



IMPORTANCE OF ART FORMS IN EDUCATION

Prof. Mrs. Desai Archana Sanjay (Page 72-78)

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, school curricula in the United States have shifted heavily toward common core subjects of reading and math, but what about the arts? Although some may regard art education as a luxury, simple creative activities are some of the building blocks of child development. Learning to create and appreciate visual aesthetics may be more important than ever to the development of the next generation of children as they grow up. "What is Art? It is the response of an individual's creative soul to the call of the Real." With such words from Tagore, art assumes an exalted role from the metaphysical to the sublime and eventually, the spiritual. According to another educationist Devi Prasad, 'Planning for Education requires, among other things, many serious considerations, primarily aiming at preparing the individual to become an integral part of the value system the society has built over a long period for the behavioural pattern of its members. These values and the manner in which they are interpreted and practiced represent the ideals and the cultural characteristics of that society.' "The arts are, above all, the special language of children, who, even before they learn to speak, respond intuitively to dance, music, and colour," stated Dr. Ernest Boyer, former U.S. Commissioner of Education and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement Of Teaching. For many people, true fulfilment is closely linked with finding an early path towards excellence. It does not matter whether one's early interest develops into an adult career. What matters is that every child goes through a joyful and meaningful experience that instils self-confidence and self-worth. Awareness and knowledge of cultural practices through Art forms go on to strengthen personal and collective identities and values, and thus contributes to safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity.



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INTRODUCTION

"We wrote, we sang, we acted, and we poured ourselves out on every side.' There was tremendous excitement and cultural richness." Rabindranath Tagore

From times immemorial, the rich and all-embracing India has always had a comprehensive approach to life around. Combining its conventions and inheritance from Nature, India has thrived on its legacy comprising the diverse splendour. The above lines by Nobel Laureate Tagore epitomise the spirit with which India blossomed and prospered in all its glory in the field of art education.

Different Forms of Art useful in education -

Motor Skills: Many of the motions involved in making art, such as holding a paintbrush or scribbling with a crayon, are essential to the growth of fine motor skills in young children.

According to the National Institutes of Health, developmental milestones around age three should include drawing a circle and beginning to use safety scissors. Around age four, children may be able to draw a square and begin cutting straight lines with scissors. Many preschool programs emphasize the use of scissors because it develops the dexterity children will need for writing.

Language Development: For very young children, making art or just talking about it provides opportunities to learn words for colours, shapes and actions. When toddlers are as young as a year old, parents can do simple activities such as crumpling up paper and calling it a “ball.” By elementary school, students can use descriptive words to discuss their own creations or to talk about what feelings are elicited when they see different styles of artwork.

Decision Making: According to a report by Americans for the Arts, art education strengthens problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. The experience of making decisions and choices in the course of creating art carries over into other parts of life. “If they are exploring and thinking and experimenting and trying new ideas, then creativity has a chance to blossom,” says MaryAnn Kohl, an arts educator and author of numerous books about children’s art education.

Visual Learning: Drawing, sculpting with clay and threading beads on a string all develop visual-spatial skills, which are more important than ever. Even toddlers know how to operate a smart phone or tablet, which means that even before they can read, kids are taking in visual information. This information consists of cues that we get from pictures or three-dimensional objects from digital media, books and television.

“Parents need to be aware that children learn a lot more from graphic sources now than in the past,” says Dr. Kerry Freedman, Head of Art and Design Education at Northern Illinois University. “Children need to know more about the world than just what they can learn through text and numbers. Art education teaches students how to interpret, criticize, and use visual information, and how to make choices based on it.” Knowledge about the visual arts, such as graphic symbolism, is especially important in helping kids become smart consumers and navigate a world filled with marketing logos.

Inventiveness: When kids are encouraged to express themselves and take risks in creating art, they develop a sense of innovation that will be important in their adult lives. Art is a way to encourage the process and the experience of thinking and making things better.

Cultural Awareness: As we live in an increasingly diverse society, the images of different groups in the media may also present mixed messages. Teaching children to recognize the

choices an artist or designer makes in portraying a subject helps kids understand the concept that what they see may be someone's interpretation of reality.

Improved Academic Performance: Studies show that there is a correlation between art and other achievement. A report by Americans for the Arts states that young people who participate regularly in the arts (three hours a day on three days each week through one full year) are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, to participate in a math and science fair or to win an award for writing an essay or poem than children who do not participate

Benefits Of Arts Education For Students -

Some parents, teachers and students look down on arts education as something unimportant, especially when compared to academic subjects such as language, math and science. However, the value of arts education should not be underestimated because it can actually provide several benefits for the students.

1. Arts Education Improves School Performance

One of the biggest benefits of arts education for students is that it can actually improve their learning skills, school attendance, critical thinking skills and creativity. All of these are essential for a successful academic performance. "In fact, several recent studies have concluded that the creativity and innovation utilized in the artistic process will be highly valued by employers in the United States in the coming years as we continue to shift into a global economy.

2. Arts Education Can Improve A Child's Creativity, Imagination And Self-Esteem

Nothing can explore and develop students' creativity and imagination better than arts education. Not everyone likes science, language or math. Many students actually are more interested and skilled at the different forms of art.

3. Arts Education Is A Bridge Across Cultural Differences

One of the most important benefits of arts education for students is that it helps them appreciate and understand the different cultures and values of our very diverse society. "They become the shared link, the glue that shapes our understanding of how we see ourselves and each other," The Education Fund explains.

The main purpose of Art Education is to develop creativity, individuality and expression through art activities. Art Education fosters cultural awareness and promotes cultural practices, and is the means by which knowledge and appreciation of the arts and culture

are transmitted from one generation to the next. It is therefore mandatory for impressionable minds to get the right exposure to arts in their formative years.

As the child began to question, and the reasoning powers sharpened, learning about the fine arts improved individual perception of the arts largely. At the same time, learning many other subjects with the help of the medium of arts, made the child more and more aware of the significance of the arts. Music education also has a clear causal impact on verbal skills, probably via its facilitation of auditory skills: music training improves phonological skills, the ability to hear speech in a noisy environment, and there is preliminary evidence that it might facilitate foreign language learning.

Education deals with human nature, which has its own potential and pace of growth. Its objective is not to mould, but to facilitate the individual to grow and develop into a creative and productive citizen. The aim is to make an individual free to make his/her own choices in life and grow holistically. In other words, education in general and Art Education in particular is a way for one to grow and become sensitive to the beauty in nature, of social values and the aesthetic aspects of life as a whole. In Art Education, training of the hand and body to develop skills is only an objective to build a creative, fulfilled and balanced personality.

Arts would have continued to play an important part of our education all along. But with the changing times and during the nineties in particular, India witnessed a revolution as a result of the after effects of globalisation, and Arts experienced a fresh lease of life with the advent of technology. After remaining secluded from the development that took place in other countries, when the process of liberalisation started Art education too demanded a drastic pedagogic approach. As the entire universe got closer, India too in its lateral thinking blended its combined creative forces with the changing circumstances. Accordingly, efforts continue to be made to help technology reach the remotest corners of this vast country where the role of computers and modern gadgets being as much in use in rural areas as they are in the urban regions.

As the new emerging techniques replace the cumbersome and time-consuming manual procedures, the older modes of creative pursuits are being done away with. Information and Communication Technology (ICT), exhibitions of arts and design, animation films, computer based sets and special stage effects, fusion of music and dance in events like puppetry are already being accepted as education through arts.

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, attention, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning.”

Integration of Arts with School Subjects -

Only a few subjects can be taught in isolation, and a holistic perspective on subjects is imminently desirable. And that can be achieved with integrating academics together. Integration entails arts and academic teachers setting class agenda together in a manner that academic topics also become the subject matter of visual and performing arts classes. This is consistent with the concept of multiple intelligences, and allows teachers additional ways of assessing whether children have grasped lesson material or have been unresponsive. Through theme related stories children play games in the sports ground, sing and dance, share their ideas and thoughts, as also listen to stories and even enact them. They thus create their own stories and songs, decorate the place, make things using their hands, and learn through exploration and experiences of their own.

How does art experience help?

It is a well known fact that each of us has a creative side that may not manifest and lie dormant for years. What is essential is to open all the windows of a child’s mind to make him/her explore all the creative challenges. Integration helps every child delve into all art forms without being rigid to achieving the desired standards and skills associated to different art forms.

The key here is openness to innovative learning, in the formative years of a child. In the open art class for instance, the conventional colours to paint the moon, trees and mountains in sometimes bizarre and abstract hues transcends the imaginative skills with vibrancy to another world of a young mind. Collaborative efforts between different art forms can fuse together harmoniously with experimental art forms that appeal to children.

Integration also serves to overcome inhibitions and promotes exploration besides helping maintain individual originality. Combining arts and other subjects bring variety in style, unity in diversity and experiences of different families and communities in to the classroom, thereby giving more open space to arts in schools. It encourages promotion and

implementation of arts as natural part of learning and living and makes learning joyful. But what it does most is to help children construct knowledge as the entire activity is a child centred learning, and thus helps in enhancing their life skills. Moreover, integration helps in the holistic development of learners, above and beyond.

In this respect, music, dance and theatre as arts included as a subject in the core set of courses could be fun too. This involves sourcing or writing songs that repeat lesson material, and fleshing out broad themes in the form of drama and dance routines, in collaboration with children in multiple projects. These projects, sometimes may continue for months, where children get hands-on experience making models in various mediums to represent things being studied in other subjects. Arts classes also serve as a bridge to explicate abstract academic concepts.

Song lyrics, dance movements, theme paintings, installations, stage settings drama scripts etc. are effective methods of teaching and learning. Illustrations of songs are also a great help for children in extracting meaning, as they give clues about the written materials.

Watching teachers involved in the process also boosts children's confidence, as artworks become not a finished product, but the outcome of teaching learning process.

Cartoons of animals and fantasy creatures are helpful in side-stepping the gender dilemma: should it be a male or a female character?

There are several projects and virtually inestimable number of novel concepts being designed, performed and used by many inventive teachers in schools who have done pioneering work and very successfully so but we are highlighting only a few of those who have followed the concept of art education, within their limited resources available, accomplished the desired objective, besides being exemplary in their work.

Some of the exceptionally matchless ones with great results, and others with spirited and commendable work, with may be a lesser degree of triumph, have been as follows:

There is growing consensus that today's economies require people who can contribute and adapt to innovation. In addition to strong technical skills, many international task forces on the future requirements of our societies have identified skills such as creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration as critical. Some even see the rise of a "creative class" as the driver of growth, and subject to a growing international competition for talent.

In this context, education systems have to equip students with the skills required for innovation societies, and some countries take this agenda very seriously.

Conclusion –

Artists are role models for innovation in our societies, along with scientists and entrepreneurs, and thus it is not surprising that many see arts education as a means of developing skills critical for innovation. According to [Arne Duncan](#), the US Secretary of Education, “education in the arts is more important than ever. In the global economy, creativity is essential. Today’s workers need more than just skills and knowledge to be productive and innovative participants in the workforce.

Don’t misread these findings. The lack of evidence does not imply a lack of impact. We find very plausible the assumption that different forms of arts education have an impact on creativity, critical thinking and attitudes. For example, Studio Thinking 2 shows that visual arts teachers at their best promote reflection, meta-cognition and other creative habits of mind. They do so by teaching students to evaluate their own works and those of their peers, and asking students to talk about their working process. Research is now called for to test whether students in arts classes actually develop these habits of mind. Other disciplines could learn from arts education how to nurture innovation-friendly habits of mind. The impact of arts education on non-arts skills and on innovation in the labour market should not be the primary justification for arts education in today’s school curricula. Students who gain mastery in an art form may discover their future career or a lifetime passion. For all children, the arts allow for a different way of understanding than, let us say, the sciences. Arts education allows students to express themselves freely and to discover, explore and experiment. They also give them a safe place to introspect and find personal meaning. In this respect, the arts are important in their own rights for education.

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