorder usually means uncertainty as well, I claim that the state of not knowing opens up more opportunities than ready-made responses. Thus, by questioning the ways that art education is discursively constructed in public discussions, I aim to raise discussion about our own fantasies about art education.

Introducing the Event

I start this study by presenting the societal and institutional context of the lesson hour distribution report by briefly explaining the basic characters of the Finnish schooling system. In addition, I go through the national core curriculum reform process and present the main content of the last proposal.

In the Finnish schooling system, the national core curriculum gives standards that governs every local curricula in Finland. As a legal document, it obligates every commune and/or school to provide a certain amount of teaching in
every school subject. Also, it gives frames for every school subject to cover in every level of education. The national core curriculum is separate for the basic education (grades 1-9) and secondary education (three years), which is either the basic upper secondary education or the vocational upper secondary education or the combination of these two. In this study, I focus on the reform process of the national core curriculum for the basic education, because the basic education is compulsory for every student in Finland.

The national core curriculum is reformed approximately every ten years. The first step of the reform process is the forming of a special committee to prepare a proposal for the general objectives and distribution of lesson hours. The committee, which is formed by the Finnish National Board of Education and appointed by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, consists of various representatives of the society, including representatives of the Finnish parliament, Trade Union of Education of Finland, Confederation of Finnish Industries and officials of the National Board of Education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009, announcement, http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Tiedotteet/2009/04/tuntijako.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=fi). The distribution of lesson hours is highly political decision; it lays the educational emphases of the basic education depending on the political and economical atmosphere in the society. After the distribution is ratified in the Parliament, various committees are appointed to work on the specified contents for every school subject of the basic education.

The distribution of the lesson hours is made using annual weekly lesson hours. In the Finnish educational system, one lesson hour equals a 45 minute long lesson and one annual weekly lesson hour indicates one lesson hour per every school week of the semester. There are total of 38 weeks per every semester, which means that one annual weekly lesson hour is equivalent to 38 x 45 minutes of work.

The most recent reform process started in the April of 2009, when the Secretary of Education and Culture Henna Virkkunen appointed the committee to prepare the general objectives and the distribution of lesson hours for the next national core curriculum. One of the objectives of the committee was to strengthen the position of the arts and skills subjects (taito- ja taideaineet) in the Finnish schooling system (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009, announcement, http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Tiedotteet/2009/04/tuntijako.html?lang=fi&extra_locale=fi). The committee completed its work on June 1, 2010, when the “Basic education 2020 - the national general objectives and distribution of lesson hours” (Perusopetus 2020 – yleiset valtakunnalliset tavoitteet ja tuntijako) report was handed to the Secretary of Education and Culture. After its release, the Ministry of Education and Culture requested official statements from various political, educational, and societal organizations. The final decision about the lesson hour distribution was, however, postponed in December 2010 to the succeeding Parliament, because the political pressure to reject it was strong.
Although one of the main objectives of the new lesson hour distribution was to strengthen the position of arts and skills subjects (including visual arts, music, crafts, and physical education) in the new core curriculum, the amount of compulsory visual arts education was proposed to be decreased in the secondary school level (grades 7-9) from two annual weekly lesson hours (76 x 45 min) to one (38 x 45 min). This means that the students would receive compulsory visual arts education total of 38 lesson hours on the seventh grade. After that, one may have the possibility to choose visual arts education as an optional school subject for the succeeding two years of secondary school, but schools are not obligated to provide visual arts education after the seventh grade (however, some schools might have more art in their curriculum than the national core curriculum demands). Every school subject of the arts and crafts subject group did not suffer a similar decrease. Whereas the amount of the visual arts education was proposed to be decreased, the amount of compulsory physical education in the secondary school level was proposed to be eight weekly lesson hours (304 x 45 min). The reason why the secondary school subject studies are considered as important, is that in the Finnish educational system, the subject teachers teach only in the secondary school. In the primary school (grades 1-6) classroom teachers teach almost every subject to their class. Although some classroom teachers might have an additional qualification for teaching visual arts, it is not stipulated from primary school teachers.

As mentioned earlier, the “Basic education 2020” report was eventually rejected by the political parties of the current parliament because of the public pressure against it. Although the position of art education was not the only reason for the rejection, the public debate about the future of art education in the Finnish school system, and subsequently, in the society, was intense. These discussions form the backbone of this thesis study.

Setting the Ground

This thesis examines the way that the educational and societal position of art education is defended in a specific historical and regional context. The basis of my research material is constructed on the collision between a governmental proposal and publicly stated critical responses to it. In other words, the societal debate about the position of visual arts education in the Finnish schooling system derived from a political crisis, where two oppositional stances were formed: The governmental one, that proposed the decrease of art education and the oppositional one, that demanded its increase. In this respect, the phenomenon that I study can be described as a political struggle that stems from conflicting views of the society.

One extremely notable societal consequence of the proposed lesson hour distribution would have been its economic outcomes in the field of art education: In a worst case scenario, in schools with two art teachers, the new lesson hour distribution would have meant a possible resignation.
of either one. Thus, the report’s effect on the employment situation of art educators cannot be overlooked.

However, when I started to go through my research material, the employment factor was usually subordinate to other reasonings for art education in the Finnish schooling system. Often, a loss of a qualified visual arts teacher seemed to mean a loss of qualified art education, not a loss of personal economic stability. In other words, the reasoning for art education was, in most cases, tied to the position of art education in the minds of human individuals and in the society in general. It became clear, that there was a discursively constructed need for art education beyond the actual amount of lesson hours or the employment of qualified visual arts teachers. The political movement against the new lesson hour distribution did not emphasize mere increase of lesson hours for the visual arts education, but also, something more; a better world, for example.

The discussions that took place in the summer and fall of 2010 in various media sent powerful political signals: “If the amount of art education is decreased, then…!” The second part of this sentence, that of “then…!” embodied the excess of meaning that art education was emitting. Of course, without any politically affective dimension, there would not be any reason to defend the position of art education in the schooling system; then, it would be mere matter of lesson hours and their distribution. Thus, the powerful “then…!” underlined the political nature of these discourses and constructed a societal surrounding for the compulsory art education. The decrease or lack of art education was not presented to affect just students in basic education, but it would influence the entire society. This is a very important thing to note: Besides trying to describe what art education is, these discourses attempted to constructs an image of a society as well. In this respect, a society that does not appreciate compulsory art education was not really considered as a society, at least not as a good one.

However, whenever the importance of art education was expressed in various proclamations, statements, and writings in different media, words seemed to always run short. No matter how carefully every sentence was formed, there were always a dimension that is impossible to put into words. Yet, although words would not grasp the true essence of art education, there were plenty of people who did their best to express their feelings through language. In fact, various people, including art educators, students, and parents, did state what art education is all about. As mentioned earlier, by finishing the clause “then…!”, they also stated plenty of other things: Art education was depicted as the key for alleviating various individual and societal discontents that derived from… the lack of art education! Thus, the phantasmic idea of what art education really means (besides art classes) was heavily present in these discourses, even if this essence would be difficult to explain verbally. Most importantly, thousands of words about the importance of art education in the Finnish schooling system and the society seemed to include a shared,
tacit understanding of what art education is and what the lack of art education means.

In this respect, the previous remarks can be encapsulated in the notions of lack and surplus. On the one hand, the threat of cutting lesson hours in the visual arts education incorporates multiple dimensions of deficiency: Loss of art classes for students, decrease of working hours for teachers, and, the deprivation of the substance of art education for the future generations. In addition, there is lack of words that could describe the true essence of art education. On the other hand, the lack of art education does not refer only to amount of annual weekly lesson hours, but it depicts an image of art education that is too valuable to be decreased. Thus, art education as a signifier embodies some kind of phantasmic surplus of meaning, that makes it meaningful. Hence, although it is impossible to depict the essence of art education through language, the signifier art education can be charged with different kinds of phantasmic meanings.

It is here, where the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) and its socio-political expansions become useful. In Lacanian theory, the notion of lack and surplus of meaning come together in language, which is the primary terrain of Lacan’s works (Mansfield, 2000, p. 38-39). In order to grasp the phantasmic substance of art education, that is, its aforementioned meaningfulness, one has to go beyond language, or at least, show its limits.

For Lacan, lack governs a great deal of human experience (Lacan, 1981, pp. 204-205). Firstly, it remarks the subject’s (as Lacan calls human individuals) constitutive split between the conscious and the unconscious. The fundamental lack in the subjectivity derives from entering to the world of language, that is, the Symbolic order. In Lacanian theory, subject does not master language, but on the contrary, language masters subject, even subject’s sense of self (Mansfield, 2000, p. 39). Thus, although the entrance to the Symbolic constructs the subject, language remains intrinsically alien to the her/him (Lacan, 1981, pp. 211-212). Lacan designates this external substance of the subject as the Other, which marks the radical otherness of subject’s consciousness. Secondly, even though language constitutes subjectivity, the unconscious remains in the kernel of the subject, creating a constitutive lack in the Symbolic as well. This is why the essence of art education always eludes the words that are uttered by subjects, even those, who are assumed to embody it (art teachers, art lovers, etc.). The dimension of the unconscious, the Real in Lacanian lexicon, is unreachable through language. However, it disrupts consciousness in various ways, such as slips of tongue, logical inconsistencies, and insatiable desires.

The Lacanian notion of lack lays the basis for the theoretical scrutiny of my study. I treat lack as a productive category, which forces subjects to find various solutions to cover the missing substance in themselves and in the society. As shown, this is clearly visible in my research material: The threat of the decrease of compulsory lesson hours in the visual arts education produced a vast amount of discussions that emphasized the importance of art education. Thus, the
possible lack of art education in the Finnish schooling system did not put an end to the discursive need of art education, vice versa.

The aforementioned phantasmic surplus of art education is best understood through the category of lack. In order to constitute oneself as a coherent self, subject needs to suture its split nature by filling the lack of the Real with external images and phantasmic promises of the totality of the Real (Walker et al., 2006, p. 314). However, constituted in the Symbolic, the search for subjective closure is never-ending, because subject cannot return to the pre-symbolic state of the Real. Subject exists in language and lives through language. This makes subjectivity an open structure that is always looking for totality, that is, a fill to one’s lack.

There is always a danger of slipping into anti-analytical essentialism when talking about a certain fundamental quality in people or society, as if there was a lost piece in the puzzle just waiting to be found. In this respect, the aforementioned notion of lack denies the possibility of any fundamental or essential substance and replaces it with pure emptiness. Socio-political theories informed by Lacan, like the works of political theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, emphasize the fundamental impossibility of retrieving any true totality or fullness. From time to time, there might pop up a piece to the puzzle that seems to fit, but eventually, it fails to represent the Real Thing. Thus, it is the image of a finished puzzle that is illusory and impossible to attain. This means that the lack is seen as constitutive and totality as derived from it (Laclau, 1997, p. 301).

Discourses do not come into being by themselves. They are products of living bodies of the human world, used and reused by the human subjects. It would be problematic to talk about the field of Finnish art education like it was a living person with contemplated thoughts, uncontrollable desires, and essential needs, but it is possible to study different meanings that discursively relate to the subject formation in the field of art education. For example, there are certain visual practices, like drawing from a model or working with clay, that have gained such a powerful status in art education that students, including myself, know to anticipate them and demand more if they feel that they cannot get enough. Or, in schools, art teachers may decorate hallways with student works because there is need for it, that is, to show appreciation for the students, to make the school look better, or to follow a memory trace from one’s own art teacher, who used to do the same. In short, subjects navigate through practices that are discursively constructed and, most importantly, emotionally attached. Identification with a certain image of art teacher or students’ expectations about art education in schools are results of available discourses that subjects negotiate with and feel connected to. This process of negotiation is not considered as purely rational and transparent act, but, as stated earlier, it includes unconscious desires that may contradict every reasonable choice. In this respect, the phantasmic promise
of filling the lack in the subject plays a significant role in identification processes.

The purpose of this study is not to collect different opinions about art education, but to examine how these conceptions are aiming for a subjective and ideological closure by using the phantasmic signifier art education. Thus, my research question is, *In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education?* There are two main reasons for asking this question: Firstly, it is important to shed light to the discursive use of various concepts and fantasies about art education, because as a societal project, it is intrinsically antagonistic, balancing between the eternalness of ideology and the fundamental insatiability of human desire. To bring out this antagonism is to disturb and complex the existing and emergent ideological structures that work as tools for social identification in our field. Secondly, a critical self-reflection on the position of art education in subjective and societal fantasies may help art teacher education to avoid the reproduction of fixed customs and ossified beliefs about our profession. As Jan Jagodzinski (2004) remarks, although fantasies (and ideologies) are inescapable, they are still replaceable (Jagodzinski, 2004, p. 40). The “Basic education 2020” lesson hour distribution report, especially when being unnerving for art educators, is seen as a stain that disrupts the image art education as desired and needed part of the basic education, hence, as a redeem, fantasies about its importance are laid out explicitly in order to return the satisfactory image. Thus, I treat the discursive field of art education, as it is presented in my research material, as an ideological field of discourse that is based on its own reproduction.

I conceptualize various discursive processes into two theoretical subject positions, namely the *subject in art education* and the *subject of art education*. The *subject in art education* describes the subject position where art education is covering a subjective lack. This subject position is always lacking and art education is discursively presented as the only way to cover this lack. The *subject of art education* refers to a fantasized subject position, where different agents are presumed to cover a lack through their actions. This may include art teachers and students, who, after being totalized by art education (i.e. lacking a lack), act towards a societal closure. In this respect, the use of the terms subject of/in art education is to be understood through the notion of identification: Subject of/in art education is a tool to discern different identification processes in discourse.

I start by introducing Lacanian theory as my theoretical and methodological background. I go through the central elements of Lacan’s multifaceted oeuvre that relate to my research interests, that of his views on subjectivity and language. In addition, I present the socio-political theories that have been influenced by Lacanian theory. My main theoretical reference in the political research is Ernesto Laclau (1935– ), who has been working with Lacan-influenced political discourse theory for decades. Then, I unfold my
research material and analyze it in three parts: Firstly, I present the discursive elements that depict art education as a tool for subjective closure; Secondly, I focus on the discourses that emphasize the need for art education from institutional and societal perspective; Thirdly, I combine these two elements together to a multilayered analysis on the phantasmic elements of the discursive structure. In the last part of my study, I sum up my findings and give tools for an ideological critique toward my research material.

Theoretical Background

In the following, I introduce the theoretical basis of my thesis work by presenting how subjectivity is conceptualized in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. I start by presenting how Lacanian theory has influenced academic research in art education. Then, I take a closer look on Lacan’s theory of subjectivity and the socio-political use of these remarks. In this sense, this chapter unravels my theoretical perspective on the critique of discourses related to the field of Finnish art education.

Lacan and the Subject of Art Education

Over the past decade interest towards Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has been steadily increasing in the field of art education in the United States. Scholars like Jan Jagodzinski (1997, 2004, 2005, 2010), Kevin Tavin (2008, 2010a, 2010b), and Sydney Walker (2006, 2009, 2010) have emphasized the use of Lacanian theory as a way to critically examine art education theory and practices. In addition, there are signs of broader public interest towards this perspective: the latest issue of Visual Arts Research (Vol. 36, Issue 71, 2010) was inscribed to the Lacanian theory in art education. In Europe, Dennis Atkinson has been an active advocate of Lacanian theory in art education in the UK (1999, 2001, 2004) and the aforementioned issue of Visual Arts Research introduces Lacanian perspective to art education in Portugal.
by João Pedro Fróis (2010) and in Spain by Paulo Padilla Petry & Fernando Hernández Hernández (2010). In Finland, the use of Lacanian theory in art education research has been very little. Inkeri Sava has used psychoanalytic theory in her works, but she has focused mainly on Freudian theory. In the field of visual culture studies, scholars like Pia Sivenius (1997), and Janne Seppänen (2001) have used Lacanian theory in examining art. In addition, psychologist Juhani Ihanus (1995) has written about Lacanian theory and its relation to artistic experiences.

To give a few examples of Lacanian theory in art education research, I shortly present three academic writings where Lacan’s notions about subjectivity have been used as the main theoretical tool of study. They represent different uses of Lacanian insights over a ten year timespan in art education discussions in the United States. Although these texts share the same theoretical basis, the authors use Lacan in various ways to support their arguments. This gives a perspective to the multiple ways how Lacanian theory can be implemented in the art education research.

Published in Studies in Art Education in 1997, Jan Jagodzinski’s *The Nostalgia of Art Education* presents a Lacanian critique of the Discipline Based Art Education by scrutinizing a multicultural program advertisement by the Getty Center for the Education of Arts in NAEA News magazine. In the article, Jagodzinski examines the ways how this specific advertisement is constructed around the desire of subject identification, which interpellates a certain type of subjectivity. He constructs his analysis through the three registers of Lacanian subject, the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real, and thus brings into question the complex psychical and societal connections that take part on the subject formation. He argues that although the advertisement is trying to promote multiculturalism, it is in fact tied to the nostalgic fantasy of modernism. Thus, Jagodzinski uses Lacanian theory as a tool for a critique of ideology and ideological discourses in art education in a historical context where Lacanian theory was relatively marginal area of interest in our field.

The second example is an article written by Sydney Walker with three doctorate students from Ohio State University, Vicki Daiello, Kevin Hathaway, and Mindi Rhoades. It was published also in Studies in Art Education, but nine years later, in 2006. As the name of the article, *Complicating Visual Culture*, suggests, the authors’ intention is to provide examples how Lacanian psychoanalytic theory can complicate the socio-cultural perspectives of critical pedagogy oriented Visual Culture Art Education. In this respect, Walker et al. introduce the question of subjectivity as the key element in understanding the complexity of teaching visual culture. Through Lacanian perspective, authors argue, subjectivity is seen as a non-stable entity fluctuated by unconscious desires rather than various subject positions that are often emphasized in socio-cultural theories (Walker et al. 2006, p. 311). Visuality has a substantial role in subjective identification and dis-identification, for “subject’s identity is
built upon and sustained by unconscious identification with images” (Walker et al. 2006, p. 313). Unlike Jagodzinski, Walker et al. are not criticizing a paradigm per se, but they use Lacanian theory to expand its focus and rethink its practices.

Lastly, the most recent example is Laura Hetrick’s dissertation from the Ohio State University, published in 2010. She studies how student teachers’ fantasies about their own teacher identities can be scrutinized through examples from visual culture, namely movies that contain an art teacher character. Hetrick uses Lacanian and Deleuze-Guattarian theory to show how the fantasized image of art teacher is shared and constructed through discourse and visuality. She examines the deconstruction, and later reconstruction, of the fantasized structure of subjectivity in the art teacher education. Hetrick’s study shows how Lacanian theory can be used as a pedagogical tool in art teacher training programs as a way to unearth subjective and cultural fantasies that affect the process of becoming a teacher. Thus, her dissertation brings forward the entwinement of subject and its social context in art education through Lacanian perspective.

As a conclusion, Lacanian theory can be used in multiple ways in art education research. The common denominator for the previous examples is the need to go beyond the subjective/objective dichotomy and look at art education theories and practices as complex processes that involve unconscious desires and fantasies. Regarding to my thesis study, they pinpoint the intricacy of subject formation and the fertility of Lacanian perspective when studying professional identification and its socio-cultural context.

An Introduction to the Lacanian Subject

The foundation of Lacanian theory is the category of subject, which offers a fertile ground for studying various individual and societal phenomena. Stavrakakis (2002b) points out, that the psychoanalytic understanding of the subject, first described by Sigmund Freud in the early 1900s, is fundamentally challenging the way that subjectivity is discussed in the tradition of Western philosophy, sociology, and psychology. The cornerstone of Western individuality, the Cartesian rational *cogito*, is based on the notion of sensible and coherent human being, who is capable to master her/himself and her/his surroundings by rational thought. In art education, this image of rational subject can be discerned in the various emphases on the cognitive processes that art is stated to develop in students (Tavin, 2010b). In the Finnish field of art education, the discordance between classical-cognitivist and romantic-expressive views has been present at least from the 1950s (Pohjakallio, 2005), but it is important to note that romantic notions about self-expression do not accord with Lacanian understanding about psyche either (Stavrakakis, 2002a).

In Lacanian theory, the edifice of rationality has its limits. It is very difficult to explain, through rational contemplation, deep emotional responses that stem from looking at particular images, or when rejecting certain imageries. Some
reactions might be diverse and contradictory. For example, an art teacher can be devoted to multicultural issues in art classroom, but outside school s/he might feel fear and anger towards different lifestyles and cultural practices; s/he might even enjoy her/his dislike through jokes and caricatures. Or, an art teacher, who emphasizes a critical relationship with over-sexualized media images to her/his students, may find the same images appealing and pleasurable in her/his own privacy.

In psychoanalytic understanding, this kind of psychic tension derives from the *incoherency* of the subject, a notion that fundamentally disrupts the image of rational, conscious, and autonomous individual. Freud introduced the idea of incoherency with the term *Ich-spaltung*, the Splitting of the Ego, that he used mostly in the clinical context (Stavrakakis, 2002b, p. 16). Lacan furthered Freud’s notion by broadening it to embody subjectivity in general. The notion of split is fundamental in Lacanian theory and the basis for his theory of the three psychic registers, the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. In fact, the split constitutes subjectivity: it is the absence of the Real that brings about the subject (Lacan, 1981, p. 141). Next, I briefly explain the dynamics of these registers in human subjectivity and how they work as theoretical tools in my study.

Before a child is introduced to language, she has no sense of separate self and her being is limited to the register of the Real. According to Walker et al. (2006) it is “an undifferentiated state where fullness, unity, and bliss prevail.” (Walker et al., 2006, p. 313). As the founding register of subjectivity it is a primordial experience of totality and enjoyment. As a realm beyond symbolization the Real is a register that is inaccessible for the language and resists any description. However, it is present in discourses as fractures and failings of language, such as slips of tongue, inconsistencies, pauses, and repetition (Tavin, 2010b, p. 59). Regarding to my study, the Real offers unconscious background for identification processes that take place in the discourses that I examine. The absence of the Real is the void that human actions, including art education, aim to fill with discourse and images of self and others.

In Lacanian theory, the process of splitting the subject is called the *mirror stage*. It is a period in human life, assumed to take place when child is between 6 to 18 months, when a child begins to create an image of unified self through interaction with (real or figurative) mirror (Mansfield, 2000, p. 42). Now, the previously scattered experiences and emotions are embodied to an image of unified body that is the basis of one’s sense of self and individuality. This leads to the formation of the Imaginary register, which is a compilation of images that form the sense of cognitive and conscious ego (Walker et al. 2006, p. 314). As “the field of spectral images, of spatial unities and totalised representations” (Stavrakakis, 2002b, p. 20), it is the way for the subject to cover the lack of the Real and return its lost enjoyment. However, this self-recognition is merely a *misrecognition* (méconnaissance), because, although it provides a sense of coherent identity, it
is only an image, a reflection. Most importantly, this image is not derived from the subject itself, but it is constituted outside of it, that is, in the Other. Lacan depicted this idea with a neologism *extimacy* (*extimité*), which derives from the notion of exterior intimacy: The most intimate and innermost part of subjectivity is constituted outside of it (Miller, 2008). As Mansfield (2000) states, “[t]his image may provide it with a sense of its own unity, but the image has an external source: it comes from, and remains part of, otherness itself.” (Mansfield, 2000, p. 43). In this respect, the Imaginary serves as a phantasmic site of identification for art educators to construct their own subjectivity.

If the sense of self is constructed in the relation to the Other, it is, according to Lacanian theory, also sustained through a similar relationship (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, pp. 161-162). The need to find external recognition for one’s self-image is a constitutive part of the function of subjectivity. As Lacan (1981) puts it, “[t]he Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever might be made present of the subject – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 203). In this study, the signifier art education can be read through this notion of the Other: *Art education* governs the subject of art education by regulating its sense of lack and totality. It is important to notice that art education as the Other cannot be identified as any particular person, group, or image(ry), but as a site of identification beyond any symbolization. Following this notion, I examine the ways how this signifier is placed in discourses that try communicate its impossible essence.

The search for the external recognition of the spectral image of self is embodied in *desire*. Desire is the force that keeps subject searching for the lost wholeness of the Real. As Lacan’s famous statement claims, “desire is the desire of the Other” (Lacan, 1981, p. 235). Thus, desire is, as the subjectivity, also formed in the Other. It is important to notice that because the image of self is fundamentally based on the misrecognition and the lack in the subject is beyond any Symbolic or Imaginary representation, desire remains always insatiable. This makes the subjectivity an open system that is never *ready nor total*; it is always lacking (Stavrakakis, 2002a, p. 528). Thus, the lacking character of subjectivity is an important feature in my study: It gives a fertile viewpoint to ideological identification and dis-identification in the discourses I have studied. The totality of the subject is similarly impossible to attain as the essence of art education, but for this precise reason, the desire to fill the void of the Real keeps subject and society in motion (Stavrakakis, 2002a, p. 528).

The motor behind the desire is depicted in Lacanian lexicon with the term *objet a*; a spectral object that promises to return the totality of the Real. The *objet a* does not relate to a physical or discursive object *per se*, but its phantasmic “surplus” that embodies “a “bit” of the Real” (Jagodzinski, 2004, p. 39). According to Tavin (2008, p. 269), this promise may be manifested also in discourses and subject positions that seem to possess something beyond their signifying
value, such as aesthetics in art education. As an Imaginary construction, it is an unattainable object, that “gives body’ to the felt of lack” (jagodzinski, 2004, p. 41), but eventually remains unable to fill it. Thus, as seen in the introductory chapter, art education promises more than mere art classes: it is the fantasized outcome of the spectral object of art education that resolves the tension of the split subject. As a theoretical tool, objet a helps me to situate signifiers in my research material that are longed for just because they are impossible to attain.

Every human action, conscious or unconscious, is eventually manifested in the Symbolic order. The Symbolic is the register that enables subject to present oneself as an individual, i.e. creates the subject (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 162). In other words, the Symbolic order has to be accepted in order to become a subject. This makes the subject an “effect of the signifier” (Stravrakakis, 2002b, pp. 19-20). In Lacanian theory, language is not a gateway to individual creativity and expression, but is a system that splits and controls the subject (Stavrakakis, 2002a, p. 529). However, as mentioned in the introductory part, the Symbolic order is lacking as well, because it tries to represent fundamentally unrepresentable (Stavrakakis, 2002b, pp. 38-39). According to Stavrakakis (2002b), this interpretation of the Symbolic order is the crucial element that differs Lacan’s theory from other theories that emphasize the social construction of subjectivity.

The tension between Lacan’s three psychic orders is most visible through the term jouissance. Jouissance is, according to Sheridan’s translator’s notes in Lacan’s The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis (1981, p. 281), impossible to adequately translate in English, because the closest equivalent words, enjoyment and pleasure, do not incorporate all theoretical elements that Lacan embodies to the original French word. According to jagodzinski (2004, p. 38), jouissance is pleasure that connects to ultimate pain, because it transgresses the pleasure principle, which conducts the socially confirmed ways to gain pleasure. Hence, jouissance is pleasure/pain at the border of the Symbolic/Imaginary and the Real. It is simultaneously the unrepresentable lost pleasure of the fullness of the Real and the dissatisfaction of never attaining it (Stavrakakis, 2007, pp. 196-197). Thus, Lacanian understanding of desire connects to the promise of jouissance through the objet a. However, it is important to note that jouissance qua the totality of the Real is beyond any Symbolic principle; it always escapes the subject and leaves the subject fundamentally lacking (Stavrakakis, 2007, pp. 196-197). In this respect, my research material provides me with discursive attempts to stabilize the fantasized position of art education and its different subject positions, but also, it illustrates ways to enjoy these positions as relievers of fundamental subjective loss.

Hence, I am scrutinizing art education as a discursive field that, on the one hand, promises to alleviate the loss of the Real, but on the other hand, is fundamentally incapable
to fulfill this promise. This provides a fruitful ground for the study of the relationship between the subject and its social context. In the following, I explain how Lacan’s theory of subjectivity has been used in political study and how it may be used in the study of social identification. By doing so, I lay the basis for understanding the complex psychic mechanisms that take part in constructing the phantasmic surplus of art education as a desired object of identification.

**Subject and Ideology**

If the subjectivity is fundamentally constructed outside of itself, then, in order to study subject formation, this outside has to be scrutinized as well. Lacan-influenced political theorist Ernesto Laclau, together with his colleague Chantal Mouffe, has focused on the question of objectivity as an ideological basis of subject formation. By objectivity, Laclau means discursive relations in human reality (Laclau, 2005, p. 68). It is important to point out, following Lacan’s notion of *extimacy*, that one cannot separate inside and outside into distinct categories that explain subjective and social formation. This means that subject formation is not a process conducted solely by the subject her/himself nor her/his social (ideological) surroundings, but what is at stake is the deep interaction of these two (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 14). Hence, I treat individual statements about art education as parts of the ideological discourses that set the discursive limits to these statements.

To go back to the Lacanian formulation of subject formation, the reason why subjectivity is constructed in the relation to the Other is the exclusion of the Real. In this respect, Laclau builds his theoretical edifice upon the negative ontology of exclusion: The focus of his study is not the essence of subjectivity or society but the very thing that prevents them from being what they are thought to be (Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 100). For Laclau, society as such is impossible because it is discursively mediated through language. This does not mean that society does not exist, but that the only level it is accessible is discourse (Laclau, 1997). Hence, his views are radically anti-essentialist and anti-positivist, laying the emphasis on the discursive practices of society that create objectivism rather than in search for the objective truth. According to Howarth & Stavrakakis (2000, p. 3), the rejection of any extra-discursive position from where the entire existence of the world would be doubted prevents this theoretical tool from slipping into skepticism or idealism; Any object of human world, physical or not, is part of the discursive practices that constitute the reality itself. In this respect, I study art education as a social construction that is embodied in certain discursive practices. By scrutinizing discursive elements that hold art education together as a site of identification, I show the limits of the ideological discourse of art education.

When studying the political, Laclau’s negative ontology offers a tool to examine the limitations of discourse as well as its productive dimensions: The impossibility of attaining the
Real of the society, or in my case, art education, compels one to articulate and re-articulate its meaning. What is pursued is a closure of an ideological structure of identification, which enables, like the misrecognition for the subject, sense of stable (political) identity. In Althusserian sense, without this misrecognition, there would be no subject nor any social configuration; identities would fall into pure differences and scattered particularities (Laclau, 1997; 2005). In art education, different paradigms have tried to formulate the real essence of our profession and capture its true societal position. This demonstrates the negative/productive chiasma of Laclau’s theory; the constant failure of pinpointing the ultimate essence of art education (negative dimension) creates a need to re-articulate it over and over again (productive dimension). Various overlapping and contesting paradigms and discourses offer art educators reflective surfaces to project and construct their own subjective identity and recognize themselves as part of the master signifier art education.

It would be naïve to think that every discourse is equal or it is through rational contemplation and choice that art teachers feel connected to a certain discourse. In certain socio-political contexts some discourses seem to have power over the others and the meaning of various signifiers are contested. For example, in the 1970s the Finnish field of art education was heavily influenced by the critical study of mass communication, which was culminated in a technique of the Polarizing Method (Pohjakallio, 2005, pp. 102-103). This method, developed in Sweden in the early 1970s, was based on the idea of art education as social activism; its purpose was to unveil different injustices of the society by colliding them in a visual form (Räsänen, 1990). The result was an abundance of student works that included pictures of starving and malnourished children (usually African, note the racial Other), put side by side with overindulgent people (Western, White). Or then, students would combine an idealized image of nature with pictures of polluted cities. The idea behind this method was to show that exploitation of both people and the nature really exists and it was possible to expose and visualize through a critical study of mass media (Räsänen, 1990).

Following Laclau’s insights presented above, images of the South/North dichotomy were embodying the lack of inequality in the society. According to Stavrakakis (2007, pp. 196-199), this lack of inequality can be read as the lack of enjoyment (jouissance). Thus, the dichotomy between an equal society and an unequal society follows the division between a total (Real) society and an antagonist (split) society. The function of ideology is to provide a promise, that is, a fantasy, of retrieving the lost jouissance by bringing a closure and fullness to the intrinsically antagonist society. In the case of the Polarizing Method, the totality of the society is to be attained by removing all of its obstacles (signifiers of inequality) by giving humanitarian aid for the starving children of Africa and restraining the exploitation of the South by the overindulgent people of capitalist North. In other words, the totality of the society (equality) is signified...
by its absence (inequality). Here, the limits of ideology are based on the exclusion of a certain societal character. This exclusion is, following Laclau (1997), the basis for every totality, because “the only possibility of having a true outside would be that the outside is not simply one more, neutral element but an excluded one, something that the totality expels from itself in order to constitute itself.” (Laclau, 1997, p. 70, emphasis original).

In this respect, the scrutiny of an ideological totality has to take account on not only what is included in its phantasmic promise, but also, what is excluded from this totality. In my research material, this exclusion sets the limits for the ideological totality that art education is discursively pursuing. In other words, I look for signifiers that are presented to hinder the subjective and ideological closure through art education.

**Summing it up: Fantasy of Art Education**

Regarding to my study, the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, among its societal expansions, offers me a vital ground to theorize on the relationship between subjective and objective dimensions of various art education discourses. The kernel of one’s sense of self and the attempts to frame the impossibility of art education come together in the notion of fantasy. The category of fantasy indicates the connection between the lacking subject and its object of desire, namely the objet a. As Lacan states, “phantasy is the support of desire; it is not the object that is the support of desire.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 185). It is important to notice that like the objet a, fantasy remains fundamentally beyond symbolic interpretation (Žižek, 1989/2008, p. 80). Thus, fantasy is not just a promise of totality, but it is crucially connected to its own impossibility. Although subject might have experiences of fantasies coming true, such as gaining enough obligatory annual weekly lesson hours for art education in secondary school, the jouissance received always remains partial (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 262). Stavrakakis (2007) emphasizes, following Slavoj Žižek, that fantasy works through a balancing act: On the one hand, it promises to bring the sense of totality qua jouissance and on the other hand, it points at a scapegoat, who is to blame for stealing the jouissance (Stavrakakis, 2007, pp. 197-198).

In this respect, fantasy is not some kind of chimerical daydream, but the very thing that supports reality. As Lacan (1981) states, “[t]he subject situates himself as determined by the phantasy.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 185). Besides providing a frame for subjective identification, the notion of fantasy can also refer to societal processes, such as nationalism (Stavrakakis, 2007). As Glynos & Stavrakakis (2008) point out, “fantasy can be understood as a way of mediating the subject’s relation to the norms and ideals governing a social or political practice.” (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008, p. 265).

As in the case of the Polarizing Method, the connection between ideology and fantasy is strong. According to jagodzinski (2004) “[i]deology is a fantasy supported by the objet a.” (jagodzinski, 2004, p. 40). Here, the relationship
between subject and its societal surroundings come close to Louis Althusser’s theory of ideology. In his oft-cited text, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* from 1969, Althusser argues that there is no subjectivity outside ideology, because it is the ideology that “hails” or “interpellates” subject to recognize oneself as a subject (Althusser, 1994, pp. 129-132). Using Althusser’s figure of speech, ideology is like a shout of a friend or a police officer on the street, “Hey, you there!” and when the hailed person turns around knowing that the shout was pointed at her/him, s/he becomes a subject (Althusser, 1994, p. 131). The call of ideology is not, however, explicit like a shout on the street, but a process that seems to happen outside any ideological structure. It is crucial for any working ideology to seem like there was no ideology at all, or that there is an ideology but subject can step out from it when needed (Althusser, 1994, p. 131).

Thus, Althusser follows the Freudian/Lacanian notion of ultimately de-centered subject, whose sense of unified ego is constituted externally. However, Laclau and Mouffe reject Althusser’s views of ideology as a determinist force that overcomes any subjective agency. Hence, they make a distinction between *subject positions* and *political subjectivity*. The former designates the various positions, that subject uses as points of identification, such as “Finnish”, “male”, and “art educator”. The latter refers to the ways how subjects act out their subject positions. As discursive constructions, subject positions are contingent, which enables different political subjectivities, that is, acts of identification (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13). For example, my subject position as “art educator” gives me a certain frame of identification, but my subjective position designates the way I act as an “art educator”.

To conclude, the theoretical basis of my study is centered around two major Lacanian insights, namely the subjective/objective lack and the fantasy that promises a (partial) cover over it. As the negative ontology of Lacanian theory suggests, the refusal of any essential element (ego, society, art education) conducts my research toward the phantasmic structures of discourse rather than the essential element of certain signifiers. This means, that I take the discursive nature of reality seriously: The entwined construction of the subjective/social of art education through language leads me to scrutinize our field as an ideological structure supported by subjective and collective fantasies. In the following, I lay the methodological basis for my study and explain, how language is treated in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.
Methodology

As discussed in the previous chapter, language plays a significant role in Lacanian theory. The primacy of language derives from the tradition of psychoanalysis as, like Freud's patient Anna O. described it, a *talking cure* (Parker, 2005, p. 165), a form of therapy that focuses on the intercommunication of the analyst (the practitioner) and the analysand (the patient) rather than medical treatment of psychic perturbations. Freud was interested in the ways how the unconscious was turned into words in psychoanalysis, but it was Lacan who, being inspired by the structuralist linguistics, took the language itself as the object of study (Mansfield, 2000, p. 38).

In this chapter, I scrutinize different aspects of Lacanian discourse analysis and I present the methodological basis of my thesis work. First, I lay the basis for Lacanian understanding of language as a way to collect information. Then, I broaden my perspective to political discourse theory and describe its psychoanalytic reading by scholars like Ernesto Laclau and Yannis Stavrakakis.

**Lacan and Discourse Analysis**

At this point, it is important to make the distinction between the clinical and theoretical use of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. According to Stavrakakis (2002b, p. 8), although Lacanian theory offers a fertile ground for philosophical and sociopolitical analysis, Lacan himself was not either a philosopher nor a political theorist. His work is based on the clinical practice of psychoanalysis and the study of the analytic situation between the analyst and the analysand. However, as Louis Althusser remarked in his essay *Freud and Lacan* in 1964, the Freudian corpus, which is the core of Lacanian theory, is not merely a therapeutic practice, but a science, that can be divided to practice (therapy), technique (method), and theory (the relationship between the former two). “[W]ithout theory”, he writes, “[...] a simple practice without theory … perhaps, then, quite simply magic (?) that would succeed” (Althusser, 1996, p. 17, emphasis original). This theory, particularly Lacan's theory of the subject, has shown to be a fecund source of research when analyzing the relationship between individual and her socio-political surroundings (Stavrakakis, 2002b, p. 14) or art education practices (as the previously described article by Walker et al. shows).

In Lacan's words, “language puts objects in reality” (Lacan, 1967, as cited in Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 11), thus providing a structure that organizes the world that subject imagines, this being not more than the reality itself. However, as discussed earlier, there is always a lack in language, that is, in the Symbolic order, because “it attempts the impossible, that is to say, the representation of something ultimately unrepresentable.” (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 69). In fact, this attempt deletes every bit of the Real from discourse (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 40), leaving the core of subjectivity,
the unconscious Real, fundamentally unaccessible. Thus, language is not to be treated as an unmediated access to the autonomous ego that expresses authentic feelings and thoughts of an individual. As Jan Jagodzinski (2004) points out when he writes about media research,

“It is somewhat disturbing, therefore, to at first suggest and then accept that motivations, intentionalities, conscious “authentic” responses of a unified conscious ego, the moi, which media researchers take to be primary data in their work are “misrecognitions” (méconnaissance) in Lacan’s terms. The ego is a paranoiac and alienated structure whose defense mechanisms attempt to keep the imago (self’s narcissistic image) stubbornly unified.” (Jagodzinski, 2004, pp. 49-50, emphasis original)

The rejection of the authenticity of the ego is the fundamental factor that deviates psychoanalysis from psychology and prevents it from slipping into relativism, where every individual voice and opinion is intrinsically a subjective truth, that is, just another way to see the world. Through Lacanian reading, this pluralistic perspective does not take account on the ultimate source of the human subjectivity, the Other, in which the subject emerges (Lacan, 1981, p. 203).

In Lacanian theory, the Other is the site of language (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 163). The split subjectivity, caused by the suppression of the Real, bifurcates subject into enunciated subject and subject of enunciation. The former addresses the conscious ego and the latter is the unconscious I (Jagodzinski, 2004, p. 51). In this respect, Lacan splits the central statement of Descartes, “I think therefore I am”, into two distinct realms: I think (enunciated subject, conscious ego, the level of thinking) and I am (subject of enunciation, unconscious I, the level of being) (Jagodzinski, 2004, pp. 51-52). Following Pavón Cuéllar (2010, p. 91), the distinction between what is told and who is telling is the dividing limit of language. In other words, the enunciated fact that someone is an art educator (“I am an art educator”) includes an enunciating act, which divides the subject position art educator into told, symbolic fact (art educator as a shared sign) and subjective act of speaking (art educator as subject’s Imaginary construction of the Real of art educator).

In this respect, my study scrutinizes the language that governs the ways how art education is, following Lacan’s words, “put into reality”. The conceptual distinction between the subject of art education and the subject in art education is a tool that helps me to discern two sides of reality, that of fantasized (subject of art education; how things should be) and lacking (subject in art education; how things seem to be). However, despite the difference between these two discursive stances, they have the same source, that is, the Other. In other words, I do not consider any writer more authentic, more experienced, or less informed about the subject matter than others, because the signifier they all are referring to, art education, remains the same. This does not mean that I presume every writer to have an identical Imaginary representation of art education. In fact, Lacanian
theory denies every possibility of identical Imaginaries (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010). Instead, the point is to treat the signifier *art education* as identical with itself, which underlines the enunciated character of speech, that is, *what is told* (contrary to the enunciating dimension, *who is telling*). By doing so, I can scrutinize its place in discourses that try to make sense out of the arbitrariness of its meaning, that is, fixing its ideological position in discourse. Thus, following Lacan, I am to treat the text with “absolute difference” (Parker, 2005, p. 168), as a signifying structure rather than a subjective statement, because “[a] signifier is that represents a subject. For whom? –not for another subject, but for another signifier.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 198).

The challenge of Lacanian discourse analysis is to avoid any Imaginary mirror that would reflect the knowledge of the analyst to the text. This is why, as in clinical Lacanian psychoanalysis, instead of guiding the analysand to seek new and hidden knowledge about oneself, the aim is rather the *fall of knowledge*: a state “in which knowledge appears as a foreign substance.” (Nobus & Quinn, 2005, p. 111). In this respect, my study focuses on discursive elements that, despite being repetitive, *do not fundamentally make sense*. My position as a researcher is to unearth this nonsensicality by finding the limits of discursive knowledge in my research material. As Lacan states, “[i]nterpretation is directed not so much at the meaning as towards reducing the non-meaning of the signifier.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 212).

Next, I broaden my scope from individual enunciations to the field of Other (qua ideology) in which the subjects statements appear (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010). I challenge the unilateral relationship between the subject and the Other by scrutinizing the subjective position that anchors the meaning of signifying subject positions. In short, I study the position of language as the mediator between subjective and ideological fantasies in the field of Finnish art education.

**Language and Ideology**

The main argument in Yannis Stavrakakis’s book *The Lacanian Left: Psychoanalysis, Theory, Politics* (2007) is that in order to understand political phenomena, such as nationalism, consumerism, and democratic movements, the dimension of enjoyment has to be taken into account. Using Lacanian formulation of *jouissance*, he scrutinizes ideologies as psychic promises of subjective and collective totality. In this study, I follow Stavrakakis’s path by focusing on the ideological structures that sustain fantasies about our field. I state that these ideological structures provide a promise of *jouissance*, a primordial enjoyment that is lost when subject is interpellated as subject, that is, when stepping into the realm of language. Here, the *extimacy* of psychic life is taken fully into account. As Pavón Cuéllar (2010) argues, “[i]ndividual psychic consciousness belongs to the trans-individual unconscious structure of language.” (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 23).
In Lacan-informed political discourse analysis, it is important to scrutinize the affective level of nonsensical Symbolic elements in ideological discourses. The Symbolic order itself is not able to explain the deep emotional attachments to certain words and discourses (Stavrakakis, 2007, pp. 163-169). Deconstructing the term art education by revealing its historically and culturally constructed nature does not explain the phantasmic surplus that it emits to my research material. As Stavrakakis (2007) points out, “a critique of an ideological system of meaning cannot be effective if it remains at a purely deconstructive level; it requires a mapping of the fantasies supporting this system and an encircling of its symptomatic function.” (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 81).

In the field of political discourse theory, which Stavrakakis represents, the emphasis of research is on the ways how different political projects aim to fill signifiers with certain meanings, thus constituting a particular understanding of social reality itself (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 3). Without discourse a signifier has no meaning. In fact, as Lacan states, “the more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is.” (Lacan, 1997, p. 210). In this respect, the political study of discourses emphasizes the contested nature of meaning by scrutinizing how different signifiers are used in creating a image of reality, i.e. how political projects try to fill the lack in the Symbolic with the promise of jouissance.

In order to work, the ideological fantasy of art education, or any other socio-political project, has to suppress its inherent antagonism, that is, the dialectics of the lost and promised (but never attained) jouissance. As in the case of subjective fall of knowledge, the task for political discourse analyst is to bring forward the discursive tension of ideology by scrutinizing the signifiers that keep its edifice stable. As Lacan (1997) states, “[a] signifying unit presupposes the completion of a certain circle that situates its different elements.” (Lacan, 1997, p. 263). In Lacanian theory, a signifier that fixes the meaning of signifying chain is called point de capiton, a guilting point (Žižek, 1991/2008, p. 16). Point de capiton ‘quilts’ the realm of distinct signifiers around a certain master signifier that brings coherency to the discourse and stabilizes the Symbolic order (Aoki, 2002, p. 42). As Žižek (1991/2008) points out, it combines “heterogenous material as into a unified ideological field” (Žižek, 1991/2008, p. 18). In the political discourse theory, Laclau and Mouffe write about nodal points, which is equivalent to the Lacanian point de capiton; an ideological construction needs certain signifiers to anchor the meaning of the multitude of other floating signifiers (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). In other words, the stabilizing signifier, point de capiton (or nodal point), makes sense out of the scattered insensible Symbolic material of discourse.

According to Laclau, the signifier that attains the status of nodal point has to be emptied with meaning, that is, to become an empty signifier (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). As he states, “any term which, in a certain political
context becomes the signifier of lack, plays the same role [as an empty signifier]” (Laclau, 1996, as cited in Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 9). In this respect, the ideological center of the field of art education has to be discursively constructed around certain signifiers that “assume the role of representing the pure being of the system.” (Laclau, 1996, p. 39), that is, empty signifiers. This means, that if the lack of art education is discursively presented to signify other societal lack(s) as well, and most importantly, fixing the meaning of these lacking signifiers, the notion of empty signifiers helps to discern the stabilizing function of an ideological discourse. In other words, to restore the ideological order in discourse, empty signifiers are needed to quilt down the scattered discourse into the limits of ideology.

Conclusion on Methodology

As I have shown, the methodological task of Lacan-orientated (political) discourse analysis is to scrutinize the discursive limits of fantasies and ideological structures. In this respect, the lacking nature of the Symbolic order is one of the founding premises in my study: Discourses that emerge from a particular need to depict a certain phantasmic image of art education fundamentally fail to do their job. This does not mean, however, that other discourses would succeed either. Rather, the question is that because all attempts fail, it is important to study discourses that seem to get there, that is, discourses that gain a hegemonic place in the ideological system. According to Laclau (2006), “[t]o hegemonize something is exactly to carry out [a] filling function.” (Laclau, 2006, p. 44), that of quilting the emptiness of societal system with certain empty signifiers. For example, if the importance of art education was signified with the need of artistic practices in society, the essence of society would be signified with the absence of artistic practices. Thus, artistic practices would work as a nodal point, that makes sense of all vicissitudes of the society (individual depression, poor economic conditions, terrible educational system, etc.) by constructing a discursive center to distinct societal phenomena. Here, artistic practices becomes an empty signifier, that provides a signifier of societal totality, that is, its (impossible) totalized being. Thus, it attempts to hegemonize the social by discursively (re)constructing its center.

As presented earlier, the Symbolic order (discourse) itself is not sufficient to explain deep psychic attachments to ideologies. Following Stavrakakis (2007), the category of jouissance is important factor in the socio-political research, which broadens the scope of study from pure discursive practices of ideology to libidinal investments that take place in ideological constructions. Thus, following my previous example on artistic practices, the desire to desire artistic practices as a subjective and ideological closure is not tractable to pure discourse. To map the phantasmic surplus of the Symbolic order is to grip fantasy from its limits.

As a surface for individual acts of identification, (ideological) discourse is an important element when studying identities. As Bracher (2002) points out,
“identity is a function of signifiers, and the identity impetus manifests itself in our desire to maintain and enhance both the status and our possession of both the master signifiers and the systems of signifiers (systems of knowledge, belief, or social organization) that bear our identities.” (Bracher, 2002, p. 98).

In this respect, subjective identification finds its base in language, which is, however, always lacking the tools to bear it. Hence, by studying the objectivity (discursive relations) of ideological structure that quilts differential identities and acts of identification, one can grasp the complexity of the relationship between subject and discourse.

Lacan conceptualized this relationship in his theory of four discourses: The discourse of the Master, the University, the Hysteric, and the Analyst. These different discourses depict subject’s position in discourse, subject’s relationship to knowledge, the relationship to what is excluded from the discourse and the master signifier that signifies the subject (Campbell, 2002, p. 79). Lacan’s discourse theory takes into account the fundamental impossibility to master language by expanding the scope of discourse to include the repressed and unconscious factors. I present the Lacanian formulation of the four discourses more detailed in the last part of my analysis, where I map the position of desire in my research material.

Thus, in order to follow my research question, *In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education?* I have to study the language that makes this impossible task to seem discursively possible. In this respect, I search for signifiers that work as cohesive elements in my research material by constructing limits of the ideological discourse in which they belong to. The phantasmic promise of art education has to have limits that govern its discursive emergence; without any limitations, this promise would not have any meaning at all. Hence, as a researcher, my task is to show and analyze these limitations. Even though language is always limiting, the ideological critique of discourses related to art education may work as a tool that redefines the discursive borders of our profession.
Research Material

Before I start the analysis section, I take a closer look to my research material. I explain my method of collecting data for this study and describe how I analyze this material.

The initial plan of my study was to get to know the “Basic education 2020” report, which served as the backdrop for analyzing the public discussions. When I was compiling my research material, I intentionally wanted to focus on texts that seemed to be written because of the need to write. The main reason for this was to avoid any prompt by explicitly presenting questions. Also, by examining discourses that were stemming from the desire to express one’s views, I wanted to grasp the explicitly stated views about art education without limiting them in interviews. Hence, I collected my research material from different electronic sources including social networking sites and blogs, as well as from traditional printed media in the form of letters to the editor in various newspapers. I studied nearly 50 comments in a social media website, 10 letters to the editor in different newspapers, 3 official proclamations by the Finnish art teacher organization and one official proclamation that was signed by various art-related organizations (this was issued before the “Basic education 2020” report was published). These texts are allegedly aimed to involve in public discussions by making a statement and giving a reasoning for it: “Art education is important, because...”. Thus, they are meant to have an effect rather than mere noting the state of things, “Art education is important“, or “The amount of art education is decreasing”. In order to give a historical perspective to my research material, I went through every issue of a Finnish professional art education magazine Stylus from early 1980s to early 2000s. I present this material in more detail in the third part of my analysis.

As I stated in the introductory chapter, I arranged my research material according to the lack that art education was presumed to cover. By doing so, I followed the conceptual division between the subject in art education and the subject of art education. In my analysis, I start with the former one and scrutinize passages that revolve around subjective lack. After that, I concentrate on the phantasmic promise of the subject of art education as a cohesive element in societal discourses.

All of my research material is originally in Finnish. I have translated the texts by myself using the combination of Internet-based Finnish-English dictionary http://www.sanakirja.org (based on Wiktionary, http://www.wiktionary.org), Apple Macintosh Dictionary software (based on New Oxford American Dictionary, 2nd edition), and in some cases, Merriam-Webster’s Internet-based dictionary (http://www.merriam-webster.com). In addition, Tuomo Hiippala made valuable corrections to my translation work.

I realize that due to the nature of my material, I grasp only the most vocal defenders of art education in certain media surroundings. This brings about a few problems: Firstly, it would be problematic to assume that the most outspoken
people of the Finnish field of art education would represent fantasies of the entire professional community. Secondly, in the case of printed media, all the texts that newspapers receive do not get published, which means that the sampling is already pre-edited. Thirdly, in the case of the electronic sources, the material is assumed to be written by people, who are able to use these websites. All of these challenges are important to note and understand while doing an analysis. However, my intention is not to present an overarching fantasy or fantasies of Finnish art educators about their position nor do I propose a method to “reveal” unconscious desires of a particular professional group. The purpose of my research material is to provide fragments of discourse about art education in a particular historical and societal context and show how these fragments build up a fantasy frame for ideological (mis)recognition in the field of art education.

All of the texts used in this research are publicly accessible. However, for research ethical reasons, I do not specify writers’ name or gender. Particularly in the texts acquired from the social networking sites, I do not know if writers are art educators or not. This is not an obstacle for my analysis, vice versa. As a researcher, I want to emphasize that I am not focusing on statements by separate individuals but the ideologies that these statements are referring to. I take the aforementioned Lacanian notion about decentered subject seriously: There is no authentic ego that expresses subject’s unique thoughts and ideas. By keeping this in mind, I do not treat the research material as subjective statements but utterances by a signifier to another signifier (Lacan, 1981, p. 198-199).

In my analysis, I use acronyms SM (Social Media) and PM (Printed Media) to make a distinction between different contexts of the analyzed texts. This distinction is important, because in some cases the nature of social media and printed media is different. A writer can use days to finish a letter to the editor ought to be published in the biggest newspaper in Finland; while on social networking site the same person might express an opinion in matter of minutes. However, this does not mean that I should take the texts published in printed media more seriously. Both of the media are mutually important sources of information, because they provide slightly different perspectives to the discussions that are being examined. Lastly, in the case of proclamations, I use the sign (PM, proclamation) to distinguish them from personal writings.
Covering the Subjective Lack

In this chapter, I study different ways that art education is discursively constructed as a path to subjective closure in my research material. As I mentioned previously, the term closure refers to a state of completeness that derives from filling the fundamental lack of subjectivity, that is, the disconnection with the Real. This chapter focuses on the discursive elements that seem to attempt to cover this lack with external, fantasized images of self in order to establish a stable subjectivity. In this respect, I examine how the lack of subjectivity is discursively constructed around certain signifiers. As a theoretical tool, the notion of subject in art education helps me to understand how the phantasmic surplus of the signifier art education works as a subjective closure toward the totalized subject position of subject of art education.

I start my analysis by studying the construction of subjectivity and its lack in the “Basic education 2020” report. Then, I further these insights by examining the critical arguments on the report that were presented in various media. Lastly, I draw these notions together and scrutinize the signifiers that support the fantasized image of art education as subjective closure.

Subjective Lack in the “Basic education 2020” Report

As mentioned in the introduction part of this thesis, the “Basic education 2020” was published June 1st 2010 by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. As a governmental document, it is publicly accessible in a digital form in the Internet. The whole document consists of 240 pages, from which one and a half pages is describing the general aims of Arts and Crafts subject group (pp. 158-159) and a little less than three pages is dedicated to more detailed description of visual arts education (pp. 162-165). According to the report, the general objective of the Arts and Crafts subject group (including music, visual arts, crafts, and drama) is,

“to support the student’s personal growth to become a balanced and self-knowing human being with healthy self-esteem.”

The role of the visual arts education is described as follows:

“The committee deems the primary objective of the visual arts to give the basic knowledge and skills of visual expression and visual arts, so that the student is able to establish a living relationship with the visual arts. The goal is a multifaceted development of the student’s skills in active, innovative and
critical thinking, and visual communication.”

Työryhmä pitää kuvataiteen opetuksen keskeisenä tehtävänä kuvalliseen ilmaisuun ja kuvataiteeseen liittyvien perustietojen ja taitojen antamista niin, että oppilas voi niitten varassa luoda elävän suhteen kuvataiteeseen. Tavoitteena on oppilaan aktiivisen, uutta luovan ja kriittisen ajattelun sekä visuaalisen viestinnän taitojen monipuolinen kehittäminen. (p. 164)

These citations present the aspects of subjective development that the report emphasizes in art education. Firstly, art education is stated to support “personal growth” (persoonallinen kasvu) that leads to positive outcomes like “healthy self-esteem” (terve itsetunto). Secondly, students need to “establish a living relationship” (elävä suhde) to the visual arts using “the basic knowledge and skills” (perustiedot ja taidot) in order to support the aforementioned growth. Thus, in the latter paragraph, the positive affect of visual arts is based on the knowledge and skills acquired from art and visual culture. The report hardly mentions any actual contents for visual arts education due to the focus of the document; it describes mere general objectives and lesson hour distribution. There is, however, a mention that the substance of visual arts education incorporates “art, design, architecture, object environment, constructed environment and the visual media (kuvataide, muotoilu, arkkitehtuuri, esineympäristö, rakennettu ympäristö ja visuaalinen media) (p. 162). In addition, there are multiple examples on the putative results of art education practices:

“The aim [of visual arts education] is to develop imagination and further students’ abilities on creative problem solving and progressive inquiry. The objective of visual arts education is to bolster student’s growth by offering possibilities to express one’s own thoughts and emotions in interaction with others.”

Opetuksen tavoitteena on kehittää mielikuvitusta ja edistää oppilaiden luovan ongelmanratkaisun ja tutkivan oppimisen taitoja. Kuvataiteen opetuksen tehtävänä on tukea oppilaan kasvua tarjoamalla mahdollisuuksia omien ajatusten ja tunteiden ilmaisuun vuorovaikutuksessa toisten kanssa. (p. 162)

“Visual arts education strengthens the student’s knowledge and understanding of one’s own cultural roots, familiarizes the student with foreign cultures and fosters a positive attitude towards them.”

Kuvataideopetus vahvistaa oppilaan omien kulttuuristen juurien tuntemusta ja ymmärtämistä sekä itselle vieraiden kulttuurien tuntemusta ja myönteisten asenteiden syntymistä niitä kohtaan. (p. 164)

“The third important task of visual arts is related to the role of art in the student’s well-being, health and quality of life. The goals of visual arts education emphasize the knowledge and skills that are generally needed in involvement with community, society and environment in everyday life.”

Kolmas kuvataiteen tärkeä tavoite on liittyä taiteen tekemisen merkitykseen oppilaan hyvinvoinnille, terveydelle ja elämänlaadulle. Kuvataideopetuksen tavoitteissa korostuvat tiedot ja taidot, joita tarvitaan yleensä osallisuuden, yhteisöllisyyden, arjen
As visible, art education is stated to affect the students in various ways, ranging from “creative problem solving” (luova ongelmanratkaisu) to “well-being” (hyvinvointi). Here, it is important to seek a signifier that brings these distinct notions together and quilts their meaning. In other words, signifiers “creative problem solving” and “well-being” do not assumably mean any kind of problem solving or well-being, but their Imaginary manifestations that derive from art education. Thus, one can ask, what is the substance of art education that is stated to bring fullness to the students’ subjectivity through these seemingly distinct signifiers? It is notable, that all of these citations seem to stress the aforementioned connection between knowledge/skills and positive (psychic) results. In this respect, the knowledge acquired from art education is discursively connected to the signifiers like “personal growth” (persoonallinen kasvu), “critical thinking” (kriittinen ajattelu), “imagination” (mielikuvitus), and “well-being, health, and quality of life” (hyvinvointi, terveys ja elämänlaatu).

In this respect, the signifier knowledge (tieto) sutures different phantasmic qualities of art education together. Art education “bolsters” (tukea), “strengthens” (vahvistaa), and “furthers” (edistää) “personal growth” (persoonallinen kasvu), “cultural roots” (kulttuuriset juuret) and “involvement with community, society and environment in everyday life” (osallisuuden, yhteisöllisyyden, arjen toimintojen ja ympäristöjen edistäminen) with knowledge. This leads to “a balanced and self-knowing human being with healthy self-esteem” (tasapainoinen, itsensä tunteva ja itsetunnoltaan terve ihminen). Thus, the lack of the knowledge of art education would mean the lack of all of the aforementioned signifiers. Through this reading, the knowledge acquired from art education plays a significant role in the pursued subjective closure.

It is important to notice that knowledge as a fluctuating signifier remains undefinable in the report. There seems to be multiple different knowledges that student is assumed to acquire: Knowledge about oneself, one’s own culture, visual phenomena and practices, and so on. All of these entities require different kind of knowledge, and this is stated in the report as well,

“Discussion has brought up the issue that the primary task of art education is not to provide knowledge, but to provide different ways of perceiving the world and to construe knowledge.”

Keskusteluissa on nousut esiin, että kuvataideopetus ei ensisijaisesti ohjaa valmiin tiedon äärelle, vaan ymmärtämään erilaisia tapoja hahmottaa maailma ja rakentaa tietoa. (p. 164)

However, following Lacan (1981, p. 206-215), the meaning of the signifier is secondary due to the alienating force of the Symbolic. As a signifier, knowledge remains fundamentally undefinable. This does not obstruct its use as a powerful signifier, vice versa. As shown earlier, knowledge seems to
lead to a state of totality and bliss, hence, its lack becomes an obstacle for attaining full subjectivity.

In addition to knowledge, art education practices seem to develop skills (taidot) that enable the use and expression of acquired understanding “offering possibilities to express one’s own thoughts and emotions in interaction with others.” (mahdollisuuksia omien ajatusten ja tunteiden ilmaisun vuorovaikutuksessa toisten kanssa). These skills include “active, innovative and critical thinking and visual communication” (aktiivinen, uutta luova ja kriittinen ajattelu sekä visuaalinen viestintä). Hence, the notion of skills is discursively presented as the relationship between subject and her/his knowledge. Also, skills are connected to the process of acquiring knowledge, like the skill of “critical thinking”.

As a conclusion, the “Basic education 2020” report discursively constructs the lack of subjectivity around the signifier knowledge. By doing so, it positions art education as a tool for acquiring knowledge that helps subject to attain totality and psychic closure. The lack of this knowledge makes of other societal lacks, such as lack of well-being, cultural roots, or “involvement with community” (osallisuus, yhteisöllisyys). In addition, the notion of skills embodies the developed understanding in practice and provides ways to acquire new knowledge.

Subjective Lack in the Critical Responses

As a researcher, I had a personal presumption that the critical commentaries on the proposed lesson distribution would have conflicted with the aforementioned ideas presented in the report. However, after going through my material, it became clear that the content of the report was not disputed as much as the proposed amount of compulsory art lessons in secondary school. This might derive from the fact that the lesson hour distribution committee had assumably used material provided by various advocates of art education, hence, the report and the critical commentaries mostly shared opinions about the phantasmic qualities of art education. For example,

“In its various forms, the visual arts are a natural way for a child to find ways to understand oneself and a means of self-expression. It can even be vital for the survival of a child who is in danger to alienate or is dealing with other problems!”

Kuvataide eri muodoissaan on lapselle luonteva keino löytää väylää itsensä ymmärtämiseen ja ilmaisun. Se voi olla jopa elintärkeää selvittymisen syrjäytymisuhkan tai muun ongelman parissa elävälle lapselle! (SM)

As visible, this passage seems to accord completely with the lesson division proposal report. Like in “Basic education 2020”, the visual arts are seen as a way to acquire understanding about oneself, which leads to positive psychic results. Yet, there are some distinctions between the report and commentary writings. In the following, I deepen my previous notion about knowledge as the lacking substance of art education by looking for other signifiers that frame the discussion about the position of art in the Finnish schooling
system. First, I study how the notion of knowledge is present in the responses to the proposed lesson division. Then, I examine how the subject of art education is discursively constructed in relation to the signifiers knowledge and skills.

Knowledge and Skills (Revisited)

Although the phantasmic qualities of art education are present in the critical commentaries as well, the signifier knowledge is not equally explicit than in the “Basic education 2020” report. However, these commentaries include a wide range of cognitive processes that art education is assumed to bring out in student:

“The purpose of art education is not to produce art, but to teach the skills required to interpret and understand the contemporary visual culture through one’s own actions.”

“Visual expression is extremely important, also in cases where words are not enough. By visual expression, one also learns new things about self.”

“The human interaction that takes place in lessons and artistic work, the process of creative planning and problem solving, and the relationship between self and the others, is the central substance that is being removed from the school of the future.”

Here, subjects gain skills to “interpret” (tulkita) and “understand” (ymmärtää) visual culture, they “learn” (oppia) about themselves, and participate in artistic work that leads to “human interaction” (inhimillinen vuorovaikutus), “creative planning and problem solving” (luova ideointi ja ongelmanratkaisu), and includes “the relationship between self and the others” (oman minän suhde muihin). Thus, the different processes that art education is presumed to fortify in subjects include a broad range of activities that are connected to knowledge: interpretation, understanding, problem solving, and awareness of self and others. It is notable that too narrow understanding of knowledge is explicitly rejected by a writer in social media:

“An extremely worrying societal development is the policy, where knowledge is raised above creativity.”

The Finnish word “tieto” means knowledge that refers to information and data, which the writer collides with the term “luovuus”, creativity. However, the same writer continues later:
“It is important to recognize oneself along the path of life and art gives the best tools for that.”
On tärkeä pitkin elämänpolkuun tunnistaa itsensä ja taide antaa sihen parhaat avaimet. (SM)

As seen, although the signifier knowledge might have been rejected as such, there is an overarching assumption that through art education one gains something that leads to desired results like self-awareness, understanding about visual culture, or human interaction. This something is discursively connected to various processes that can be examined through the notion of knowledge. Like in the “Basic education 2020” report, the substance of art education qua knowledge sutures a wide array of desired results that are prerequisite for total subjectivity. In other words, the lacking subject in art education needs the knowledge of art education to become the totalized subject of art education.

Covering the Lack of Children and Youth: Media Literacy

Along with the signifier knowledge, many writers stressed the importance of skills in acquiring, analyzing, and using knowledge. While some writers referred to more traditional skills of art education (such as artistic skills), the most emphasized skill in my research material was media literacy. Like the signifier knowledge, media literacy discursively quilts together various remarks about subjective totality and its lack. This quilting effect is most visible in the way the notion of media literacy appears side by side with the idea of the society as an increasingly visual experience. The lacking subject in art education is positioned in subordinate position to the ever-expanding realm of visuality. For example,

“The media feeds our youth ready-made and sweetened dreams of a photoshopped world of commercials, whose deceiving falsehood makes everyday life seem gray and one’s sense of self incomplete.”

Media sen sijaan syöttää nuorillemme valmiita esansisia unelmia photoshopattuun mainosmaailmaan, jonka pettävä valheellisuus saa arjen tuntumaan harmaalta ja oman olemuksen puutteelliselta. (PM)

As in the previous citation, many writers stress the dominance of media imagery over subject’s true self. Media is an entity that “feeds” (syöttää) “our youth” (nuoremme) “falsehoods” (valheellisuudet), which discursively makes our youth an effect of media’s mastery. This chiasma of media literacy and signifiers child (lapsi) and young person (nuori) is often present in various writings. Without art education, subjects (qua children/youth) are seen as illiterate in front of visual culture. However, as in the citation above, illiteracy does not seem to refer to a total inability to read images (that all images would seem to be meaningless), but to a state of misinterpreting them.

“In today’s world, one cannot cope without visual skills. A child or a young person cannot be left all by her/himself under a flood of images.”

Nykymaailmassa ei pärjää ilman visuaalisia taitoja. Lasta ja nuorta ei voi jättää oman omensa nojaan kuvatulvan alle. (SM)
“To be able to cope with today’s world, one does not only need literacy, but literacies, of which the visual literacy is a profound skill! The building blocks for spiritual well-being and the development of personality are provided by art education.”

Nykymaailmassa pärjätäkseen jokainen tarvitsee ei ainoastaan lukutaitoa vaan lukutaitoja, joista kuvallinen lukutaito on yksi oleellinen taito! Henkinen hyvinvointi ja persoonallisuuuden kehitys saavat rakennusaineita kuvataitteen opetuksesta. (SM)

“We are living like in the days before public literacy. A flood of images is growing all around us, but the people are kept illiterate and stupid.”

Elämme kuin ennen lukutaidon leviämistä kansalle. Kuvatulva sen kun kasvaa ympärillämme, mutta kansa halutaan pitää lukutaidottomana ja tyhmänä. (SM)

“At an age, where a young person really has to acknowledge questions related to the surrounding media imagery and one’s own identity, the proposal for the new lesson hour distribution changes the emphasis from general basic education to optional classes.”

Ikävaiheessa, jossa nuori joutuu toden teolla tiedostamaan ympäröivään mediakuvastoon ja omaan identiteettiinsä liittyvät kysymykset, tuntijakoehdotus siirtää painopistetä kaikille yhteisesti annettavasta perusopetuksesta valinnaiskurssieihin. (PM)

Here, the “spiritual well-being” (henkinen hyvinvointi), “development of personality” (persoonallisuuuden kehitys), and “questions related to the surrounding media imagery and one’s own identity” (ympäröivään mediakuvastoon ja omaan identiteettiin liittyvät kysymykset) are connected to the notion of media literacy as a skill to read visual culture. Reading is a “profound skill” (oleellinen taito) for the subject in art education to cope in “the flood of images” (kuvatulva).

The subordinate position of the lacking subject in art education to the visual imagery of “today’s world” (nykymaailma) is verified with the same double positioning as the previous citation: While the flood of images is discursively presented to have the power over child/young person or “people” (kansa), these subject positions are simultaneously appearing to be entities that are possible to master. Thus, media literacy is a skill for the subject in art education to distract the mastery of visual culture, that is, to read it in a way that supports well-being and development of personality.

The signifier media literacy conducts the way knowledge is constructed as the lacking substance of subjectivity. Subject’s relationship with media is to be controlled by literacy, which is acquired from art education. Although media gives subjects in art education “ready-made and sweetened dreams” (valmiita esanssisia unelmia) about their “own identity” (oma identiteetti), this knowledge does not seem to lead to spiritual well-being and development of personality; it has to be filtered through media literacy in order to support the completeness of subjectivity. The totalized subjectivity of art education is then not an effect of visual culture, but the totality results from mastering visuality though media literacy.

It is important to emphasize the relationship of the signifier media with child and young person. As a subject
in art education, child/young person “has to acknowledge questions related to the surrounding media imagery and one’s own identity”. Thus, the promise of covering the lack in the subject position child/young person is contested between the knowledge acquired from art education and the surrounding media imagery. The subject of art education possesses, on the contrary, the media literate mastery of the knowledge of art education over media imagery qua the flood of images. Here, the issue of media literacy underlines the position of knowledge in the relationship between different agents of art education: Child or a young person as the lacking subject in art education needs skills provided by the knowledge of the subject of art education. In Lacanian terms, this makes the subject of art education a subject supposed to know, subject that seems to master knowledge through skills (as the analyst for the analysand in the psychoanalysis). In short, the knowledge of child/young person is incomplete which predisposes her/him to the indoctrination of media. In order to emancipate, child/young person needs the knowledge of art education to develop the skill of media literacy.

However, in addition to the subordinate position of the signifier child/young person to media, there were other threads of discourse that referred to the fantasized figure of child/young person in the context of art education. In fact, one of the clearest structural distinctions between the lesson division report and the individual responses to it was the change of the subject position student (oppilas) to child/young person. The report does include these terms as well, but only in the part that presents search projects that have been done about the effects of art education (p. 163). In addition to child/young person and student, the lacking subject in art education was signified with terms like “human being” (ihminen), “student in basic education” (peruskoululainen), and “citizen” (kansalainen), but these terms did not acquire a strong position in discourse.

The use of terms child and young person was most common in the social networking site, but they were present in other media as well. While some texts referred only to child or young person as the subject in art education, other writers used them side by side with other subject positions. For example,

“There is a need for everything, but if human being cannot realize her/his creative side, s/he loses something true and deep from her/himself and also knowledge and possibilities to improve it are damped down. A human being should be encouraged to express her/himself through art in every possible way (visual arts, writing, music, exploring, motion). There is a little creative artist living inside every child, who wants to raise her/his head and say: “I can too!”. If this artist is stifled, something valuable that can never be purchased with money, knowledge, merits, or achievements is lost. Knowledge is mainly outside oneself, art is, however, mainly stemming from the self.”

Kaikkea tarvitaan, mutta jos ihminen ei saa toteuttaa omaa luovaa puoltansa, hän menettää jotain todellista ja syvää itsessään ja tiedonkin ja sen kehitämisen mahdollisuudet tukahtuu. Ihmistä tulee kannustaa uskallukseen toteuttaa itsään taiteen kautta kaikilla mahdollisilla tavallaan (kuvataide, kirjoittaminen,
“My life has been enriched and diversified with the help of images. By looking at images, by making myself busy with images, by thinking, and by taking pictures. With the help of images I have got to know beauty, sensitivity, ugliness, oldness, sickness, cruelty, and death. One can always go back to images. This is an opportunity that should not to be omitted from any child.”

Both of these examples start with a subject position that later changes to child. The former citation refers first to “human being” (ihminen) as the lacking subject who needs “creativity” (luovuus) and “art” (taide) for not to lose “something true and deep” (jotain todellista ja syvää), but when the writer writes about subject’s “inside”, the subject position is changed to “child”. The latter describes the multifarious effects that “images” provide the writer with using personal pronoun, but the text ends by a reference to “any child”. Similarly to the child/young person to media literacy, these texts position children in submissive position, but here, the domination works in the realm of “knowledge” (tieto) and prohibition of images. The suppression is not fixed into any specific signifier, such as media, it is presented in the passive tense: children are not to be “omitted” (laiminlyödä) nor “stifled” (tukahduttaa) in general. This does not change the subordinate position of children in these discourses; it fortifies it.

The signifier child/young person was present in my research material as an active category as well. Then, it was accompanied with the signifier creativity, which was presented as an innate skill of children and youth.

“The suggested lesson hour distribution shows that children’s needs, creativity, and talent have no meaning whatsoever.”

“Art is a science of life and produces innovations that make us special adepts. If one cannot be creative and insightful in the school during childhood, there will be no new Einsteins. Let us allow our children the freedom to show their own special skills inside the system as well.”
Here, the subordinate position of child/young person as the subject in art education is still present, but in contrast to the child/young person under the flood of images, the children/youth presented above have their “own special skills” (omat erityiset kyvyt) and they possess “needs, creativity, and talent” (tarpeet, luovuus, lähjakkuuus). Thus, in order to become the “new Einstein” (uusi Einstein), child/young person must be given “freedom” (vapaus) to use these skills. However, the subordinate position of creative children/youth is not fundamentally challenged: It seems that art education is discursively positioned as the way to give the freedom to children/youth.

Conclusion on the Subjective Lack

In this chapter, I studied the various ways that subjectivity and its lack is discursively presented in my research material. My starting point was the assumption that various reasonings for a stronger position of art education in the Finnish schooling system are based on the aim of subjective closure. By examining these discourses through the Lacanian notion of lack, I could categorize traces of psychic surplus that the signifier art education discursively bears.

First, by studying the subjective closure in the “Basic education 2020” report, I found that the lack in the subject, that is, the very thing that obstructs the subject to attain full subjectivity, was constructed around the signifiers knowledge and skills. Art education was stated to provide knowledge and skills that help students to achieve subjective closure qua balanced, self-knowing, and healthy human being. Secondly, I deepened my analysis about the subjective use of the signifiers knowledge and skills by studying different critical responses to the report. For the subject in art education, the method to acquire and use totalizing knowledge was presented through the skill of media literacy. Visual culture was as a powerful force in identity construction. In order to control subject’s identification process and attain a totalized subjectivity of the subject of art education, media literacy signified the distinction between harmful and useful knowledge for the subjective closure. Lastly, I noticed that the lacking subject in art education was commonly placed in a subordinate discursive position. This position was signified with terms child young person. Although these signifiers were sometimes accompanied with creativity as subjective agency, the possibility to use this agency was depended on knowledge of art education.

In short, the subject in art education, that is, the subject of lack, was discursively constructed as being dependent on the knowledge art education. This dependency was signified with the inherent absence of media literacy. The subject of art education was presented to possess media literate knowledge of art education that the subject in art education is lacking. The subordinate position of the lacking subject, signified with child/young person, makes the totalized subject of art education an effect of knowledge of art education. In the following chapter, I look at the fantasized position of art education in the societal level and the ways that it provides
discursive tools for ideological closure. For the clarity of my work, I change to use the signifier knowledge to represent both knowledge and skills, because the notion of knowledge discursively embodies, as shown, skills as well.

In the previous chapter, my focus was on discourses that sought for subjective closure through art education. However, the need for art education in the Finnish schooling system was also reasoned through an institutional and societal demand, that is, a societal lack of art education. In this chapter, I study the institutional and societal place of art education in the Finnish schooling system by scrutinizing how art education is stated to bring closure to the fluctuating signifiers school and society. Here, the term closure refers to a state of completeness and rapport of the societal entity. In Lacanian terms, it is a promise of the Real of school or society.

Studying the lack in social entities, such as school or society, does not mean that these institutions are treated like subjects with similar desires and fantasies. What is at stake here is a change of perspective from the subjective lack to the lack in the site of the subjective identification. In this respect, school and society are examined as the ideological backdrop for the construction of subjectivity, that is, the exterior intimacy (extimité) of subject’s sense of self. As I explained in the first part of this study, it is important to point out that this ideological backdrop is also lacking, because it is rooted in the Symbolic.

Whereas the previous chapter centered on the lack of the subject in art education, this chapter examines the totalized
subject of art education as a cover of a societal lack. I treat the fantasized subject of art education as similarly impossible aim as the totality of the society. However, by scrutinizing the discourses that are constructed on this impossibility, I broaden my perspective to the socio-political position of art education. In other words, I read the discourses, that search for the subjective and ideological totality through art education, as attempts to control the societal reality with the phantasmic signifier art education. This ideological system of thoughts is not derived from subjects as such, but it offers a collective platform for the subjects to feel connected to. In this respect, I study the ideological reproduction and reformation of society through the notion of totalized subject of art education.

The new lesson hour distribution does not provide the kind of recognition that would externally verify the subjective closure of the subject of art education. In fact, it is discursively positioned against this closure. A writer in a social networking site summarized this tension clearly:

“I can’t even organize my thoughts because the lesson hour distribution proposal is from some other dimension. I can’t understand that in this country adults like myself are suggesting something along these lines.”

En pysty edes jäsentämään ajatuksia, koska uudistusehdotus on jostain eri ulottuvuudesta. [sic]

En ymmärrä, että kaltaiseni aikuisten tällä maassa ehdotetaan tällaista. (SM)

In the following, I study the various ways how the subject of art education supports the image of better school or better society and, reciprocally, how a better school/society supports the spectral figure of subject of art education. I start by examining how the position of art education in the Finnish school system is visible in my research material. Then, I deepen some remarks from the previous chapter by examining how the signifier knowledge is discursively framed in the socio-political context of art education.

The Otherness of Art Education

At this point, it is important to discern two different positions of art education in the Finnish schooling system that are present in my research material. Firstly, the biggest concern seems to be the quantitative position, which relates to the amount of compulsory annual weekly lesson hours in the basic education. As I stated in the introductory chapter, the relation of compulsory annual weekly lesson hours of the visual arts education and the physical education in secondary school is often taken as an exemplary case of the disparaged position of the visual arts in schools. The problematic ratio for art teachers was one compulsory annual weekly lesson hour (38 lesson hours in total) for visual arts education and eight compulsory annual weekly lesson hours for physical education (304 lesson hours in total). Secondly, various writers emphasize a qualitative position, which serves as a reasoning for enhancing the quantitative position. By qualitative position I mean the discursive difference between
the content of art education and other school subjects. These positions are entwined and often discursively connected. For example,

“It sure is true, that according to the proposal physical education is in fact taught eight times more than visual arts in secondary school! Not that there is anything wrong with physical education, but the school surely misses out on its task of civilizing purpose.”

No se on kyllä taivahan totta, että ehdotuksen mukaan liikuntaa tosiaan opetetaan kahdeksan kertaa enemmän yläluokilla kuin kuvista! Ei sillä, että liikunnassa mitään vikaa olisi, mutta kyllä tää on koulun sivistystehtävä nyt jäänyt aka [sic] vähälle.

In this study, I focus on the qualitative position, because it is the basis for the argumentation for the quantitative position. As in the case of the previous citation, the “civilizing purpose” (sivistystehtävä) is the very reason to argue for art education, because this civilizing purpose is depended on the existence of visual arts in the educational system. Thus, it is necessary to study, how the qualitative position of art education is stated to differ from other school subjects and how this difference is sustained in discourse. In fact, this discursively constructed difference is often visible in my research material. For example,

“The visual arts, music, and crafts offer a perspective that supports other school subjects, but simultaneously deviates from them.”

Kuvataide, musiikki ja käsityö tarjoavat muita oppiaineita tukevan, mutta niistä poikkeavan näkökulman. (PM)

“The objective of the basic education is to give holistic knowledge and skills for the student for her/his life. Visual arts are a part of this!”

Peruskoulun tavoite on antaa oppilaalle kokonaisvaltainen tieto ja taito elämää varten. Kuvataide on yksi osa sitä! (SM)

The deviancy (poikkeavuus) of art education contra other school subjects is a constitutive element of the signifier art education and its discursive use. Following Laclau (2005, p. 71-72), mere differential particularities do not construct a totality: There has to be one significant difference that makes the totality of other differences possible. In the case of previous citations, the totality of basic education is dependent on the particularity of art education. School will not provide “holistic knowledge” (kokonaisvaltainen tieto) without visual arts education, because art education “supports other school subjects, but simultaneously deviates from them.” (muita aineita tukeva, mutta niistä poikkeava). Thus, the difference between art education and other school subjects is not just a difference but a difference that constitutes the totality of the school. In other words, “school” does not exist for subject of/in art education if art education is excluded from the educational system, because “school” as an (unattainable) Imaginary representation includes art and its education.

The distinction between the particularity of art education and the totality of other subjects is the base of objectivity of
these discourses. The antagonism toward the new lesson hour division derives from the contested nature of objectivity as such: The reality of the “Basic education 2020” report differs from the reality of the fantasized subject of art education. This connects to the anxiety that the previously cited writer expressed by saying, “I can’t understand that in this country adults like myself are suggesting something along these lines”, because for the writer, the new lesson hour division proposal worked as a failed reality check. Failed, because the need to find recognition for the phantasmic image of subjectivity of art education was not supported, but on the contrary, disparaged.

The qualitative position of art education is, then, intrinsically based of difference, while the quantitative position is aimed to be equal with other school subjects. The aim for equality between art education and other school subjects was often connected to the notion of knowledge. The “Basic education 2020” report touches this subject as well, “it has been emphasized that as part of basic education and its mission to provide general knowledge, art and cultural education should be considered as an equal foundation for the worldview as the knowledge of natural sciences.”

On korostettiin, että peruskoulun yleissivistävään tehtävään kuuluva taide- ja kulttuurikasvatus tulisi nähdä samanarvoisena maailmankuvan rakentajana kuin luonnontieteellinen tieto. (p. 164)

Here, the knowledge acquired from art education differs from the “knowledge of natural sciences” (luonnontieteellinen tieto). The latter knowledge is considered as the dominant knowledge of the school system because the former one “should be considered as an equal foundation for the worldview” (tulisi nähdä samanarvoisena maailmankuvan rakentajana). The stress on the qualitative position of art education is visible in the commentary texts as well, “The significance of visual arts, crafts, and music in students’ growth and learning is not acknowledged to be equal with other school subjects.”

“Drama, as a new school subject, would not bring salvation [to the position of arts education in the schooling system], because it would have to step to the same marginal role as the other art subjects.”

“Visual arts education and qualified art teachers are also needed to ensure the quality of collaborative media education between different school subjects.”

The “equality” (samaravoisus) between different school subjects is hindered by the “marginal role” (marginaalirooli) of art subjects. The inclusion of assumably media literate
subjects of art education, i.e. “qualified art teachers” (pätevä kuvataideopettaja) in the basic education enhances “the quality collaborative media education” (yhteistyönä tehtävän mediakasvatukseen laadukas toteutus). The equality of knowledge is an objective that ensures the fantasized totality of schooling system and supports the desired image of the subject of art education. However, this equality is not based on equivalence of all school subjects, but on the crucial difference between marginalized art subjects and other school subjects. In the following, I examine the discursive lack in the knowledge of other school subjects and the ways how art education is assumed to cover this lack.

Lack of Culture in the Knowledge of School

In my research material, the importance of the excluded knowledge of art education is often signified with the term culture. This is usually expressed as a concern about the state of cultural education in schools after to possible decrease of compulsory visual arts education. For example, “Cultural education should be more visible than currently proposed in the values of basic education and objectives derived from them. The significance of cultural abilities in students' well-being and their growth to humanity and to be ethically responsible participants of the society is central.”

It seems that the lesson distribution committee does not think that the future school or future society needs design, architecture, visual media, digital image, photography, motion picture, art based environmental education, knowledge about one's own and foreign visual cultures, art history, traditional techniques of art making or other cultural skills.”

“In a multicultural society it is integral that people who belong to different groups have a possibility to express themselves and understand others' insights. The arts and crafts subjects in school are developing exactly these kinds of cultural abilities.”

“Thus, [by cutting the art education lesson hours] the committee castrates student's cultural abilities particularly in secondary school.”
Here, culture is presented to be a crucial part of the pedagogical substance of art education, which embodies a promise of a better society. Thus, cultural “abilities” (osaaminen) and “skills” (taito) can be read as subjective characters that generate a closure for the site of ideological identification. This closure provides a totality for the Imaginary representation of “future” (tulevaisuuden) or “multicultural” (monikulttuurinen) “society” (yhteiskunta). The basic education should embrace culture and pass on cultural knowledge, abilities, and skills in order to sustain the ideological fantasy frame that supports the self(mis) recognition of subject of art education and underlines the discursive lack of subject in art education. If culture is reduced from the schooling system, students’ “cultural abilities” (kulttuuriosaaminen) are “castrated” (kastroida). In short, “school” performs its Real function when its knowledge is quilted with culture by art education.

Thus, in my research material, the lack of knowledge in the Finnish educational system is discursively constructed around the signifier culture. Culture performs a similar function than media literacy in the previous chapter: Its lack makes sense of other societal lacks. It is also the basis for the otherness of art education in schools: Culture signifies the crucial difference between art education and other school subjects and labels the knowledge of art education.

To go back to the notion of the Real function of educational system, the qualitative position of art education in schools is not limited to the schooling system itself. As seen in the previous citations, societal agency of art education is clearly emphasized. Next, I study the societal position of art education as a tool for an ideological closure.

Lack in the Societal Knowledge and Skills

The societal mission of art education is presented in my research material in different ways. Firstly, the signifier culture is present in the societal reasonings for art education in the form of cultural knowledge, that is, knowledge about one’s own culture and other cultures. Here, the societal position of art education is reasoned through the notion of multiculturalism. This notion leans on the idea that the Finnish society is already or it is becoming more and more multicultural, which creates the need to know about different cultures. This idea is presented both in the “Basic education 2020” report and in the commentary texts.

“Visual arts education furthers cultural abilities and participation. Studying visual arts is considered as an activity that strengthens multiculturalism, culture, identity, and citizenship education, where personal and communal cultures come together.”

To summarize, the signifier culture is crucial for understanding the societal mission of art education in schools. It is presented as the key to understanding the otherness of art education and the need to know about different cultures. This knowledge is essential for the ideological closure that supports the self(mis) recognition of subject of art education.
yhteisölliset kulttuurit kohtaavat. (Basic education 2020, p. 164)

“Art, in its all forms, is the only way to transgress the borders of cultures/languages in a spiritual way internationally, without a translator. With art, there is a possibility for peace and educating for tolerance. Etc.”

Taide kaikissa muodoissaan (sic) on ainoa tapa ylittää kulttuurien/kielen rajat henkisellä tasolla kansainvälisti, ilman tulkia. Taiteen avulla on mahdollisuus rauhaan ja suvaitsevaisuuden kasvattamiseen. Jne. (SM)

“In visual arts, one learns to know one’s own culture and foreign cultures as well. Cultural knowledge is more important than ever in the multicultural world. The Finnish school is constantly becoming multicultural as well.”


(PM, proclamation, Kuvataideopettajat)

Here, in order to attain a societal closure, the current “multicultural world” (monikulttuurinen maailma) needs “cultural knowledge” (kulttuurinen osaaminen) that visual arts education furthers. The ability to “transgress the borders of cultures/languages” (ylittää kulttuurien/kielen rajat) is seen as a way for art education to perform such duties. Hence, knowing about one’s “own” (oma) and “personal” (henkilökohtainen) culture and learning about “foreign” (vieras) ones is not considered as the cover of the lack of cultural knowledge only in schools but in the society as well. Once the lack is covered, society will reach signifiers like “peace” (rauha) and “tolerance” (suvaitsevaisuus). In short, when the meaning of the signifier culture is fixed by the master signifier art education (and its knowledge), culture could perform as a societal tool for ideological cohesion. This is well summarized by one writer, who stressed the historical relationship between visual imagery and national identity,

“The Finnish national identity was created approximately a century ago precisely among the field of high culture, and art has had played a significant role in imagining and constructing Finnish culture. Today, visual messages shape our thinking even more than in the past.”

Suomalainen kansallinen identiteetti luotiin noin vuosisata sitten juuri korkeakulttuurin piirissä ja taiteella on ollut merkittävä osa suomalaisuuden kuvittelussa ja rakentumisessa. Tänä päivänä kuvalliset viestit muokkaavat ajattelumme vielä monin verroin enemmän kuin menneisyydessä. (PM)

Thus, for the subject in art education, culture can be read as a tool for national identification. It is a way to adopt a certain ideological backdrop for identity construction, which promises a sense of totality for the subject. Reciprocally, subject of art education uses cultural knowledge in the search for societal cohesion qua ideological closure. The lack of cultural knowledge, that is, the lack of art education, would seem to result to social antagonism (lack of “peace” or “tolerance”). Here, it is useful to revisit a citation from the “Basic education 2020” report used in the previous chapter:
“Visual arts education strengthens the student’s knowledge and understanding of one’s own cultural roots, familiarizes the student with foreign cultures and fosters a positive attitude towards them.” Kuvataideopetus vahvistaa oppilaan omien kulttuuristen juurien tuntemista ja ymmärtämistä sekä itselle vieraiden kulttuurien tuntemusta ja myönteisten asenteiden syntymistä niitä kohtaan. (p. 164)

Knowledge and understanding about “one’s own cultural roots” and “foreign cultures” (omien juurien tunteminen ja itselle vieraiden kulttuurien tuntemus) results in “positive attitude” (myönteinen asenne) toward them. In other words, cultural knowledge leads to positive attitude toward culture itself. Thus, the signifiers culture and cultural knowledge are discursively constructed as relievers of societal antagonism. What follows, is that in my research material, multiculturalism is discursively constructed as an antagonistic object that needs to be controlled by cultural knowledge received from art education.

In addition to cultural abilities of multicultural society, another branch of discourse stressed the importance of art education for the wholeness of the society. Whereas the discourse analyzed above emphasizes multicultural relations between different cultures, the second underlined the economic relations of global markets. Here, the cultural substance of art education is accompanied with creativity; a signifier that is used to make a distinction between different economies. For example,

“The creators and spectators of the culture industry and creative economy are grown in the visual arts class.

The culture industry and creative economy are already major factors in national economy and ways to succeed in the global competition. In future, this development continues while the significance of traditional fields of industry decreases and the new visual businesses develop further.”

Tulevaisuuden kulttuuriteollisuuden ja luovan talouden tekijät ja kokijat kasvatetaan kuvataidetunneilla. Kulttuuriteollisuus ja luova talous ovat jo nyt erittäin merkittäviä tekijöitä kansantaloudessa ja menestystekijöitä kansainvälisessä kilpailussa. Tulevaisuudessa tämä kehitys vain vahvistuu, kun perinteisten teollisuudenalojen merkitys vähenee ja visuaaliset uudet alat kehittyvät edelleen. (PM, proclamation)

The distinction between national and global, that is, Finland and other countries, is thus made in the realm of economics. If in multiculturalism, culture is covering the lack of society and relieving its cultural antagonisms, economic creativity is covering the lack in national economy and forming different economic positions in global markets. The role of art education is then to bolster national identification not only in its traditional, romantic manifestations (as stressed in the earlier citation about the significance of art in the formation of Finnish culture), but in the realm of globalized economics as well.
“The prerequisites of our country in the international field of culture, design, and environmental planning demand the creation of a basis already in the basic education – this basis is created in the teaching of proficient visual arts teachers.”

Maamme edellytetyt kansainvälisessä kulttuurielämässä, muotoilussa ja ympäristön suunnittelussa vaativat jo perusopetukessa pohjan luomista – tämä pohja luodaan ammattitaitoisen kuvataideopettajan opetuksessa. (PM, proclamation, Kuvataideopettajat)

“Can we afford [cutting the lesson hours in visual arts education] in times when the flagship of the Finnish technology expertise stumbles in the shadows of an American corporation that is famous for their design and creative innovations?”

Onko tähän varaa aikana, jolloin suomalaisen teknologiaosaamisen lippulaiva kompuroi muotoilusta ja luovista innovaatioistaan tunnetun amerikkalaisyhtiön varjossa? (PM)

“The value of creative visual abilities is constantly growing in the society.”

Luovan, visuaalisen osaamisen arvo kasvaa yhteiskunnassa koko ajan. (PM, proclamation, Kuvataideopettajat)

However, the relationship between the signifiers economics and creativity is disputed in my research material. The promise of societal well-being through creative economy is contrasting with other objectives that art education is aiming for. In fact, the double-meaning of creativity as an innate characteristic of child/young person (as visible in the previous chapter), and as a distinctive factor of economics is collided in the texts that deal with the societal position of art education.

“We all need competent and self-trusting dreamers, not just for the needs of business but for building the well-being for our entire nation. If Alvar Aalto was born to the Finland that Newsweek admires today, what kind of chances would he have had to become a world famous architect?”

Me kaikki tarvitsemme osaavia ja itseensä luottavia haaveilijoita, emme vain elinkeinoelämän tarpeisiin vaan koko kansamme hyvinvoinnin rakentajiksi. Jos Alvar Aalto syntyi Newsweekin ihailemaan Suomeemme nyt, mitkä olisivat hänen mahdollisuutensa tulla maailmankuuluki arkkitehdiksi? (PM)

“A human generation should not be an experiment that is used to prevent the vicissitudes of the state economy by increasing the teaching of one school subject and decreasing another.”

Ihmiskukupolven ei pitäisi olla rottakoe, jolla emnaltaaehkäistään valtion talouden muutoksia lisäämällä yhtä aineopetusta ja vähentämällä toista. (SM)

“Our natural sciences orientated curriculum does not allow the creativity that is made possible by the arts subjects, even in those societally emphasized fields that it demands.”

Luonnontieteitä korostava opetushjelmamme ei salli taideaineiden mahdollistamaa luovuutta [sic] edes niillä yhteiskunnan korostamilla aloilla joita se vaatii. (SM)
Here, the “well-being” (hyvinvointi) of “our entire nation” (koko kansamme) is not a question of mere “business” (elinkeinoelämä) but it stems from national icons such as “world famous architect” (maailmankuulu arkkitehti) Alvar Aalto as well. In addition, the economic domination of schooling system is depicted as “an experiment” (rottakoe) and the creativity derived from the arts subjects is not comparable to the “natural sciences orientated” (luonnontieteitä korostava) school.

Thus, although the economic reasoning for art education is visible in my research material, it does not attain a hegemonic position from where it would have fixed the meanings of different fluctuating signifiers, such as creativity. In fact, economics is quilted with the cultural reasoning that stems from the nationalistic idea of Finland as culturally and economically different entity from other cultures and countries. In other words, although the reasoning for art education through the realm of economics is visible, it is not presented as a strong discursive justification. Fixing the meaning of economics with the signifier creativity does not strengthen its position, because creativity remains as relatively contested signifier.

Conclusion on the Societal Lack

In this chapter, I scrutinized the educational and societal position of art education through the fantasized position of the subject of art education. I examined the ways that the subject of art education is discursively produced to fill the lack in the society. My premise was that, as a totalized subject position, the subject of art education is presented as the lacking substance in educational system and society.

I started my analysis by studying the discursive position of art education as a school subject in the Finnish schooling system. By focusing on the discursive means that art education was differentiated from other school subjects, I found out that although the position of art education was stated to be marginal, it played a vital role in creating totality of the Imaginary representation of the signifier school. Following my research material, “school” does not exist as school if art education is expelled from it. This positions the subject of art education qua the possessor of knowledge of art education to an irreplaceable status in the creation of the totality of the schooling system. I continued my analysis by scrutinizing the phantasmic element that separated the knowledge of art education from the knowledge of other school subjects. My conclusion was that the lack of knowledge in school and society was constructed around the signifier culture. The subject of art education was discursively presented to possess the cultural knowledge that would resolve societal antagonisms, such as multiculturalism, and fortify the ideological cohesion of the society. Knowledge seemed to lead always to positive results, such as respect toward one’s own and other cultures. Finally, I examined the signifier creativity in the context of societal closure. I found that creativity, accompanied with the signifier economy, was present in some texts, but it did not reach a dominant role as a societal closure in my research material.
Rather, the economic fixation of the signifier *creativity* was usually tied to the idea of art education as a nationalistic project, that emphasized the distinctiveness of the Finnish culture and economy. The meaning of signifier *creativity* was also contested: For some, its economic attachment collided with the idea of creativity as a subjective characteristic of human beings.

In short, the master signifier art education is discursively presented to embody cultural knowledge that is vital for educational and societal totality. The subject of art education is elevated to the status of a knowing subject, whose possibilities to share knowledge are necessary for ideological (re)creation of school and society. In this respect, the ideological necessity of the subject of art education in the school and society is tied to the particularity of its knowledge among all other school subjects and societal projects. This particularity derives from the promise to relieve the anxiety of the subjective lost *jouissance* with cultural knowledge. An educational system that does not recognize or value the knowledge of art education is, as one writer describes it, “shitty” (paska):

“...I went to Steiner school and I have perceived visual arts and other creative subjects very important for one’s personal growth. I wish they would understand the importance of creativity and practicality in other schools as well. And I wish that our shitty system that overrates sciences would realize it too!”

Olen käynyt steinerkoulun ja kokenut kuviksen ym. luovat äineet tosi tärkeinä oman kasvun kannalta.

In the next chapter, I will scrutinize the position of the three main signifiers that were clearly present throughout my research material, that of *media literacy*, *child/young person*, and *cultural knowledge*. I deepen my analysis on how these signifiers are positioned in the discourses I have examined and see, what keeps their ideological edifice coherent.
In the third part of my analysis, I put the former remarks on the discursive position of knowledge of art education to their ideological context. As the two previous chapters show, the Symbolic structure of discourse contains certain key elements that were oft-repeated in various forms in my research material, namely media literacy, cultural knowledge, and child/young person. These signifiers are presented throughout my research material in most similar way, whereas other signifiers, such as creativity, were often contested or subordinate to the three aforementioned signifiers.

In order to lay the basis for the understanding about the current discourses, I briefly present discussions that have emerged from previous lesson hour distribution from the 1980s onward. As a source, I have used various editions of Stylus magazines from 1984 to 2003. Stylus is a professional magazine published by the Finnish art teacher organization Kuvataideopettajat (formerly Kuvaamataidonopettajain liitto and Kuvataideopettajien liitto), the only one of its kind in Finland. The reason why I chose to start collecting data from 1980s onward was that the Finnish educational system was reformed during the 1970s from a two-partite educational system to a comprehensive basic education. By the end of the 1970s every commune had changed to the new system, hence, for the equivalency of the data, I focused on the lesson hour distribution reforms after the 1970s.

In the following, I compare the analysis made in the previous chapters to the past discussions on the position of art education in the Finnish schooling system. I do not conduct an as detailed analysis as I did in the previous chapters, but rather, I see if the signifiers present in the current discussions are included in the past discourses. Then, I will begin mapping the ideological structure of my research material using Laclau’s critical discourse theory and Lacan’s conceptualization of the four discourses.

Historical Overview

The clearest common denominator for the all of the past and present writings about the importance of art education is the notion of media literacy. Although in the 1980s, the signifier mass communication (joukkotiedotus) was used in the place of current signifier media, the present-day visual surroundings are described in a similar way,

“Understanding and arranging visual symbols is the a necessity for the development of a balanced approach. Art education must not be decreased in times when the use of images in information, education, and entertainment is growing constantly. The ability of citizen to receive visual mass communication depends heavily from the experience provided by teaching. The examination of visual messages and prevention of their harmful effects is not possible without readiness to read images provided by education.”

Kuvasymboliikan ymmärtäminen ja jäsentäminen on perusedellytys tasapainon sen asemoinuksen kehittymiselle. Täidekasvatusta ei pidä vähentää

(Stylus, 1/85, proclamation)

“it feels weird that the necessity of learning visual language and visual expression is not understood in these times of videos and other flood of images.”

tuntuu kummalliselta, että kuvakielen ja visuaalisen ilmaisun oppimisen välttämättömyttä ei tänä videoiden ja muun kuvatulvan aikakaudella ymmärrätä. (Stylus, 2/85)

Similarly to the current discourses, the “harmful affects” (haitalliset vaikutukset) of mass communication are to be controlled by the “ability […] to receive” (kyky vastaanottaa) visual messages and the capability to “read images” (kuvan lukeminen). The discursive position of the subject in art education is correspondingly submissive in “these times of videos and other flood of images” (videoiden ja muun kuvatulvan aikakausi). To overcome the dominance of flood of images, the “necessity” (välttämättömyys) of art education should be understood. Many writers throughout the retrospective research material similarly stress the position of images as “the language of the future” (tulevaisuuden kieli) and art education as a way to learn this language. In fact, this kind of linguistic description of the realm of images was stronger in the past than in the current discussions. For example,

“We cannot close our eyes in front of the fact that image is the language of the future, although one cannot read it. We hope that the significance on image would have been acknowledged already in this decision.”

Emme voi ummistaa silmiämme siltä, että kuva on tulevaisuuden kieli, vaikka sitä ei osaa lukea. Toivomme, että kuva merkitys olisi tajuttu jo tässä ratkaisussa. (Stylus, 2/85)

Overall, the current stress on different manifestations of knowledge is usually connected to the notion of visual language (kuvakieli) in the 1980s and the 1990s. Gaining understanding about (visual) world is more explicitly tied to the idea of learning a certain language of images rather than acquiring cultural knowledge.

“We live in the world filled with images, and the prestigious and educationally aware lesson hour distribution committee has not, however, understood the importance of learning visual language.”

Elämme kuviens täyttämässä maailmassa eikä arvovaltainen ja koulutustietoinen tuntitakotyöryhmä ole silti ymmärtänyt visuaalisen kielen oppimisen tärkeyttä. (Stylus, 2/92)

The notion of images as the language of the future connects to the other similarity between the current discussions and the past, that of the lack in the knowledge of schools. The substance of art education qua the language of images, is
seen as a vital part of the totality of the signifier school. As in the current discussions, the schooling system is not considered to do its job as a proper educational institution without reasonable amount of art education.

“The objective of compulsory education is to provide substances and stimuli for the unique development of the student’s whole personality” Peruskoulun tavoitteena puolestaan on tarjota aineksia ja virikkeitä oppilaan koko persoonallisuuden omaleimaiselle kehittämiselle. (Stylus, 1/85, proclamation)

“Art is a part of the education. Since the school’s mission is also to civilize young citizens, it has to take the responsibility for passing on visual education as well.” Taide on sivistystä. Koska koulun tehtävänä on myös sivistää nuoria kansalaisia, on sen otettava vastuu kuvallisenkin sivistyksen välittämisestä. (Stylus, 3/92)

The “unique development of the student’s whole personality” (oppilaan koko persoonallisuuden omaleimainen kehittäminen) is part of the “civilizing” (sivistäminen) mission of the educational system. Here, education is similarly seen as the way for subject to reach psychic totality and independency. This is visible in the way how the subject in art education, “a young citizen” (nuori kansalainen), is discursively constructed around the lack of her/his abilities to be civilized or attaining whole personality.

In this respect, use of signifiers child/young person as the subject in art education followed similar tracks in the past than that of the current discussions: Child/young person was depicted as someone, who was either lacking abilities to cope with visual culture or as an innately creative subject, whose creativity should be bolstered. For example,

“We can ask, should it be already obvious for everyone to understand the significance of art education for the development of a young person, and the visual language as part of general language skills.”
Me voimme kyllä kysyä, etteikö itsestään selvästi kaikkien tään päivänä pitäisi ymmärtää taidekasvatuksen tärkeys nuoren kasvulle ja kuvakieltä osana yleistä kielitaitoa. (Stylus, 1/92)

“With well-organized and progressive teaching one can enrich the perceptive-visual thinking and forms of creative imagining, which are spiritual skills that belong to every child and student.”
Järjestelmällisellä, etenevällä opetuksella voidaan rikastuttaa havainnollisl-kuvallista ajattelua ja luovan kuvitteellisuuden muotoja, jotka ovat jokaiselle lapselle ja koululaiselle kuuluvia henkisiä valmiuksia. (Stylus, 1/85, proclamation)

The question of identity, widely present in current discourses, was absent in the past reasonings. The media/mass communication was stated to affect children and youth, but not to the construction of their identities. Discussion about identity construction appears in the early 2000s.

“[…] constructing one’s own identity. The greatest deprivation in the growth of human being is the situation where one cannot create and think, visually and musically. It is about another kind of
experience.”

[...] oman identiteetin rakentaminen. Se on suurin
puute ihmisen kasvamisessa, jos ei saa tehdä, ajatella
visuaalisesti ja musiikillisesti. Kyse on toisenlaisesta
kokemisesta. (Stylus, 1/2003)

However, unlike in the current discussions, some writers in
the 1980s made explicit references to Freudian understanding
about the mechanisms of psychic life. For example,

“Educated people in the advertising industry
attempt to influence you with images on a daily
basis. Images of the press communicate the news
and create attitudes. Who would count the amount
of images that a massive consumer of video sees
daily? Who knows what is left of them in the mind
of a young person, what part unravels in dreams,
and what part remains in the subconscious.”

Koulutetut mainosihmiset pyrkivät vaikuttamaan
sinun joka päivä kuvilla. Lehdistön kuvilla on suuri
merkitys uutisten välittäjänä ja asenteiden luojina.
Kuka laskisi videofilmiä suurikuluttajien näkemän
kuvamäärän. Kuka tietää mitä niistä jää nuoren
mieleen, mikä osa purkautuu unissa, mikä jää
alitajuntaan. (Stylus, 2/85)

“Being engaged with arts is considered to unravel
repressed emotions and to develop emotional life.”

Taitteen harrastuksen katsotaan purkavan
tukahdutettuja tunteita tai kehittävän tunne-elämää.
(Stylus, 2/84)

Although the therapeutic use of art education in the
Finnish schooling system was implicitly present in the current
discourses (for example in the use of the term spiritual well-
being, henkinen hyvinvointi), straightforward references to
therapeutic practices were visible only in writings from 1980s.
In fact, in the 2000s, therapeutic reasoning for art education
was explicitly criticized in the Stylus magazine (Vira, 2003).

Whereas the current discussions emphasize culture as a
positive object of identification (contra media), culture does
not have a similar nationalistic/ethnic connotation in the
1980s. In fact, every time the signifier culture is mentioned,
it is connected more or less to artistic activities, such as
“cultural activities” (kulttuuriharrastukset) (Stylus, 2/84),
and “participation to culture” (kulttuuriin osallistuminen)
(Stylus, 1/85, proclamation). By the 1990s, culture starts
to correspond to national culture as well, such as “cultural
heritage” (kulttuuriperintö) (Stylus, 3/92), “national culture”
(kansallinen kulttuuri) (Stylus, 3/92), and it was connected to
the “perception of the world” (käsitys maailmasta) as well,

“The language of images increasingly constructs our
perception of the world and it is a definitive part of
our culture.”

Kuvien kieli rakentaa käsitystämme maailmasta
yhä suuremmassa määrin ja se on oleellinen osa
kulttuuriamme. (Stylus, 1/92)

This shift in the meaning of signifier culture seems to be
tied to the political situation in Finland in the early 1990s.
The Finnish government was paving the way for joining the
European Union and public discussion was intense. There
were reflections of this debate in the reasonings for art
education as well,
“Good language skills alone do not help us on our way to Europe. There is a need for understanding and knowledge of different cultures, habits, and messages without words, that is, artistic and cultural knowledge.”

Pelkkä hyvä kieltaito ei meitä Eurooppaan menossa auta. Tarvitaan myös erilaisten kulttuurien, tapojen, sanattomien viestien lukutaitoa ja ymmärrystä, taide- ja kulttuuritietoutta. (Stylus, 1/92)

“There have been worries about our nation’s internationally low competence in mathematics. Yet, I would assume that mathematic skills of an engineer are not as bad the skills in visual arts, sense of aesthetics and style, sense of form and material, and artistic and cultural knowledge and creative imagination. These skills are, however, going to be needed, if we are to cope with the tough competition in the world and in Europe.”

Suurella porulla on päivitelty kansan matematiikan taitojen kansainvälistä matalaa tasoa. Luulenpa kuitenkin, ettei sen insinööрин matematiikan taidot ole ollenkaan niin huonolla tasolla kuin kuvaamataidon taidot, estetetin ympäristö- ja tyylitaju, muoto- ja materiaalitaju, sekä taide- ja kulttuuritietous ja luova mielikuvitus. Näillä taidoilla kuitenkin tulee olemaan todella kysyttää silloin, kun pitäisi pärjätä kovassa kilpailussa maailmalla tai Euroopassa. (Stylus, 2/92)

Although the previous citation mentions “creative imagination” (luova mielikuvitus) as one of the skills needed in “the tough competition in the world and in Europe” (kova kilpailu maailmalla ja Euroopassa), there was no similar relationship between creativity and economics as in some current discourses. In fact, a connection between culture, creativity, and economics was distrusted.

“The so-called market forces claim to respect “cultural values” and the “self-sufficient creativity of human being” as a means to get over the economic depression.”

Ns. markkinavoimat väittävät arvostavansa “kulttuuriarvoja” ja “ihmisen omaehtoista luovuutta” talouslamasta selviämisen lääkkeinä. (Stylus, 3/92)

In conclusion, there are significant similarities between the current discourses and past debates about the position of art education in compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, there are some crucial differences as well. Firstly, emphasis on media literacy is equally present throughout the research material. Present-day has been depicted as an age of super-visual society at least from the very beginning of my research material (1984). Secondly, the way to cope with the flood of images is more explicitly tied to the notion of visual language in the 1980s and 1990s, whereas current discourses stressed multifarious representations of media literacy and knowledge of art education. Thirdly, the position of the lacking subject in art education is similarly portrayed as subordinate to the power of external images using the same signifiers child or young person. The harmful effects of visual culture are not, however, tied with the notion of identity until the 2000s; before that, they were targeted at children, youth, or citizens in general, or in their psychic life. Fourthly, the current notion about culture is absent in the 1980s. Culture started to appear as a category for (national) identification in the
early 1990s among the change in the political atmosphere in Finland. The transition from visual language to cultural knowledge as the substance of art education is visible the first time. Lastly, creativity is not connected to the economic competition in the 1980s and 1990s as much as it is present in current discussions.

It is possible to state, that there are certain repetitive themes in discussions about the importance of art education in the Finnish schooling system. Although some signifiers might change, as in the case of mass communication and media, the discursive positions of these elements can be astonishingly similar. The repetitive nature of the signifying system is producing the same kind of anxiety through decades. It seems that, as art educators, we know what we are asked for but we cannot answer this call. There seems to always be something that hinders us to do our job, preventing us to grasp the totality of art education. Reaffirming the (quantitatively and qualitatively) marginalized position in the educational system unravels the fundamental anxiety about the lacking structure of Symbolic-Imaginary fantasies that govern the ideological field of art education.

In order to grasp the question of anxiety, the complex dimensions of fantasy have to be scrutinized first. In the following, I commit a detailed analysis of the phantasmic promise of subjective and ideological totality through art education, that is discursively presented in my research material. My main conceptual focus of study is the knowledge that art education is assumed to give to the lacking subject in art education. By analyzing the ideological limits and position of knowledge in my research material, I map the phantasmic structure of the signifying system that revolves around the signifier art education.

Structuring a Fantasy

Going back to my research question, In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education? I have shown, that there are multiple discursively presented ways to attain a relief for subjective and social perturbations through the compulsory art education in the Finnish schooling system. Here, it is helpful to go back a little bit and see, what kind of particular (subjective or societal) discontents are collected under the umbrella of art education and how these notions are combined into an ideological discourse.

“The aim [of visual arts education] is to develop imagination and further students’ abilities on creative problem solving and progressive inquiry. The objective of visual arts education is to bolster student’s growth by offering possibilities to express one’s own thoughts and emotions in interaction with others.”

Opetuksen tavoitteena on kehittää mielikuvitusta ja edistää oppilaiden luovan ongelmanratkaisun ja tutkivan oppimisen taitoja. Kuvataiteen opetuksen tehtävänä on tukea oppilaan kasvua tarjoamalla mahdollisuuksia omien ajatusten ja tunteiden ilmaisun vuorovaikutuksessa toisten kanssa. (Basic education 2020, p. 162)
“The third important task of visual arts is related to the role of art in the student’s well-being, health and quality of life.”

Kolmas kuvataiteen tärkeä tavoitealue liittyy taiteen tekemisen merkitykseen oppilaan hyvinvointille, terveydelle ja elämänlaadulle. (Basic education 2020, p.164)

“In its various forms, the visual arts are a natural way for a child to find ways to understand oneself and a means of self-expression. It can even be vital for the survival of a child who is in danger to alienate or is dealing with other problems!”

Kuvataide eri muodoissa on lapselle luonteva keino löytää väyliä itsensä ymmärtämiseen ja ilmatisuun. Se voi olla jopa elintärkeää selvyytymiseen syrjäytymisuhana tai muun ongelman parissa eläville lapselle! (SM)

“If one cannot be creative and insightful in the school during childhood, there will be no new Einsteins.

Jos lapsuuden koulussa ei saa olla luova ja oivaltava, ei synny myöskään uusia Einsteineja. (SM)

“In visual arts, one learns to know one’s own culture and foreign cultures as well. Cultural knowledge is more important than ever in the multicultural world. The Finnish school is constantly becoming multicultural as well.”

Kuvataiteessa opitaan tuntemaan omaa ja vieraita kulttuureita. Monikulttuurisessa maailmassa kulttuurinen osaaminen on entistä tärkeämpää. Myös suomalainen koulu monikulttuuristuu koko ajan. (PM, proclamation, Kuvataideopettajat)

The above quotations make visible that the compilation of particular insights, namely bolstering imagination, creative problem solving, expressing emotions, well-being, health, self-understanding, self-expression, avoiding alienation, becoming a famous scientist (in this case, Einstein), cultural knowledge, and multiculturalism, are all tied together with art education, particularly with its knowledge. In the two previous chapters, I showed that this knowledge had two major branches, that of media literacy and cultural knowledge. In addition, the lacking subject of art education, who lacks the knowledge of art education, was often depicted with the signifiers child and young person. This means, that as a master signifier, art education fixes the meaning of the other signifiers (media literacy, cultural knowledge, child/young person) and unifies their differential characters under one ideological project.

It is here, where Lacanian formulation of point de capiton, the quilting point, shows its affective dimension. As I have shown in the previous chapters, the signifiers media literacy and cultural knowledge are presented to alleviate various lacks in discourse. Thus, they can be scrutinized through the notion of empty signifiers: They make sense out of a set of differentiated particular signifiers. For example, in the case of media literacy, issues like commercialization of popular visual culture, low self-esteem among youth, and questions about identity are discursively combined to represent the lack of media literacy as the knowledge of art education. Thus, following the theorization of Laclau’s nodal point, knowledge
of art education (manifested in the signifiers *media literacy* and *cultural knowledge*) gathers distinct societal projects together and constructs a center around itself.

If the discursive position of art education is empty (deriving from its nature as an empty signifier), it is important to notice that this emptiness is situated in the realm of the Symbolic. However, the affective side of discourse, its Imaginary and Real dimensions, are inseparable from the Symbolic interpretation. Without the Imaginary and the Real, I would be just dealing with the play of signifiers, thus being lost in the lacking structure of language. It is crucial to point out, that the Symbolic interpretation is, although always missing the Real, vital for understanding the discourse. But, it is just the first step. Thus, in order to lay basis for an analysis that takes account on the Imaginary and Real dimensions of my research material, I briefly go back to the Lacanian theory of language and pave the way for studying the psychic dimensions of discourse.

Following Lacan (1981, p. 210-213), the alienation between the subject and language is the precondition to use the language in the first place, as his famous “Your money or your life!” example shows (If one chooses money, s/he will lose both; if one chooses life, s/he lives her/his life deprived of money). In short, there is no language without subversion of meaning (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 73): The meaning of art education is fundamentally deprived from its signifier. This is clearly pointed out by a writer in my research material:

“It is ironic, that visual arts and visual culture are to be shriveled to half from already a minimum amount in basic education, exactly when the meaning of images and media skills has become more important. At the same time, the words are used to express the contrary.”

On ironista, että kuvataide ja visuaalinen kulttuuri halutaan näivettää peruskoulussa puoleen nykyisestä vähästä juuri silloin, kun kuvien ja mediataitojen merkityks on nousut voimakkaasti ja sanoilla puhutaan päinvastaisesti. (PM)

The meaning of the meaning (significance) of art education lies somewhere else than in the Symbolic order, as visible in the last part of the citation, “words are used to express the contrary” (sanoilla puhutaan päinvastaisesti). In strict Lacanian sense, this is the closest relationship that a signifier and its Real meaning can ever have (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 164). This does not mean, however, that one should fall into the game of pure differences and state that every meaning is equal and unique way to see the world. As visible in the previous chapters, there are similar (but not identical) meanings of art education that are quilted to various discourses. The shared ideological position of art education in these discourses cannot be reduced to acts of Cartesian *cogito*, who as a transparent subject for itself, chooses to think so. For Lacan, the only choice that the subject can make is to think or not to think, that is, being or non-being, which eventually leads to subjectivity or psychosis (Briton, 1997, p. 62). As in the case of money/life dilemma, choosing thought/being/subjectivity means that something is lost at the same
time. This lost object is the unconscious, the realm of the Real.

Here, the function of fantasy comes into play. By choosing the (deprived) thought, subject has to manage one’s being as a stable entity with a promise of attaining the lost jouissance of the Real. The Imaginary order provides the subject with this promise qua fantasy (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 75). The disruption in the fantasy structure leads to anxiety. The basis of anxiety is the encounter with the Real (tuché in Lacanese), the moment of waking up to “other reality hidden behind the lack of that which takes the place of representation” (Lacan, 1981, p. 60). This can be demonstrated by going back to the previously cited passage from my research material, “I can’t even organize my thoughts because the lesson hour distribution proposal is from some other dimension.”

The “other dimension” (eri ulottuvuus) is a stain in the Imaginary representation of subject of art education; it disrupts the totality of the fantasized image of art education. Thus, subjectivity is a way to deal with the loss of the Real and subject’s identification is a manifestation of this attempt. Lacan’s view that “the subject is the subject of the signifier” (Lacan, 1981, p. 67) thus means that subjectivity is based on a signifying act. But, as Glynos (2000) points out, “[i]t is not simply a question of bearing witness to the contingency of a signifier’s hegemonic sway in order to conclude that any signifier will do. It is more the case that no signifier will ever do.” (Glynos, 2000, p. 215, emphasis original). However, as seen in my research material, some signifiers seem to provide a better promise of the Real than others. The question is not about what do these signifiers, namely media literacy, cultural knowledge, and child/young person, mean, but what kind of fantasy (reality) they are (re)creating and how this fantasy is discursively sustained.

In the following, I analyze the repetitive fantasy frame that governs the discussions about the necessity of art education at the subjective and societal level. I do this by mapping the ideological limits of discourse. Then, I focus on the position of knowledge in my research material and study the libidinal elements that hold these discourses together.

**Discursive Limits of Fantasy**

I start by mapping the limits of fantasy frame of my research material by examining the emphasized elements of knowledge in these discourses. First, I scrutinize the most emphasized one, that of media literacy. Following Žižek (2004, p. 396), the question is not whether media imagery really effects children and youth in a harmful way (by giving false hopes about their identity, creating misogynist or homophobic attitudes, etc.) or not; it is more about why art education needs the figure of obscene media that defaces the minds and bodies of our children and youth. Here, the paradoxical position of images in fantasy structures of art
education shows its complicated face. On the one hand, there are images that make subjects learn something, that is, to gain knowledge (about oneself, about culture, etc.). On the other hand, there are images that mar the very knowledge that one should be getting from images (commercial world of photoshopped images, etc.). As an example, I return to two paragraphs cited earlier.

“My life has been enriched and diversified with the help of images. By looking at images, by making myself busy with images, by thinking, and by taking pictures. With the help of images I have got to know beauty, sensitivity, ugliness, oldness, sickness, cruelty, and death. One can always go back to images. This is an opportunity that should not be omitted from any child.”


“The media feeds our youth ready-made and sweetened dreams of a photoshopped world of commercials, whose deceiving falsehood makes everyday life seem gray and one’s sense of self incomplete.”

Media sen sijaan syöttää nuorilleemme valmiita esanisia unelmia photoshapatusta mainosmaailmasta, jonka pettävä valheellisuus saa arjen tuntumaan harmaalta ja oman olemuksen puuteelliselta. (PM)

Both of above paragraphs rely on the idea that images give something to the lacking subject in art education. Whereas, the first writer focuses on the productive side of images, that is, images as a way to getting to know various phenomena, the second writer emphasizes the deceiving power of images, their dark and obscene dimension. Thus, there is a discursively constructed split in the realm of images that keeps the ideological edifice of these discourses together. The subjective process of identification between the lacking subject in art education and the fantasized total subject of art education follows this split: Either subject identifies oneself with the knowledge of art education (its images) or one is subjected to the harmful images (knowledge) of media.

Hence, I state that the split that strikes through the realm of images is the limit of the ideological structure of the various discourses that I have studied. Following Laclau (1995, p. 151) on the process of ideological identification, the process of identifying oneself with images cannot happen with an endless multitude of multifarious images, because then, subjects would be subjected into pure differences. In order to constitute a context of identification, that is, a totality of images, limits of this totality have to be established. The only way to do this is to define what is outside of it. In other words, something has to be excluded from the totality in order to establish its limits. As in the case of knowledge of art education and the lacking knowledge of the schooling system, the excluded element has to be something that prevents the context to attain its totality. As Stavrakakis (2007, p. 198)
points out, a similar process is visible in nationalism: the exclusion of a particular social group (such as Jewish citizens in Nazi Germany or immigrants in various European countries) is based on the idea that these groups are in the way of realizing the nationalist fantasy of the Fatherland. What follows, is that the exclusion itself is the basis for the internal cohesion of nationalist ideology.

Hence, in order to establish an ideological frame for the identification processes in art education, the realm of media (or mass communication) has to be excluded and, up to some extent, demonized. It is media that makes one’s sense of self feel incomplete, because media is deceptive. The realm of art education is, however, its opposite: It enriches and diversifies one’s subjectivity in a way that completes other ways of knowing. In Lacanian terms, media steals the ideological jouissance of the fantasy frame that art education promises (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 199).

The other clearly emphasized signifier for the knowledge of art education is culture, at least from the 1990s onward. In the aforementioned split realm of visuality, the signifier culture seems to position on the productive/positive side, as visible in the previously cited passage from the “Basic education 2020” report,

“Visual arts education strengthens the student’s knowledge and understanding of one’s own cultural roots, familiarizes the student with foreign cultures and fosters a positive attitude towards them”

Kuvataideopetus vahvistaa oppilaan oman kulttuuristen juurien tuntemista ja ymmärtämistä sekä itselle vieraiden kulttuurien tuntemusta ja myönteisten asenteiden syntymistä niitä kohtaan. (p. 164)

The positive attitude toward one’s own and other cultures is attained with knowledge about them. Needless to say, the differentiation between one’s own and other cultures is highly equivocal in this passage. However, the act of differentiation per se is discursively included to the passage by making the distinction between two poles of cultural identification, that is, one’s own and other’s. Whereas the split in the realm of images went through art education and media, the split in cultural knowledge follows the differentiation of my/our culture and her/his/their culture. As jagodzinski (1997, p. 85) points out, following writings of Etienne Balibar and Homi Bhabha, although this kind of cultural pluralism seems to be democratic and equal, it in fact fortifies the hegemony of the dominant culture by establishing unsurmountable limits between different cultures. Other cultures may stay as other cultures as ossified cultural relics, fixing the position of dominant culture as equally stagnant entity. In this respect, cultural knowledge of art education can be read as a skill to keep the other as other and foreign to oneself, as the “Basic education 2020” report suggests,

“Teaching the visual arts creates a basis for understanding and appreciating the Finnish culture and the student’s own culture as well, and the visual world of the cultures foreign to her/him.”

Kuvataiteen opetus luo perustaa suomalaisen ja oppilaan oman kulttuurin sekä hänelle vieraiden
The point made, that of multiculturalism is discursively constructed as an antagonistic object that needs to be controlled by cultural knowledge of art education, finds its discursive basis from this tension. Unlike in the realm of media images, there is no attempt to demonize other cultures, but the emphasis is rather laid on the need to keep cultures discursively separated and internally coherent.

Therefore, the discursive relationship between different cultures must be examined critically. The idea of cultural pluralism, that of equal (particular) cultures living together in harmony (understanding and appreciating all other cultures), requires an assumption of a universal point of reference in which these particularities are constituted (Laclau, 1995). If all cultures were considered through a pure logic of difference, it would be unnecessary to maintain any construction of equivalence or equality between them. Following Laclau (1992), one “cannot assert a differential identity without distinguishing it from a context, but in the process [one is] asserting the context as well.” (Laclau, 1992, p. 88). In this respect, the idea of cultural knowledge of art education asserts that it is constituted in this universal ground: As knowledge, it is assumed to lay the basis for an universal context from where the particularity of all cultures is discerned and subsequently, understood and appreciated. For example, the previous citation from the “Basic education 2020” report describes three distinct cultural spheres: Finnish culture, student’s own culture, and other cultures. Now, the cultural knowledge of art education is simultaneously based on the particularity of Finnish/one’s own/others’ culture and the universal principle that makes these cultural spheres commensurable. Here, one is in danger to slip into an essentialist notion about culture itself; a notion that leans on the idea that there is an inherently similar substance in every culture. Following this trail of thought, art education would be a way to achieve this cultural denominator. However, as seen, the point in cultural knowledge is not to amalgamate different cultures, but on the contrary, make distinctions between them. Thus, the paradoxical position of the cultural knowledge of art education is fluctuating in the middle of particularism and universalism.

This is what Žižek (2008) has described as “culturalisation of politics” (p. 140) and “the rise of universality out of the particular lifeworld.” (p. 152, emphasis original). The individual act of identification, that is, identifying with a subject position of a Finn for example, is an inherently split act; it is split between its own particularity and universality. Thus, it is possible to discern another kind of split in the realm of images, that of cultural imageries. The lacking subject in art education is not just lacking skills to make a distinction between (malignant) media images and (benevolent) images of art education, but in addition, there is a lack in identification with particularized cultural imageries. Both of these acts are assumed to bring totality to the lacking subject in art education by providing right kind of identity.
construction (media literacy) and cultural identification (cultural knowledge).

Thus, in the discourses I examined, the notion of multiculturalism is tied to a fantasy of universalized knowledge of art education that does away with cultural antagonisms by constructing a discursive center of cultural knowledge. For example,

“In visual arts, one learns to know one’s own culture and foreign cultures as well. Cultural knowledge is more important than ever in the multicultural world. The Finnish school is constantly becoming multicultural as well.”


(PM, proclamation, Kuvataideopettajat)

Through this reading, the notion of student’s own culture becomes an articulation of a universal culture that sets limits to particularized (own) cultures. As Laclau (1992) states, “[t]he universal emerges out of the particular not as some principle underlying and explaining it, but as an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity.” (Laclau, 1992, p. 89). In other words, in order to fix the ideological identification of subject in art education, there has to be an extra-discursive vantage point, that of culture, and tools to attain it, that of cultural knowledge (in politics e.g. Laclau, 1997). Thus, the limits of subjective identification in my research material are not only a matter of individual identity, but of ideological position of social identification.

The position of knowledge of art education contra the knowledge of other school subjects, an issue I explained in the previous chapter, makes the tension between particular and universal even more complex. As stated, the cultural knowledge of art education was depicted as a vital part for the totality of school. In this respect, if the knowledge of art education is based on the idea of universal point of reference, how can it be particularized contra the knowledge of other school subjects? For example,

“The visual arts, music, and crafts offer a perspective that supports other school subjects, but simultaneously deviates from them.”

Kuvataide, musiikki ja käsityö tarjoavat muita oppiaineita tukevan, mutta niistä poikkeavan näkökulman. (PM)

Here, the cultural knowledge of art education offers particularized knowledge that deviates from other school subjects, but at the same time, supports the existence of the ideological totality of school, that is, its universalized knowledge. Thus, the cultural knowledge of art education as a particular kind of knowledge needs (universalized and internally equivalent) other school subjects to constitute itself as a political project. The distinction between cultural knowledge and scientific or natural-science orientated knowledge is not based on their positive characters. An oversimplified example would be that cultural knowledge of
art education stresses “artistic practices” and natural-sciences emphasize “scientific” ones. Here, these positive characters are not sufficient to make a real distinction between them, but, in Saussurean spirit, the distinction is made according to the lack of “artistic practices” in natural-sciences and lack of “science” in art education. As Laclau (1992) states, “an oppositional force whose identity is constructed within a certain system of power is bound up with that system; it may prevent the full constitution of identity, but, at the same time, it is its condition of existence.” (Laclau, 1992, p. 88).

In this respect, the cultural knowledge of art education finds its limits not only in its national/ethnic/subcultural bipolarity (us versus them) but also in the fantasized construction of the universalized knowledge, which serves as a vantage point from where these distinctions are formed. The totalized subject of art educator possesses this knowledge, which is, however, split between its particular (cultural knowledge) and universal (other knowledge) dimensions. As in the case of media imageries versus art education imageries, the realm images is also split between those, who support cultural (national) identification and understanding (the universalized cultural knowledge of art education), and those, who do not (other knowledge). The position of subject in art education remains similarly split: There is a lack in knowledge about both one’s own particular culture and universal culture that particularizes this own culture.

Whereas, the fantasized subject of art education is connected with two former signifiers, that of media literacy and cultural knowledge, the lacking subject in art education was depicted with signifiers child and young person throughout my research material. As I have shown, the knowledge of art education (media literacy and cultural knowledge) was discursively split in order to constitute its totality. The discursive character of child/young person is similarly split and this is succinctly described in a passage I have cited earlier.

“There is a little creative artist living inside every child, who wants to raise her/his head and say: “I can too!”. If this artist is stifled, something valuable that can never be purchased with money, knowledge, merits, or achievements is lost.”

As this passage suggests, there is something more in the signifier child/young person than mere signifying element: In this case, it is a phantasmic figure of a little creative artist. This spectral substance is so valuable that it demands a protection of its bearer, i.e. of a child. It is important to underline that, in the previous passage, it is the little creative artist who is been stifled and whose death would be mourned the most, not the child’s.

Here, Lacanian formulation of *objet a* helps to grasp the complexity of this phenomena. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, *objet a* represents the desired surplus

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“Jokaisessa lapsessa asuu sisällä pieni luova taitelija, se joka tahtoo nostaa pään esille ja kertoa: Minäkin osaan! Jos tuo tukahdutetaan, tukahdutetaan jotain arvokasta jota ei rahalla, tiedolla, arvosanoilla ja saavutuksilla koskaan voida mistään lunastaa. (SM)”

As this passage suggests, there is something more in the signifier child/young person than mere signifying element: In this case, it is a phantasmic figure of a little creative artist. This spectral substance is so valuable that it demands a protection of its bearer, i.e. of a child. It is important to underline that, in the previous passage, it is the little creative artist who is been stifled and whose death would be mourned the most, not the child’s.

Here, Lacanian formulation of *objet a* helps to grasp the complexity of this phenomena. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, *objet a* represents the desired surplus
value of an object in desire. In the case of this citation, it is not merely a child that is desired, but child’s phantasmic surplus, agalma, that of a little creative artist (Jagodzinski, 2004, p. 39). Thus, in order to attain a desired ideological position as signifiers, child/young person have to represent something else than mere itself. As Jagodzinski (2004) writes about children as spectral objects of modernity, “[a]s objet a, the fantasy child exists outside the system of capitalist exploitation, devoid of the symbolic descriptors such as class, color, gender; thereby enabling precisely its reversed form to be instituted: namely, a masculinist, racist, upper-class norm that abjures all those who failed to reach its “impossible” norm” (Jagodzinski, 2004, p. 34). In my research material, this “impossible norm” is the phantasmic surplus of children/youth, which they cannot embody, not at least in the way that would fully satisfy the desiring subject.

Thus, as subject in art education, child/young person is an object that is always more than mere a signifying element; it is a image that is desired for its spectral surplus. For example, “The suggested lesson hour distribution shows that children’s needs, creativity, and talent have no meaning whatsoever.”

Esitetty tuntijakoehdotus sinällään jo osoittaa sen, että lasten tarpeilla, luovuudella ja lahjakkuudella ei lopulta ole mitään väliä. (PM)

The agalma of children/youth, such as their particular needs, their creativity, or their talents, incarcerates this subject position into play of insatiable desire. As Lacan (1981) expresses this relationship, “I love you, but, because I inexplicably love in you something more than you – the objet petit a – I mutilate you.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 268). This can be found in my research material in the way that child or young person is often positioned as someone who can lose her/his agalma (creativity, balanced development, etc.) and, somewhat literally, be run over by a flood of images. In this respect, as subjects in art education, children and youth are double-positioned; they are balancing between their desired qualities and (fundamentally inevitable) loss of these qualities. The need to sustain the fantasized image of children using art education is an ideological limit in the discourses I studied. Again, this limit is not drawn on the basis of positive characteristics (i.e. what children/youth are) but, on the contrary, on the negative, excluded features (i.e. what prevents them to be).

Therefore, the discursive position of children and youth as fluctuating subjects in art education, who may identify themselves with almost anything or anyone, discursively positions them as objects of control and submission. A child/young person is dependent on the knowledge of art education in order to attain the fantasized position of subject of art education, that is, become a totalized subject. It is important notice, that even the knowledge of art education can fail in this job; this might happen if the lesson hours are cut and children/youth cannot get the right amount of art education. The subject in art education qua child/young person is thus positioned under a threat of scattered identities...
and falsehoods from other imageries/knowledges. Here, the question seems to be whether it is the flood of images or media literacy, or natural sciences or cultural knowledge that governs the identity formation of these subordinate entities. Hence, the split realm of visuality (media/art education; culture/other) needs the submissive character of children and youth to sustain its ideological coherency. Reciprocally, the agalma of children and youth with their fantasized impetuous subjectivity requires a strong dominating element that simultaneously stabilizes (promises totality) and destabilizes (a promise that never is fully embodied) identity.

As a conclusion, signifiers that are present in my research material, namely media literacy, culture, and child/young person are inherently split. Firstly, the realm of images is bifurcated into media imagery and art education imagery, which sustains the ideological position of art education as coherent and beneficial societal agency. Media literacy is the dividing force between these two sides of visuality. Secondly, the notion of culture incorporates a split between different cultural practices that sustain cultural differences. These differences may produce othering, which denies the fluctuating nature of culture per se. In addition, the signifier culture is split into its universal and particular dimensions: Cultural knowledge of art education is based on an universal vantage point, from where the particularized cultures are discerned. Finally, the discursive position of child/young person is shown to be intrinsically tied to the phantasmic surplus of these signifiers. The desire to totalize the fantasized image of child/young person requires the ultimate impossibility to fulfill this fantasy. Thus, the subject position of children/youth as the subject in art education is based on submission: The totality of children/youth is dependent on the external forces that guide their process of identification. The dominance of external knowledge (media/art education; culture/other knowledge) is seen to triumph over the agency of children/youth. Thus, the agency of children/youth is discursively split between their unattainable position of subjects of art education and their permanent position of subjects in art education. Paradoxically, the active agency of subject of art education is constructed around the submissive subject in art education.

As shown, knowledge is positioned in a dominant position in the discourses I have studied. In the following, I grasp this intersection of knowledge and dominance by conceptualizing the aforementioned remarks about the discursive structure of fantasy. Then, I use Lacan's theory of four discourses to study the affective level of these structures.

**Knowledge as Dominance**

To conceptualize the tension between subject in art education and the realm of societal forces (images, cultures, etc.) that affect it, I claim that the most central repetitive element in my research material is the relationship between the subject, its knowledge and skills, and an external element that signifies the subject. The relationship between these components determined the realm of discursive practices.
in various discussions. In order to grasp this question conceptually, I place these different elements in a diagram that shows their relations in different fantasy structures. My first example shows subject's relation to images.

Subject → Knowledge → External Images

Subject ← Knowledge ← External Images

The former subject position shows the structure of fantasy where subject controls its relation to images with knowledge. It is notable that this fantasy structure positions the subject in total mastery and provides the subject with power over identification processes. Thus, the subject is considered as total, that is, lacking a lack, and the realm of images is split between malignant and benevolent images. Thus, this schema presents the structure of the totalized subject of art education.

The latter structure is the inverse of the former, which makes it the structure of (fantasized) reality. Here, external images have total control over the subject's identification processes, because they control and split the knowledge (transforming it to "falsehoods") that controls the subject. The product of this structure is split subject, that is, the lacking subject in art education.

As visible, both of these structures are based on unilateral mastery: it is either the subject who controls the external element or the external element controls it. Although these structures do not exist in discourse as pure, they provide an useful frame that helps one to conceptualize different subject positions in discourses. For example,

“A child or a young person cannot be left all by her/himself under a flood of images.”
Lasta ja nuorta ei voi jättää oman onensa nojaan kuvatulvan alle. (SM)

Child/young person is the subject position in this sentence; The flood of images represents the External Images, and because there is no promise of knowledge, it has been barred. Thus, the structure of this fantasy is Subject ← Knowledge ← External Images, that is, the subject in art education.

“To be able to cope with today’s world, one does not only need literacy, but literacies, of which the visual literacy is a profound skill.”
Nykymaailmassa pärjätääkseen jokainen tarvitsee ei ainoastaan lukutaitoa vaan lukutaitoja, joista kuullinen lukutaito on yksi oleellinen taito! (SM)

In this passage, one marks the Subject position, literacy represents Knowledge, and today's world marks the External Images. Thus, Subject → Knowledge → External Images, the fantasy of subject of art education.

However, the split nature of the external element (media/art education; culture/other knowledge) and the discursive limits of knowledge (media literacy; cultural knowledge) make these schemas more complex. For example, culture as a realm of identification is depicted as a totalizing element ("understanding one's own cultural roots") that is a vital part for the subjective closure. It is important to notice,
that knowledge about one's own culture is simultaneously knowledge about what other cultures are not, which places the knowledge of art education to a central (universal) position in the structure. Thus, the diagram goes as follows:

Subject ↔ Knowledge → Culture/Culture

The cultural knowledge of art education is not splitting the subject, but, vice versa, stabilizing its identity by providing a benevolent point of identification. At the same time, knowledge of art education splits the realm of culture to particularized cultures by its universalized standpoint (Culture) and provides a stagnant image of these cultures as whole (Culture). Thus, the benevolent submission to the imposition of cultural knowledge is an external element that the subject needs to become whole. This means that the realm of culture is subordinate to the cultural knowledge as well, because the Imaginary representation of culture is distilled by the universalized knowledge of art education.

For example,

“In a multicultural society it is integral that people who belong to different groups have a possibility to express themselves and understand others’ insights. The arts and crafts subjects in school are developing exactly these kinds of cultural abilities.”

Monikulttuurisessa yhteiskunnassa on oleellista, että erilaisiin ryhmiin kuuluvilla ihmisillä on mahdollisuus ilmaista itseään ja ymmärtää muiden näkemystä. Koulun taide- ja käsityöaineissa edistetään juuri tällaista kulttuuriosamista. (PM)

Cultural abilities (qua the cultural knowledge of art education) are integral for the function of multicultural society in the same way as the knowledge of art education was depicted as a comprehensive part of the Imaginary representation of school in the previous chapter. This cultural knowledge governs the totalizing subject formation (possibilities of self-expression and understanding others) and division of different cultures into an infinite realm of other cultures that can be differentiated from the position of cultural abilities (Culture). However, this requires a discursive construction of particular (totalized) cultures that people belong to (Culture).

It is notable, that the dynamics of the subject position child/young person positions the lacking subject in art education intrinsically subordinate to both knowledge of art education and the external signifying elements that shapes identities. This means that child/young person cannot fully be the totalized subject of art education, because the threat of external element that prevents the subject to cover the lack (media, lack of art education, etc.) is always present. In this respect,

Knowledge → Subject/Subject ↔ Signifying Element

The knowledge of art education radically differs from the malignant signifying element that hinders the subject to attain fullness and totality. Child/young person is bifurcated to the fantasized image of the total subject of art education and to the lacking subject in art education that seeks false
totality from other sources than art classes. This tension keeps
the signifiers child and young person constantly lacking and
under a threat to lose every fleeting moment of totality. For
example,

“At an age, where a young person really has to
acknowledge questions related to the surrounding
media imagery and one’s own identity, the proposal
for the new lesson hour distribution changes the
emphasis from general basic education to optional
classes.”

Although the young person in this passage is depicted as
a subject that has the ability to ponder her/his own identity
(Subject), the possibility to “acknowledge questions related to
the surrounding media imagery and one’s own identity” is,
however, stated to depend on the compulsory art education
(Subject). Thus, children/youth as subjects in art education
do not discursively have any other choice than to always be
lacking and to remain as unstable entities.

By drawing these insights together, it is possible to
discern the dominant position of knowledge of art education
in my research material. It does not only mark the subject,
but in addition, it discursively splits the realms of subjective
identification. However, as stated in the introductory chapter,
process of identification is not merely a discursive act, but
it also embodies desire that derives from the fundamental
lack of jouissance. Thus, in order to grasp the complexities
of ideological discourse, one has to take on account the
surplus enjoyment of the discursive structures in my research
material.

Here, Lacan’s theory of the four discourses, that of the
Master, the University, the Hysteric, and the Analyst, helps
to situate the level of desire in the aforementioned structures
of discourse. As stated earlier, Lacan’s theorization of the
four discourses presents not only the discursive relations
between the subject and signifiers, but also, the repressed and
excluded level of these relations. The structural coordinates
of this theory are based on the following schema (Fink, 1995,
p. 131),

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{agent} \\
\text{truth}
\end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{other} \\
\text{product/loss}
\end{array}
\]

The pair agent/truth represents the source of
communication whereas other/product/loss denotes the
receiver of this communication. The upper level of both bars
depicts the conscious level of subjective communication and
the lower one is the repressed and unconscious dimension
of discourse (Briton, 1997, p. 57). In order to demonstrate
the relationship between these different positions, I place
the variables used by Lacan to the structure above. In this
chapter, I focus on two of the four discourses, that of the
discourse of the Master and the University. The discourses
of the Hysteric and the Analyst are presented in the last part
of my study.
In his discourse theory, Lacan positions the discourse of the Master as the basis for all other discourses (Žižek, 2004, p. 390). Its structure is depicted as following (Fink, 1995, p. 130),

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S1 \\
S \\
a \\
S2
\end{array}
\]

In this schema, subject is marked with S, and subject’s positions in the signifying system is marked with S1 (master signifier) and S2 (signifying chain, the other) (Samuels, 2002, pp. 48-49). In order to grasp the difference between S1 and S2 is to remember that for Lacan, “signifier is that which ‘represents the subject for another signifier’” (Žižek, 2004, p. 388). The position of the master signifiers as the agent (S1) represents a person who has the control over the master signifiers of the signifying chain (S2), thus controlling the knowledge of the other(s) subject(s) and enslaving her/him/them. As Fink (1995, p. 131) points out, the enslaved position of S2 is productive; in fact, S2 represents the knowledge learnt from the Master. The surplus value produced in this relationship is the objet a (a), a phantasmic object that resists symbolization. $ is the fundamentally split subjectivity, that the master represses in order to fully perform the duty of the master. According to Žižek (2004, p. 390), the repressed level of the discourse of the Master ($) – a) is a Lacanian formulation of fantasy: For the Master (S1), the relationship with the mastered signifying chain (S2) produces the objet a (a) that promises relief for the repressed split subjectivity ($), thus keeping the recreation of the mastery as the object of the Master’s desire.

In my research material, the discourse of the Master is often presented as the dominant relationship between the subject of art education, its knowledge, and media. To give an example, I refer to a previously cited passage that deals with the subject in art education:

“We are living like in the days before public literacy. A flood of images is growing all around us, but the people are kept illiterate and stupid.”

Elämme kuin ennen lukutaidon levittämistä kansalle. Kuvatulva sen kun kasvaa ympärillämme, mutta kansa halutaa pitää lukutaidottomana ja tyhmänä.

(SM)

In this passage, the master signifier S1 is presented through a passive tense (“are kept”); a force that is connected to the notion of flood of images. The illiteracy and stupidity of people is the knowledge that the Master projects to the S2, thus, keeping people in that state. Following Fink (1995, p. 131), the stupidity or illiteracy of the people is relevant to the Master; as long as the dominant position is sustained, people can be signified with any kind of knowledge. The repressed dimension of this relationship manifests itself in Master’s need to keep people in a subordinate position that reproduces the fantasy of the Master’s power as the source of her/his jouissance. Hence, the discursive structure of the relationship between subject in art education and the malignant realm of media images that shape its identity and
knowledge follows the Lacanian formulation of the discourse of the Master.

However, in the case of cultural knowledge and the totalized/split chiasma of the signifiers child and young person, the structure of dominance was not presented as explicitly as in the question of media imagery. Here, the emphasis was more on gaining knowledge about oneself rather than about an external element. In this respect, Lacan’s formulation of the discourse of the University is more useful in unearthing the central position of knowledge in discourses. It is depicted as following (Fink, 1995, p. 132),

\[
\begin{align*}
S2 & \rightarrow a \\
S1 & $ 
\end{align*}
\]

Here, knowledge (S2) is elevated to the position of the agent. Just like in the Master’s discourse, this position is unquestioned, which creates a sense of neutral knowledge (Žižek, 2004, p. 394). What follows is that this knowledge “rationalizes” and “justifies” its phantasmic by-product, that of objet a (a) (Fink, 1995, p. 132), creating a fantasy of the knowing subject. Product of this relationship is the split subject ($) that is, the repressed, unconscious knowledge of knowing subject. An important thing to notice is that although knowledge seems to be neutral, it in fact “supports the master’s desire for omniscience, justifying its insistence on univocal conscious belief and the concomitant refusal of the unconscious.” (Campbell, 2002, p. 79). Thus, the repressed truth of knowledge in the discourse of the University is that it legitimizes Master’s will (Fink, 1995, p. 132). According to Campbell (2002, pp. 79-80), the agency that the discourse of the University embodies (S2), supports the subjective misrecognition of subject as a whole and complete entity, conscious of its entire self.

The fantasized position of the subject of art education as the possessor of (cultural) knowledge of art education can be read through this schema. As an example, I use the same paragraph that I analyzed earlier on multiculturalism:

“In a multicultural society it is integral that people who belong to different groups have a possibility to express themselves and understand others’ insights. The arts and crafts subjects in school are developing exactly these kinds of cultural abilities.”

Monikulttuurisessa yhteiskunnassa on oleellista, että erilaisiin ryhmiin kuuluvilla ihmisillä on mahdollisuus ilmaista itseään ja ymmärtää muiden näkemyksiä.

Koulun taide- ja käsityöaineissa edistetään juuri tällaista kulttuuriosaamista. (PM)

Reading this passage through a Lacanian notion of the discourse of the University, cultural abilities that art education furthers, takes the place of knowledge (S2). This knowledge justifies the phantasmic surplus of the object of knowledge (a), in this case, people who belong to different groups that do not understand their or others’ culture without this knowledge. The product of this tension is the split subjectivity ($) of people. The master signifier (S1) is arts and crafts subjects, i.e. art education, whose knowledge...
is subjected to the people as integral element to their being as conscious entities.

Lacan designed the discourse of the University mainly to the field of reasoned and rationalized knowledge (Fink, 1995, p. 133), which is not totally comparable with some undercurrents of art education, for example, that of therapeutic ones. However, as Tavin (2010, p. 57) has pointed out, the idea of knowing as the basis for subject’s being in the world is visible throughout the field of art education, even in the most progressive constructivist theories. Besides, various discourses in my research material stress the importance of art education as a tool for self-understanding and self-expression. These tools revolve around the mythical self, that is fundamentally questioned in the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis. In this respect, knowledge about self is only composed of “half-truths” (Tavin, 2010, p. 58). It is important to remember that his knowledge has an external source, namely the Other, which governs the existence of subjectivity as such (Pavón Cuéllar, 2010, p. 163).

Now, it is important to focus on the conceptual intersections of these two different sets of schemas. As stated earlier, the discursively presented interaction between subject and the external realm of media images followed the structure of Lacan’s discourse of the Master. As follows,

\[
\text{Subject} \rightarrow \text{Knowledge} \rightarrow \text{External Images}
\]

\[
\text{Subject} \leftrightarrow \text{Knowledge} \leftrightarrow \text{External Images}
\]

The two former structures present a direct mastery of either the subject of art education or the master signifier that signifies the subject in art education. In this respect, it follows the logic of the upper level of Master’s discourse \( S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \), where the signifying element controls the chain of signifiers. In the case of two former structures, the subject of art education controls (and splits) the realm of external images, while the realm of external images controls (and splits) the subject in art education. The lower level of Master’s discourse, the structure of fantasy \( \$ \rightarrow a \) (Žižek, 2004, p. 390), provides a critical perspective to this unilateral mastery. The structure of subject of art education (Subject \( \rightarrow \) Knowledge \( \rightarrow \) External Images) represses the ultimately split subjectivity of the mastering subject. In other words, the omnipotence of subject of art education is based on the repression of its fundamentally split nature (\$). The phantasmic surplus of this schema (the lower level \( a \)) is the realm of images, that keeps the subject of art education desiring for the stolen jouissance and totality. Therefore, the never-attainable fantasy of the right kind of visual culture, that would solve the tensions of the repressed split subjectivity, keeps the subject of art education reproducing its mastery over its chain of signifiers. The mastery of external images (Subject \( \leftarrow \) Knowledge \( \leftarrow \) External Images) follows the same logic, but in reversed order. The fundamentally split character of the realm of images
(media/art education; cultural images/non-cultural images) is repressed in order to present it as a flood of images that controls everything that is knowable in its chain of signifiers. The phantasmic product of this schema (the lower level a) is the lacking subject in art education, whose insatiable lack keeps the mastery of external images reproducing itself.

Lacan’s discourse of the University did, as shown, conceptualize more subtle ways of dominance, such as cultural knowledge. It may also be used to analyze the paradoxical position of child and young person in my research material. Thus,

Subject ← Knowledge → Culture/Culture

Knowledge → Subject/Subject ← Signifying Element

\[
\begin{align*}
S2 & \rightarrow a \\
S1 & \rightarrow \$ \\
\end{align*}
\]

The position of knowledge of art education in the two former structures is equivalent to the upper level of the discourse of the University S2 → a, which rationalizes the phantasmic total subject of art education. In the case of cultural knowledge of art education (Subject ← Knowledge → Culture/Culture), this knowledge justifies the phantasmic images of both subject of art education and totalized particular culture. However, as shown, subject in art education and the signifier culture are fundamentally split, which is the repressed product of this scheme. In fact, these entities have to be split in order to rationalize the repressed truth in these discourses (S1), that of the mastery of art education. This means that the fantasized subject of art education cannot be the total master of knowledge because its knowledge has fundamentally an external source, that is, art education. In this respect, the signifier culture has to be split for the same reasons: It is the cultural knowledge of art education that is discursively positioned to define the limits of culture. Through this reading, the discursive structure of the position of a child/young person (Knowledge → Subject/Subject ← Signifying Element) is just a mirrored version of the same structure. Hence,

Knowledge → Subject = Subject ← Signifying Element

The right side of this equation (Subject ← Signifying Element) seems to follow the logic of discourse of the Master, which brings forward the ultimate dominance of the master signifier *art education* in the left side (Knowledge → Subject). In order to keep the discursive structure coherent, both of these sides have to be equally present (as previously stated in a quote from my research material, “an age, where a young person really has to acknowledge questions related to the surrounding media imagery and one’s own identity…”). Thus, the (repressed) dominance of the master signifier *art* is discursively based on the lacking character of the subject in art education, which is embodied in the phantasmic lacking figure of child and young person.
In this respect, the knowledge of art education as the discourse of the University “attempts to know all, including that which is excluded from its discourse” (Campbell, 2002, p. 79). Thus, it is positioned as the ultimate knowledge about one’s true self. In other words, the knowledge of art education is fantasized to attain dominance over subjective identification processes. For example, among the bifurcated visuality of art education, such as the contesting visual realms of media and art education, the explicit dominance of media imageries is challenged by the implicit dominance of art education. In order to sustain an ideological cohesion, different subject positions, namely subject of/in art education, are positioned against the backdrop of knowledge of art education.

The question of cultural knowledge can be read as discourse of the University par excellence: The knowledge of art education helps one to find cultural roots that can be concealed even from the subject itself. In this respect, the idea of finding knowledge about oneself through art, as depicted in my material, shows its ontological basis: The substance that one finds through art is not the subject per se, but the subject of the signifier, namely the subject of art education. Following Lacan’s conceptualization of the discourse of the University, the suppressed truth of this idea of self-realization is the Master, the ultimate dominance of the master signifier art education, mastery cannot be questioned.

Conclusion on the Structure of Fantasy

In this chapter, I showed that the discursive coherence of my research material was based on a structure that positioned the knowledge of art education to a central position in subjective and societal closure. Both of the embodiments of this knowledge, namely media literacy and cultural knowledge, were simultaneously presented as signifiers that quilted the meaning of various societal discontents into unified articulations of the lack of art education, and signifiers that split the realm of identification into differential (and particular) entities. Thus, the master signifier art education and its knowledge held a position of universality against particularized spheres of different discursive practices, such as visual culture and national identity. Following Laclau’s notions on objectivity, these limitations constructed an ideological totality through the exclusion of a radical other that threatened the cohesion of the particularity of art education. In this respect, the position of art education contra the knowledge of other school subjects, an issue presented in the previous chapter, finds its conceptual basis: The particularized cultural and media literate knowledge of art education is the limit, which constructs the ideological cohesion to the discourse. Simultaneously, this particularity is depended on the attempts to hegemonize the (universal) other knowledge with its own meanings. In other words, the cultural knowledge that art education is emitting, differentiates from the cultural knowledge of other school
subjects, but in order to perform its task as a fantasized entity that fills the subjective lack, school should universalize the cultural knowledge of art education.

Through this reading, the dominance of knowledge in my research material is based on discursively positioned elements that keep signifiers in tension. The explicit dominance over the realm of images (or on the contrary, subjects being dominated by the realm of images) is based on totalized image of the dominating subject (or the signifier media). The desire to reproduce this mastery is tied to the notion of sustaining the fantasized totality of the Master, which is, as shown, based on the repression of its split nature. In the case of cultural knowledge of art education, the (repressed) mastery of art education is rationalized by the relationship between its knowledge and the fantasized image of subjects that attain totality through it. In order to reproduce this schema, the image of the knowing subject produces the phantasmic surplus of split subject, which ensures that Master’s knowledge is always needed.

The lacking subject in art education, signified with child/young person, is based on the unattainable fantasy of the totalized subject of art education. The impossibility of becoming a subject of art education keeps the discursive position of child/young person repetitively dominated. In other words, the knowledge of art education is desired for its promise of totality for the lacking subject but, simultaneously, this phantasmic promise has to be always more dominant than the subject that lacks knowledge.

Thus, the answer to the research question, *In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education?* is found from a complex structure of ideological dominance and discursive positioning. Both subjective and ideological closure is connected to the knowledge of art education, that masters the chain of signifiers in the discourses that I studied. I showed that the impossibility of attaining totality and closure is the very thing that keeps the dominant position of art education fixed. The basis for ideological identification that puts limits to the subjective closure is to be found from a discursive mastery over the realm of visuality. In other words, the fundamental lack of *jouissance*, a lack beyond any symbolization, is discursively regulated in my research material to a certain kind of lack, that of lack of phantasmic signifier *art education*. It is notable, however, that art education never succeeds in this duty; there is always a level of anxiety in these discourses. The subject position of child/young person is a perfect example of this chiasma of totality/lack: On the one hand, children/youth possess every tool to become a totalized subject (like the passage about “the little creative artist living inside every child” suggests), but on the other hand, as shown, they never can attain this state in order to stay as desired objects, that of *children* and *youth*. Thus, the promised bliss of totality is a vital part of the discourses that I studied, but, in order to sustain the ideological phantasm, the promise always stays as promise. In
fact, following Lacanian theory, due to the lacking structure of the Symbolic, this promise can never be embodied as total jouissance (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 72-73).

However, the most important question has not been posed yet: So what? In other words, is there something wrong with pursuing happiness and bliss both in subjective and societal level? In order to answer the former question, I start by answering the latter one: No, there is nothing wrong in pursuing bliss and happiness. In fact, following Lacanian theory, it is the only way to keep subjectivity as an active agency (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008). For this reason, it is necessary to scrutinize the ways how these psychic states of bliss are presented in discourse and how they are discursively pursued. Thus, this is the answer the first question: The reason to study fantasies of (impossible) subjective and societal closure is that as subjects, we do not have any other option than to cling on to phantasmic structures of discourse. However, as Jagodzinski (2004, p. 41) points out, it is possible to distract these fantasies, which can lead to radical reassessment of reality (qua ideology).

The next and final chapter of this study focuses on disturbing the phantasmic promise of art education depicted throughout this thesis. Following Lacanian theory, I hysterize (a term used by e.g. Žižek 2004; Fink, 1995) the master position of art education in these discourses. In other words, I question the knowledge of art education in a way it is visible in my research material. By doing so, I also position myself against these discourses as an art educator: For me,
Transgressing the Limits of Fantasy

In the last part of this study, I focus on the critique of the ideological structure that I have presented in the previous chapters. By doing so, I suggest an alternative for the problem presented in the first part of this study: Instead of trying to return the phantasmic image of art education through a repetition of certain signifiers, the moment of disorder can be used as a tool for ideological reassessment.

I start by analyzing the repetitive nature of discursive elements in my research material through Lacanian notion of symptom. Then, I present Lacan’s discourse of the Hysteric as a way to question the master signifier art education and use the discourse of the Analyst to go beyond the mastery of art education. Lastly, I present an overarching conclusion of my study.

Unraveling the Symptom

In order to question art education’s phantasmic promise of jouissance, I have to scrutinize both sides of jouissance, that of its phantasmic and symptomatic elements. Previously, I have focused on the pleasurable side of jouissance, that of fantasy, which is the frame beyond symbolization in which subject constructs the promise of the lost enjoyment and sense of totality. As Stavrakakis (2007, p. 78) stresses, fantasy is not embodied in experience; only its promise is present for the subject, which keeps fantasy as an open structure that constitutes itself in pleasure qua jouissance. However, the painful dimension of jouissance, embodied in symptom, is a sign of repression, “a response to anxiety” (Alcorn, 2002, p. 62) that derives from subject’s entrance to the Symbolic order. Contrary to fantasy, symptom is possible to symbolize; in fact, it is, as Žižek (1989/2008, p. 79) states, “prolongation of the communication by other means.” Interpreting a symptom releases anxiety (Alcorn, 2002, p. 62). Following Lacan’s typology of jouissance, the anxiety that symptom releases is deeply entwined with pleasure (Stavrakakis, 2007, p. 79). According to Briton (1997), “[m]ore than a ciphered message, the symptom also serves as the vehicle, as the means, to organize the surplus knowledge/enjoyment resulting from the subject’s interpellation, its entry into the Symbolic.” (Briton, 1997, p. 59). In this sense, the pleasure gained from displeasure keeps subjects repeating their symptomatic patterns. According to Stavrakakis (2007, p. 79), the dimension of jouissance in every symptom illustrates the complexities of political discourses and the inadequacy of the discourse (the Symbolic order) to fully alleviate societal anxieties.

As shown earlier, the fantasy of ideological totality of art education, embodied in the signifiers media literacy, cultural knowledge, and child/young person, is reproduced through its negativity. This negative dimension, embodied in the pain of never truly attaining the desired state of being, is symptomized through the repetitive encounter with unnerving lesson hour distributions. This comes clear when going through responses...
to every lesson hour distribution from the beginning of my research material (1984).

“it feels weird that the necessity of learning visual language and visual expression is not understood in these times of videos and other flood of images.”

*tuntuu kummalliselta, että kuvakielen ja visuaalisen ilmnaisun oppimisen välttämättömyyttä ei tänä videoiden ja muun kuvatulvan aikakaudella ymmärrettä.* (Stylus, 2/85)

“We live in the world filled with images, and the prestigious and educationally aware lesson hour distribution committee has not, however, understood the importance of learning visual language.”

*Elämme kuvien täyttämässä maailmassa eikä arvovaltainen ja koulutustietoinen tuntijakotyöryhmä ole silti ymmärtänyt visuaalisen kielen oppimisen tärkeyttä.* (Stylus, 2/92)

“The [lesson hour distribution] committee justified the reduction of optionality by cutting out unnecessary goofiness from school – the arts are therefore counted as parallel to messing about.”

*Työryhmä perusteli valinnaisuuden kaventamista sillä, että näin koulusta karistetaan pois turhat hörhöilyt – taideaineet lasketaan siis turhaksi puuhasteluksi.* (Stylus, 1-2/2001)

“Therefore, [by cutting the art education lesson hours] the committee castrates student’s cultural abilities particularly in secondary school.”

*Näin työryhmä kastroi peruskoululaiselta kulttuuriosaamisen erityisesti yläkoulussa.* (PM, 2010)

Through this reading, the symptomatic anxiety that is present in my research material (in current and past discussions) is not just an obstacle for subjective identification, but, on the contrary, a reason to reproduce patterns of ideological identification. In other words, symptoms are not merely a cause but a constitutive element, that is part of the construction of the ideological as such. For example, the quantitatively and qualitatively marginalized position of art education in the Finnish schooling system is a pleasurable pain that gives consistency to the ideological edifice of the discourses in my research material. Thus, following Žižek (1989/2008), a symptom is “an element which causes a great deal of trouble, but its absence would mean even greater trouble: total catastrophe.” (Žižek, 1989/2008, p. 85). The symptomatic encountering with the lesson distribution report supports the discursive reproduction of the ideological realm of art education. This means that the ideological dominance of art education, based on the discursive splitting of imageries (media/art education), cultures (own culture/other cultures), and subject positions (subject of/in art education as child/young person), may be reproduced through both modalities of jouissance, that of fantasy and symptom.

In this respect, it is important to point out that the political credibility of art education has not fortified even though the amount of particular substances that construct the lack of art education has been increased. This is visible in the way that every new lesson distribution report is depicted with terms such as “cold shower” (kylmä suihku) (1985), “cold water”
(kylmä vesi) (1992), and “shocking” (tyrmäävä) (2001); it seems that art educators never receive want they wanted. The political opportunism, which tries to expand the societal need for art education (using it as an empty signifier) has not been left undisputed: According to Pohjakallio (2005, p. 35), the field art education in Finland has been criticized for trying to provide a too wide scope of desired results.

Through a symptomatic reading, the repetitive anxiety proves that no discursive element can ever embody the desired totality of art education. Every lesson hour distribution in my research material has been a way to confront anxiety by giving a body to the fundamental impossibility of the ideological fantasies. The moment of tuché, confronting the Real, is precisely the force behind the desire to return the fantasy-frame of one’s subjectivity and ideology: Reaffirming the subordinate position of art education can work simultaneously as a return to its fantasy. However, this moment of disruption has its productive side as well; it may work as a tool of re-articulation, a critical viewpoint to the fantasy structure that determines discursive practices of our field.

Hysterical Questions

As shown in the introductory chapter, reforming phantasmic structures of subjectivity and ideology is not a question of bringing new knowledge to the subject, but showing how the existing knowledge is structured around certain signifiers and their signifying chain. As Nobus & Quinn (2005) point out, the knowledge that governs the subject (causing anxiety, desire, fear, etc.) is taken to a point where it “appears as a foreign substance.” (Nobus & Quinn, 2005, p. 111). By facing “the language that bears” the subjectivity of analysand, the subject can start to work through the net of signifiers that construct her/his reality (Parker, 2005, p. 168). In other words, one task of the Lacanian psychoanalytic treatment is to hysterize the analysand, which means that the patient confronts her/his master signifier (Fink 1995, p. 136). Thus, I suggest that instead of clinging onto the aforementioned structures of the discourse of the Master and the discourse of the University, the knowledge of art education has to be pushed to the state of hysteria.

In his theory of four discourses, Lacan depicts the discourse of the Hysteric as following (Fink, 1995, p. 133),

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\$ \rightarrow S1 \\
\text{a} \rightarrow S2
\end{array}
\]

According to Fink (1995, p. 133), the discourse of the Hysteric is the exact opposite of the discourse of the University. Here, the split subject ($) directly demands the Master (S1) to “show his or her stuff, prove his or her mettle” (Fink, 1995, p. 133), thus questioning the very essence of Master’s knowledge. However, the repressed truth (lower level a) of this schema is the subject’s position as the desire of the Other, that of the Master. As Žižek (2004) puts it, “Why am I what you’re saying that I am?” (Žižek, 2004, p. 395).
The product of this discourse is knowledge (S2), which the hysteric subject ($) desires, or as Fink (1995) describes, “gets off” on (Fink, 1995, p. 133).

It is vital to point out that socio-political discourse analysis and psychoanalytic treatment are not to be considered as the same thing. As I stated earlier, I cannot treat the field of Finnish art education like a human subject who needs therapy for her/his repetitive anxiety during every national core curriculum reform process. However, in order to conceptualize the act of hystericizing, I use the subject position of subject of art education, since it is a theoretical tool that has helped me to discern various discursive elements in my research material. In addition, as a supposedly total subject, it embodies all the knowledge of the master signifier art education, that of media literacy and cultural knowledge. In this respect, I place the subject of art education to the place of split subject ($). Although by marking the subject of art education as a split subject I contradict the description that I originally gave to this subject position, there is a reason for it: As I have shown, the omniscience and omnipotence of the subject of art education was based on repressing its split nature. Also, the split indicates the bifurcated subject position of/in art education, which, as stated earlier, works like the signifiers child and young person in my research material: In order to wish the totality of the subject of art education for the subject in art education, the latter has to remain always lacking.

The master signifier (S1) that the split subject of art education questions is, of course, art education. Unlike in the discourse of the University, where the split subject is the surplus product of Master's knowledge, the hysteric subject demands more knowledge about Master's knowledge. The desire to question the Master is insatiable; in fact, “the hysteric pushes the master […] to the point where he or she can find the master’s knowledge lacking.” (Fink, 1995, p. 134). Although the relationship between the questioning subject and the master signifier is antagonistic, it is still strong. In fact, the hysteric subject is still caught up in the Master’s discourse by using its signifiers and its knowledge, because the subject is the object Master’s desire (depicted by a in the left side of the lower lever). However, through hystericizing the subject of art education, the knowledge of art education starts to reach its limits: The “half” of the aforementioned “half-truths” about oneself is shown to be tied to the signifying chain of art education (leaving, of course, the “truth” qua the Real unaccessible). Thus, the ontological basis of the subject of art education is, in fact, the subject of the signifier art education, subjected to its signifying chain.

It is here, where the symptomatic kernel of subjectivity is put into question. Still caught in the Master’s discourse, the subject is confronted with Master’s knowledge and the fact that this knowledge is never enough. Every bit of knowledge that is received from the master signifier art education is merely a “short-term socio-political contracts and cultural
service agreements” (Nobus & Quinn, 2005, p. 131), impossible to bring stability to the split subject.

In this respect, following Žižek’s “Why am I what you’re saying that I am?” question, I add three hysterical subquestions to my original research question, In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education? regarding to my research results.

Why do I know that the media images that my students enjoy and admire outside art classroom make them, eventually, feel bad?

What gives me the talent to recognize different national and cultural backgrounds?

Why do I love children and youth so much that I want to make sure that they stay lovable?

The obscenity of these questions, that is, their narcissistic dimension of dominance, derives exactly from the position of knowledge of the Master; full-blown knowledge of art education, which serves simultaneously as site of pleasure (knowledge, talent, love) and hysterical displeasure (“why?!”).

Thus, pleasure and displeasure in my research material have eventually the same address, that of the Other qua the mastering signifier art education, because “the subject depends on the signifier and [...] the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other.” (Lacan, 1981, p. 205). This is the reason why the mapping of the discursive elements that present the never-ending search for the totality is just the first step in the critique of ideology: The second one is to hystericize and rehystericize subjects to grasp the signifying chain they are tied to.

However, it is worth noting, that, according to Žižek (2004, p. 398), even though the discourse of the Hysteric opens up a place for political protest and resistance, it does it in certain limits, that of, in the relation to the Master. This is why in order to receive radical, emancipatory answers to these questions, subject has to come to the point of realizing that the place of the Master is actually the void of the Real. This means that the knowledge in psychoanalysis is “knowledge concerning the most intimate, traumatic being of the subject, knowledge about the particular logic of his enjoyment.” (Žižek, 1989/2008, p. 73) and not about another chimerical Master, from whom the Hysteric seeks answers to her/his eternal question, “who am I?”.

Thus, as Žižek (2004) writes, “[t]he original split is not between the One and the Other, but is strictly inherent to the One, it is the split between the One and its empty place of inscription.” (Žižek, 2004, p. 393). It is this “empty place of inscription” that has to be taken into account in the critique of ideology. Through this reading, the plethora of reasonings for art education in the Finnish schooling system and in society that were present in my research material are not positioned against the “shitty system that overrates sciences” (as the one earlier cited passage suggested), but against its own coherency as an ideological field, that is, the discursive practices that
differentiate art education from the aforementioned system that “overrates sciences”. This difference constitutes the Real Master in my research material, that is, art education as an empty signifier that quilts the meaning of signifying chain of discourse. In the three hysterical questions I posed above, the consistency of their signifying chain is precisely in the emptiness inscribed by the master signifier art education and its knowledge. In order to go further, one has to accept “the condition of traumatic disorder, seeing it as a place to begin, rather than as a terminal point.” (Nobus & Quinn, 2005, p. 132). This brings me to the remaining discourse of the four discourses of Lacan, that of the discourse of the Analyst.

Beyond the Hysteric

“Hardly no one, who is going to see a dentist expects to come across equipments from the 1960s – so, why schooling and art education are still considered to be similar than in the past decades?”

Tuskin kukaan odottaa hammaslääkäriin mennessään kohtaavansa 60-luvun porausvälineistöä – miksi siis kuvitellaan koulupetuksen ja taidekasvatuksen olevan samanlaita kuin menneinä vuosikymmeninä? (PM)

As I stated earlier, the aim of clinical psychoanalytic treatment is the fall of knowledge, which may help the analysand to reconfigure the already existing knowledge (Nobus & Quinn, 2005). Regarding to this study, my aim has remained consistent: By going through discourses that are terribly easy to concur with, I have provided a point of view that distracts the signifying chain that is based on an ideological agreement. As a researcher, I have, in a true hysterical manner, tried to discern lacks, ruptures, and cracks in the discursive edifice of the signifier art education. However, art education remains as unaccessible and enigmatic Thing, that disturbs my study right from the beginning to this closing chapter. I cannot enunciate the final word about art education, because the word belongs to the Other and its Real meaning is mutilated by the Symbolic.

The Hysteric stops her/his endless questioning when s/he comes to find that the Master is, in fact, product of her/his desire. This is the basis of Lacan’s discourse of the Analyst, which is depicted as following (Fink, 1995, p. 135),

\[
\begin{array}{c}
a \\
S2 \\
\end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
$ \\
S1 \\
\end{array}
\]

In the discourse of the Analyst, the place of the agent is occupied by the phantasmic objet a, which makes the subject to confront the truth of her/his desire (Žižek, 2004, p. 396). Thus, the split subject ($) is pushed to produce the master signifier (S1) that the subject is unconsciously subjected to. The position of knowledge (S2) as the truth designates the unconscious knowledge; the signifying chain that governs subject’s perception of the reality. As Fink (1995) puts it, “where that knowledge was, the subject must come to be” (Fink, 1995, p. 136).

Throughout this study, the unconscious knowledge about art education was embodied in the various ways that writers finished the sentence, “If the amount of art education
is decreased, then…!”. Through the Analyst’s perspective, the signifying chain that answered for these writers, the truth of these discourses, is not the knowledge of the Master (as in the discourse of the University), but the very thing that constitutes the desire of the subject. Thus, the mastery of art education is not the cause of these discourses but an effect of the subjective desire for totality. Following Žižek’s (2004) description, the discourse of the Analyst shows its “radical revolutionary-emancipatory” dimension (Žižek, 2004, p. 398): Once the subject is confronted with her/his impossible cause of desire, the objet a, the position of the master signifier can be considered not as a Master (as in the discourse of the Hysteric) but as a signifier.

Through this reading, the subjective expectations described in the passage above can be radically confronted with their master signifier. In the case of the dentists, subject’s assumed pre-knowledge about dentists’ paraphernalia is part of the signifying chain of the idea of dentists per se. Thus, the horror of coming across drills from the 1960s is disrupting the very idea of dentists, although the patient is, in fact, meeting a dentist. Similarly, the multitude of expectations about art classes, described in this study, are connected to the phantasmic and unattainable art education that governs the discursive position of signifiers such as media, culture, and children/youth. Like dentist’s equipments, these signifiers bear a certain kind of understanding about what art education is and what it should be. A change in the signifying chain (a different kind of drill, an unexpected experience of media/culture/children/youth) may hystericize the subject by bringing the master signifier into question: Is s/he really a dentist? Is that really art education? Two of the Lacan’s discourses, that of the discourse of the Master and the University, show different modes of dominance that stabilizes the situation and keeps the signifying system reproducing itself. As Masters, art educators authoritatively announce the state of things: Media, culture, and children/youth are what art educators tell them to be. Using the discourse of the University, art educators may use various reasonings for their mastery; for example, the knowledge of art education is helping the children to become aware of their true selves.

However, through the discourse of the Analyst, the subject is confronted by the expectations and desires per se that shape the fantasies that are signified by the Master. In this respect, instead of focusing on things that one knows to expect from art education (consciously or unconsciously), the radical reassessment of the signifying chain that holds these expectations together puts the emphasis on things that are unsayable, unknown, and unclear, just like the signifier art education itself. This does not mean that these obscurities could or should be unraveled; the point is rather to sustain the element of disorder in every subjective and ideological identification. In Laclau and Mouffe, this fundamental disorder, antagonism in their terms, is prerequisite for radical democracy and the rejection of authoritarianism (Bishop, 2004, p. 66).
When reviewing my results, the question of authoritarianism cannot be overlooked. The oft-repeated perceptions of the realm of visuality, cultural differences, and the agency of students qua children/youth show that there are discourses in the Finnish field of art education that lean heavily on stagnant societal dichotomies. These polarities keep, eventually, different social phenomena in their predetermined positions. In this sense, art education as an empty signifier has every possibility to be just another apparatus in a society, where authority (either explicit as the Master’s discourse or implicit as the discourse of the University) may be reproduced and, most importantly, enjoyed. As Stavrakakis (2007, pp. 259-267) points out, the utopian political promises (for example in totalitarian regimes) and de-politicization of the politics (in current consumer capitalism) can be read through this notion of enjoyment qua jouissance. Thus, following the title of Slavoj Žižek’s book Enjoy Your Symptom! (1992/2008), the discursive position of art education in my research material and its phantasmic promise of jouissance become obscene orders of the Master, such as, “Enjoy your culture as your own and others’ as others!”⁴. The radicalness of the discourse of the Analyst is the confrontation with this enjoyment, which leads to treat it as a signifying structure rather than an extra-discursive state of things.

Conclusory Note

Following my research question, In what ways do various discourses that demand more art education in the Finnish schooling system exhibit the (impossible) subjective and ideological closure through art education? I have scrutinized the signifying structure that keeps the desire to discursively reproduce certain phantasmic elements of the signifier art education. Although art education remains as an object that is impossible to incarcerate in the Symbolic order, it is important to scrutinize the ideological field of discourse that creates the Symbolic/Imaginary meaning of art education. In a difficult political situation, such as the (repetitive) unnerving national lesson hour distribution reform(s), this phantasmic meaning of art education can be reproduced over and over again. However, instead of symptomatically returning to certain fantasies, these times of disorder can be used to confront the desire that keeps the ideological discourses as static and self-evident. If art educators always knowwhere to draw the line between different imageries, cultures, and subject positions, and use these bifurcations as a way to discursively control the jouissance of their students, the pursued closure is not related to the students’ subjectivity or societal cohesion: The aim is rather to suture art education itself as an ideological construction.

It should be noted, that the impossibility of such closure is already visible in the antagonist relations among the discourses that I have presented in this study, namely the
split realms of visual and national culture, and the mercurial identification processes of children and youth. As Laclau & Mouffe (1985/2001) remark, “antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture, is the ‘experience’ of the limit of the social.” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985/2001, p. 125). Once the limits are manifested, it is easier to transgress, renegotiate, and reform them. The immortality of ideological statements about art education can be put into question and scrutinized as signifying units that bear the desire for the impossible totality.

By using the concepts subject of/in art education, I studied the ways how the phantasmic surplus of art education was discursively positioned as a subjective and ideological closure. This promise of closure was manifested in the notion of knowledge. Through signifiers media literacy and cultural knowledge subject can become total, and simultaneously, work toward ideological closure of society. However, this totality has its price: In order to become total, subject has to become a subject of the signifier art education and, subsequently, enjoy that position. In other words, the subjective and ideological closure depends on the dominance of the master signifier art education and on the ways how art educators putatively embody it.

In this sense, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and its societal expansions are helpful tools for searching the limits of signification and unearthing the affective side of discourses that relate to art education. However, it is necessary to lay the emphasis on the last part of the previous sentence: Due to my research material, I was able to study only a fracture of the discourses that relate to art education in Finland. This is an important factor when evaluating my results and it ties my research material to its historical and local context. Nevertheless, the field of art education as a site of identification does not limit itself to a particular place and time: As a phantasmic and ungraspable signifier, it governs different sorts of ideological constructions, such as dimensions of national identity, which seem to be eternal. Disrupting the eternalness of ideology means to bring forward its antagonisms, as Laclau & Mouffe (1985/2001) suggest. This means that instead of focusing on lacking subject positions in art education (child/young person as a case example) or totalized subjects of art education (for example in the fantasies of distinguishing multiculturalism), art education itself should be treated as lacking and antagonistic object that resists any totalizing formation. This will not bring any certainty to our profession, but it can help to discern the authoritarian undercurrents that support the state of certainty.
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