



The Importance of Fine Arts Education an Overview

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Received; 27 September 2016 Accepted; 11 October 2016; © The author(s) 2016. Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

ABSTRACT: *Arts education refers to education in the disciplines of music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. Study in the arts is integral to our society. They are a part of the cultural heritage of every human being. The arts are what make us most human, most complete as people. The Ultimate aim of Education is all round development of an individual where Art education helps to realize this lofty aim of education. In the present context the authors focused on the research studies depicting the importance of art education in human personality development, what recommendations given by different National education policies and Education committees for flourishing Art education in India since Independence. The paper also throws light on present status of arts education in our country and has given several suggestions for effective implementation in order to realize our Aims and objectives through Art education.*

Keywords: *Art education, dignity of labor, motor skills, creativity, cognition, conation.*

I. Introduction

Education in the arts is an integral part of the development of each human being. Those who have studied learning processes throughout the ages, beginning with Plato, have emphasized the importance of the arts in the education process. Arts education refers to education in the disciplines of music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. Study in the arts is integral to our society. They are a part of the cultural heritage of every human being. The arts are what make us most human, most complete as people. The arts cannot be learned through occasional or random exposure any more than math or science can. Education and engagement in the fine arts are an essential part of the school curriculum and an important component in the educational program of every student.

Sufficient data exists to overwhelmingly support the belief that study and participation in the fine arts is a key component in improving learning throughout all academic areas. Evidence of its effectiveness in reducing student dropout, raising student attendance, developing better team players, fostering a love for learning, improving greater student dignity, enhancing student creativity, and producing a more prepared citizen for the workplace for tomorrow can be found documented in studies held in many varied settings, from school campuses, to corporate America.

Evidence from brain research is only one of many reasons education and engagement in fine arts is beneficial to the educational process. The arts develop neural systems that produce a broad spectrum of benefits ranging from fine motor skills to creativity and improved emotional balance. One must realize that these systems often take months and even years to fine-tune. In a study conducted by Judith Burton, Columbia University, research evidenced that subjects such as mathematics, science, and language require complex cognitive and creative capacities “typical of arts learning” (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999). “The arts enhance the process of learning. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning” (Jensen, 2001). The fine arts also provide learners with non-academic benefits such as promoting self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, improved emotional expression, as well as social harmony and appreciation of diversity. These are the very fibers of the fabric known as our country culture. The following are findings reported in *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning* (Fiske, 1999) that should be noted by every parent, teacher, and administrator:

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- The arts reach students not normally reached, in ways and methods not normally used. (This leads to better student attendance and lower dropout rates.)
- It changes the learning environment to one of discovery. (This often re-ignites the love of learning in students tired of just being fed facts.)
- Students connect with each other better. (This often results in fewer fights, greater understanding of diversity, and greater peer support.)
- The arts provide challenges to students of all levels. (Each student can find his/her own level from basic to gifted.)
- Students learn to become sustained, self-directed learners. (The student does not just become an outlet for stored facts from direct instruction, but seeks to extend instruction to higher levels of proficiency.)
- The study of the fine arts positively impacts the learning of students of lower socioeconomic status as much or more than those of a higher socioeconomic status. (Twenty-one percent of students of low socioeconomic status who had studied music scored higher in math versus just eleven percent of those who had not. By the senior year, these figures grew to 33 percent and 16 percent, respectively, suggesting a cumulative value to music education.)

Is the study of fine arts important? They engage many areas of the brain and also have far-reaching effects on the learner's mind (Jensen, 2001). The arts promote the understanding and sharing of culture. They promote social skills that enhance the awareness and respect of others. The fine arts enhance perceptual and cognitive skills. The Burton study of more than 2000 children found that those in the arts curriculum were far superior in creative thinking, self-concept, problem-solving, self-expression, risk-taking, and cooperation than those who were not (Burton et al., 1999). The arts have the capacity to engage everyone. All levels of American society can and do participate in the fine arts. There are no barriers of race, religion, culture, geography, or socioeconomic levels.

Today's world is witness to the Information Age. The primary sources of content information are no longer teacher lectures or textbooks. Learning is not limited to what you know, but is dependent upon how to find information and how to use that information quickly, creatively, and cooperatively. "We are in the twilight of a society based on data. As information and intelligence becomes the domain of computers, society will place a new value on the one human ability that can't be automated: emotion (Jensen, 1999, p. 84)."

Today's students are inundated with data but are starving for meaningful learning. Workplace demands are for students to understand how to solve problems, what makes arguments plausible, how to build teams and coalitions, and how to incorporate the concept of fairness into the everyday decisions. Students need to be thinkers, possess people skills, be problem-solvers, demonstrate creativity, and work as a member of a team. We need to offer more in-depth learning about the things that matter the most: order, integrity, thinking skills, a sense of wonder, truth, flexibility, fairness, dignity, contribution, justice, creativity and cooperation. The arts provide all of these.

Perhaps the most fundamental element to education one should consider is the manner in which we perceive and make sense of the world in which we live. An effective education in the fine arts helps students to see what they look at, hear what they listen to, and feel what they touch. Engagement in the fine arts helps students to stretch their minds beyond the boundaries of the printed text or the rules of what is provable. The arts free the mind from rigid certainty. Imagine the benefits of seeking, finding, and developing multiple solutions to the myriad of problems facing our society today! These processes, taught through the study of the arts, help to develop the tolerance for coping with the ambiguities and uncertainties present in the everyday affairs of human existence. There is a universal need for words, music, dance, and visual art to give expression to the innate urgings of the human spirit. (Eisner, 1987) The premier organizations in the corporate world today recognize that the human intellect "draws from many wells." Arts education gives access to the deepest of those wells.

II. Recommendations of Education Committees and Education policies Regarding Art Education in India

There is a lack of meditation and creativity everywhere, especially in schools. The arts are missing from our lives and we are giving way to violence.

Yehudi Menuhin.

Since independence various policy documents of the government have mentioned art education as an area of immense importance for the overall development of students. If we say in Ben-Zimren Blooms classification for the development of Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor domains Art Education plays important role. As early as 1952-53, the report of the then Education commission emphasized the "release of

creative energy among the students so that they may be able to appreciate cultural heritage and cultivate rich interests, which they can pursue in their leisure and later in life.” This has been decided as one of the main functions of secondary education, which recommends that subjects such as art, craft, music, dance etc. should be provided a place of honor in the curriculum.

It was further recommended that every high school student should take one craft, which is considered to be necessary at this stage; every student should devote some time to work with the hands and attain a reasonably high standard of proficiency in one particular craft so that if necessary they may support themselves by pursuing it.

The Kothari Commission report of 1964-66 emphasized that in an age which values discovery and invention education for creative expression acquires added significance. “Adequate facilities for training of teachers in music and the visual arts in education improvises the educational process and lead to a decline of aesthetic tastes and values.”

The National policy of Education 1986 emphasized fostering among students an understanding of the diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country as an important objective of school education. All the previous National Curriculum Frameworks of 1975, 1988, and 2000 emphasized art education by defining its aims and objectives in the school curriculum. The teaching of the different arts, dance, music, painting etc, -should be based on the same fundamental principle of providing students opportunities for perfecting their own capacities and helping and encouraging them in the process. There was a paradigm shift in the objective of art education from dignity of labor by working on crafts to developing aesthetic sensibility and free expression.

It was not only India where this problem of art education exists. There is a worldwide phenomenon, which was taken up by UNESCO in the year 2000 with an appeal by the Director General for promotion of art education and creativity at school level as part of development of a culture of peace.

III. STATUS OF TEACHING - LEARNING AND EVALUATION OF ART EDUCATION

In the previous pages we have seen that almost all the documents every time on school education laid an emphasis on the importance of teaching of art education. At the same time it had been given a secondary treatment by the schools, teachers, parents, school management and finally by the students who otherwise enjoy art related activities. The present status of art education has become worst from had in the last few decades.

There are several reasons for the present status of art education. An ongoing study of NCERT, an in-depth Study of Teaching – Learning Practices and Evaluation Procedure in Art education, observes that all children enjoy creativity in their earlier stage of education but by the time they reach VI class they start losing interest in art education.

One of the major reasons why art education has been a neglected area in the majority of schools is placing too much emphasis on the core subjects, which have a formalized procedure for assessment throughout the year including tests and exams. Since the assessment of art education is not reflected in the marks secured by students. Neither the teachers nor students and not even school authorities take it seriously.

Another major problem is the lack of trained teachers for teaching art education subjects. Art education teachers who have undergone training in various visual and performing arts in art colleges for four or six years have very little to do with art education in school, let alone methods of teaching art in schools. They are trained in their own disciplines but not as educators. They lack training methods of teaching art to children in the age group of 10 to 15 years. The teacher being the vehicle of children’s’ education, there is a real need for the teacher to understand children’s’ psychology to be aware of the pedagogy and teaching methodology for art education. Art education is an activity-based subject, which does not require a text book and this makes the role of teacher all the more important. They have to be more alert, innovative and creative than any other teacher.

IV. SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions for improvements in the status of arts education in schools:

- Art education should be made compulsory up to Secondary school certificate level.
- Though Non – examination based process oriented evaluation is going on in several states like Telengana and Andhra Pradesh. But strict implementation is not done. The teachers themselves are not having proper comprehension of Continuous comprehensive evaluation. Hence need base training should be given in assessment procedures.
- As Arts education is an enjoyable experiential learning process for free expression of children. Ample opportunities should be provided for their creative expressions.
- Schools should provide time, space and resources for arts education activities within and outside the school. The authorities should view this seriously otherwise the recognition of schools should be cancelled.
- More awareness needs to be created regarding arts education among different beneficiaries and stake holders.

- Obvious and clear guidelines should be prescribed to schools, teachers and parents for effective implementation of various dimensions of arts education curriculum.
- Though several handbooks designed as per National curriculum Framework -2005 pertaining to arts education still much to be done. Teacher education and orientation at different levels needs a drastic change.
- Though subjects like Art education, Yoga, physical and health education, work experience introduced in the schools and also place in time table given. The recruitment of teachers not yet done. Hence Trained and specialized teachers should take arts education classes from upper primary stage onwards

V. CONCLUSION

Art education should not be used by the schools merely as a showcase activity on different occasions such as annual function, inspection day, etc. Art education should be applied in activities such as arrangement of classrooms, galleries, halls, corridors, etc. and designing of school diaries, cards, school bags, etc. Since this is an activity – based, experimental subject, it gives scope for observation, imagination and visualization in the process of creativity. Every individual child has all types of emotions, which need to come out of the child's inner self; thus art education helps them in this process. Hence responsibility relies on stakeholders to implement the Art education effectively at grassroot level.

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