


Chapter 13

The Importance of Art and Visual Education in General and Special Education

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ABSTRACT

Art and visual education are vital in both general and special education, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and emotional well-being. In general education, art enhances academic performance, supports self-expression, and promotes cultural awareness. It builds communication skills and helps students analyze and interpret visual information. In special education, art plays a transformative role, supporting fine motor skill development, cognitive growth, and emotional expression. It provides inclusive opportunities tailored to individual needs, fostering social interaction and teamwork. Art therapy helps students with emotional or behavioral challenges process their feelings effectively. By integrating art into the curriculum, educators create a holistic learning environment that nurtures every student's potential, breaking barriers and building confidence. Art and visual education are not just creative outlets but powerful tools for personal and academic growth, enriching lives and

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enabling all learners to thrive.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that the contribution of art is significant for the psycho-emotional development of children, as through it they can grow multi-dimensionally. Contact with any form of art, apart from the aesthetic experience it offers to the individual, contributes decisively to the development of intellectual skills reflected in the management of practical issues. Art expresses the function of the soul, of our inner life. It is much more important than a “spare time” occupation than a “hobby” or a light activity for the children.

Philip Pullman, the esteemed British author honored with the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2005 for his significant contributions to children's and young adult literature, emphasizes the role of art claiming that “children need art and stories and poems and music as much as they need love and food and fresh air and play. If you don't feed a child, the damage is quickly visible. If you don't let a child have fresh air and play, the damage is also visible, but not as quickly. If you don't give a child love, the damage may not be apparent for a few years, but it is permanent. But if you don't give a child art and stories and poems and music, the damage is not so easily seen. It's there though. Their bodies are quite healthy. They can run and jump and swim and eat voraciously and make a lot of noise, just like children always did, but something is missing (Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, 2005).

Through art, the person can experiment symbolically and express ideas and feelings that can, ultimately, be expressed in life. Art contributes to aesthetic cultivation as it helps, among other things, in visual literacy and the formation of visual perception. It contributes to the cultivation of visual sensitivity, observation, empathy, problem management, contact with emotion, imagination (Dewey, 1938) and the development of multiple types of intelligence (Gardner, 1990). Art, also, offers familiarity with unconventional ways of thinking, cultivation of self-esteem, historical knowledge, aesthetics and appreciation of cultural heritage. Above all, the power of art lies in transforming those who get to know it laying the groundwork for a new view of the self and life.

Many times, works of art act as keys that open the door to the ark of very personal memories and feelings, which come to light through associations and retrieved experiences. Art works therapeutically. When its therapeutic role is realized by those who create it or enjoy it, the perspective changes and their inner space is redefined (Αθανάσέκου, 2020).

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