

**Abstract:**

In this research report I trace selected arts education advocacy positions in South Africa and the global north over the past 25 years. What I have found is that arts education has always been used to serve certain socio-political agendas, be it social cohesion, or the innovation required from individuals in the 21st century. Recently in South Africa, this agenda has been centred on how the arts can teach students about their heritage and indigenous practices, without relying on western models of artistic and knowledge production.

In order to contribute to the decolonisation of education, I have revisited some of the recommendations that advocates made in the early 1990s during South Africa's transition to democracy. These recommendations were based on equal access to, and participation in, the arts. I have reconsidered these recommendations in today's context in light of broader international arts education advocacy positions.

I have used historical research methods to gather literature pertaining to arts education advocacy. To supplement this literature, I have sent questionnaires to six stakeholders in the arts and culture sector in South Africa. I have asked them to contribute to my understanding of arts education advocacy and decolonisation. To compliment my research, I have drawn up a timeline that features all of the major events and publications that I mention throughout my research report.

Through my research, I have come to two recommendations. The first is that broad scale access to arts education is essential to South African students because it teaches them skills such as empathy and critical thinking, which are central to a strong democracy. Secondly, I believe that arts education today should strike a balance between revisiting marginalised heritages, and teaching students entrepreneurial and business management skills.