



ART IN EDUCATION

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Do we find a difference in the teaching techniques of an Artist and a non-artist? Shouldn't every teacher learn some or the other art? The answer to these questions is hidden in the following illustration. If you observe any tree, you will notice that its branch structure is the reflection of its root structure. But the branches are not the exact reflection of the roots as they seem more beautiful due to leaves, flowers and fruits. The reason this happens is; whatever is absorbed by the roots from the soil, gets processed in the trunk of the tree which results in the forming of branches adorned with leaves, flowers and fruits. Similarly, as stated by Paul Klee, an artist is like a trunk of a Tree, who perceives, understands and absorbs the root fundamentals in this world, processes them with his own thoughts, emotions and ideas and in the end exhibits them with his own interpretation in a beautiful manner like the branches of the tree. Learning any art develops sensitivity towards everything in any human being and changes his/her approach towards life. So naturally the teaching techniques by an artist will be more creative and will have a different approach than the teaching method of a non-artist.

'Applied Art' in itself is a unique subject studied and practiced widely these days. What is Art application and how is it exactly related to teaching methodology? Art can be applied on three different levels:

1. **Application on self** – Use of art to enrich and enhance our own performative aspects.
2. **Application through an Art performance or presentation** – Use of the artistic performance itself to give a message to the viewers and educate them.
3. **Application in education** – Use of art medium while teaching and Use of art medium with a particular purpose for the good of general people.

Our concern is with the third category i.e. 'Art in education' wherein the Art medium and teaching methodology goes hand in hand. As we all know, in India the Guru-Shishya parampara (Teacher-disciple tradition) was considered very much important few decades

back. In this tradition when a child used to reach the age of 8, he was sent away from his home to live with the Guru at his abode for a span of 12 years. In this span he used to gain an all-round knowledge of all sciences, sports and arts. The Guru used to take complete responsibility of grooming the disciple thus building a very good bonding between Guru and the student. All the knowledge imparted used to be mostly in practical and verbal form in an ideal, conducive environment of nature with no distractions. But the onset of school, college and university education system in India, definitely affected the process of knowledge gaining. Nowadays each class has over 50 students. In this case it is impossible for the teacher to connect with every student with personal attention which further makes it impossible for the teacher to understand the needs and capacities of every student. Most of the students end up learning information rather than true knowledge.

It is necessary to understand the 3 styles of learning of every student; **Auditory, Visual and Tactile**. Some students understand simply by hearing (Auditory). Some understand by actually seeing the visuals (Visual) and some understand only after doing the practical (Tactile). If a combination of any two styles or all three styles is used while teaching, it definitely helps maximum no. of students to understand better and learn faster.

Well-known educator Benjamin Bloom stated the 3 educational learning objectives named as the Bloom's Taxonomy. The first one is the **Cognitive domain (Knowledge based)**. This involves understanding, remembering, analyzing, and applying, synthesizing and evaluating information with the help of the brain. The second one is the **Affective domain (emotive based)**. This involves feeling the knowledge with the help of the mind. And the third one is the **Psychomotor domain (action based)**. This involves actual experience of the knowledge through the body actions, movements and physical skills. In the learning process all the three domains should be united. When the brain, mind and body get completely immersed in the learning process and they start working together, the knowledge gaining is triggered to a great extent. Art is such a medium in which all the three domains are continuously active. Take dance for instance; While performing a dance, the dancer understands, analyses, calculates and even applies the concept and the theme through the brain. At the same time she also feels the emotions of the particular theme. And at the same time she emotes and expresses the theme through the body movements. So while dancing and while experiencing any art form, the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains work together. This is the reason why any art medium should be used in education. Learning would definitely become simpler and fun filled if knowledge is taught through the use of dance, drama, music,

sculpting and painting activities. The other reasons why such activities and artistic games should be used are as follows:

1. Our brain has two halves. The left half of the brain is analytical whereas the right half is creative. It is commonly seen that those students in a class who are most talkative and mischievous are the most creative ones; who cannot follow discipline but can improvise unbelievably when given an opportunity. Whereas the students who are sincere and disciplined, easily gain information but find hard to explore or improvise when given a chance. So it is essential to balance the use of the two sides of the brain to give justice to the knowledge gained. Art makes this task possible.
2. Art and theatre games help to release tension and also help to break inhibitions in the students. This makes the learning process easy, spontaneous and fun filled.
3. The activities also help in increasing the concentration, alertness and attention-span in the students.
4. Audio visual activities and games help to simplify the information to be learnt by the students.
5. The students in any class come from various backgrounds and also sometimes come from different age groups. In such a case activities help to dissolve the discrimination amongst them as well as to resolve the differences between them thus acquiring a sense of equality and unity in all the students. Art helps to build the following approach; 'No one is superior or inferior to anyone. We all are equal and we have gathered here to learn and celebrate knowledge'.
6. Applied art approach of teaching, is a student centered or a student focused teaching process and so it helps the teacher to gain trust of his/her students and thus helps to maintain a healthy and conducive environment in the class.

Here are few theatre games and activities which can be conducted in a class:

1. The session can start by playing any kind of classic music piece depending on the requirement. If the class is chaotic, it can be calmed down by playing soothing music. If the class is dull, an energetic piece of music can be played. Whenever space is available, warm up sessions consisting of free body movements done on a particular piece of music will always help in developing focus and awareness of the body.
2. Few key words, important formulas and important definitions can be sung in an impromptu tune and rhythm created on the spot with the help of the students in the class. Even poems composed musically get memorized faster than simply reciting them. Any

words when composed musically linger in your mind and brain for a long time as music seeps easily in your mind. This helps the students to remember important information faster.

3. The definitions or poems can also be choreographed with relevant body movements. The creation of audio visual helps the students to learn the content faster.
4. The entry in the class can be dramatic. Imagine, if a teacher enters the class bearing a different character everyday and presents a monologue creating a background of the topic to be taught that day, the students will enjoy it and will get involved unknowingly into the subject. For instance if you are going to teach an incident based on Shivaji Maharaj and if the teacher himself enters the class in Shivaji Maharaj's character (not with the help of costume but with the help of theatre) and acts a monologue convincingly, the students will get involved immediately.
5. Voice modulation should be used while teaching or while reciting just to avoid monotony.
6. Students can be asked to paint scenes or incidences or even places described in their theory.
7. The mirroring exercise can be carried out often wherein the students observe and mirror the teacher's moves or the students if made to stand in pairs, mirror each other. This helps to develop their observation skills to great extent.
8. The students can be blindfolded and then given multiple instructions. For instance instructions given slowly as follows "Open your right hand, on your right front corner, at a lower level". This will help them to develop auditory skills and will help them getting used to multiple instructions commonly given in any class. This technique can be used by the teacher to understand if any student is facing left- right direction problems.
9. A ball game helps the students to stay alert and focused. For instance, the student who has the ball has to read a passage and after completing he throws the ball to any other student who will continue reading further.
10. Getting models and structures in class for demonstration. For instance while demonstrating the visual of the creation of the Fold Mountains; hold a long flexible sponge at both the ends. Now slowly slide both ends toward each other elevating the center portion of the sponge. This kind of visual clarifies the content quickly. You can also take samples of sand, ice, leaves, etc. just to give the students the feel by the sense of touch.

11. In case of a language class, giving impromptu instructions to the students to create an alphabet using the body. This task can be carried out on individuals or in groups or in pairs. For vocabulary building, the teacher can write any word on the black board and then he can ask the students to come and write the words related to the written word. For instance; If the word classroom is written, the students add words like teacher, students, blackboard, chalk, friends, books, etc. to it thus helping them in building a vocabulary of that particular content in a playful manner.
12. Making body sculptures is a unique game. In this, if the students are asked to stand in pairs, one of them is asked to be neutral like a ball of clay and the other student moulds him into a sculpture of a thing or a character. This game can also be carried out in groups. Creating stills and collages of particular scenes by the students using their bodies is also fun. Ask a student to bear any shape through his body and then ask other students to guess and interpret what it could be and then ask them to enter the scene and complete the picture. This helps the students to explore, imagine, interpret, visualize and create something out of the box.
13. Projects and assignments are a very important task given to the students at all levels in school. Most of the times students find the projects a tedious task and end up taking the help of parents to complete them. Instead of giving the task as homework, the projects can be asked to make live in the class itself by using any available material present in class. Also the sculpting activity can be used to create models in class by students themselves.
14. Also the students in a group can be asked to just create sounds of a particular incidence or a place (e.g. a desert, a railway station, etc.) and all others can guess by closing the eyes and hearing the sounds.

And in this manner the list goes on and on. En number of art activities, games and tasks can be planned everyday for the students. But few things should be taken into account. The teacher should first study the target group in detail. Knowing the background, issues, problems, weaknesses and capacities of the target group is extremely important for the teacher. Once the group is studied, activities should be planned accordingly. The activities to be carried out should directly/indirectly act on the weaknesses of the target group and should prove beneficial to them in the long run. Most of the times the solution is hidden in the problem itself. While carrying out art sessions and activities the teacher should play the role of a facilitator. He/she should avoid commands and instead ask

simple questions. For instance, instead of shouting out 'Do it', he should ask 'Shall we do it?' The facilitator becomes a part of the target group, becomes their age and explores the game along with them, goes to their level and slowly uplifts them. If possible most activities should be carried out in a circle where everyone shares equal space and receives equal attention. Even when the students are sitting in a class, they shouldn't be sitting in the same place with the same set of companions instead they should be asked to change places every day. The games to be planned should be 'in' games and not those in which you are 'out' of the game. The punishments given should also be artistic and creative. The teacher should assure the students that what happens in class, stays in class and no one is supposed to criticize or laugh unnecessary at others. All the above points help the teacher to gain trust of the students and also help to build a positive and productive environment in class. The students also feel free to explore and get attached with the teacher quickly. Time to time appreciation and encouraging words are essential to inspire the students and to build their confidence. The teacher should take out inferences after every class and depending upon the results he should plan the next session.

It is commonly said that 'Art is the mirror of life'. Art reflects life or life reflects art? Whenever an artist performs, his personality and thoughts are reflected in his art. But when we are learning art or when we are experiencing an artistic process, the art creates an impact on us and helps us change from within. Art has the power to change lives for good. Life and education are inseparable. From our birth to death learning is a continuous ongoing process. But, in today's world a huge gap is seen between life and education. Art is the only powerful medium which can bridge this gap and make education an interesting and creative process.