Enriching Arts Education through Aesthetics

Enriching Arts Education through Aesthetics examines the use of aesthetic theory as the foundation to design and implement arts activities suitable for integration in school curricula in preschool and primary school education. This book suggests teaching practices based on the connection between aesthetics and arts education and shows that this kind of integration promotes enriched learning experiences.

The book explores how the core ideas of four main aesthetic approaches – the representationalist, the expressionist, the formalist, and the postmodernist – translate into respective ways of designing and implementing experiential aesthetics-based activities. Containing relevant examples of interventions used in classes, it analyzes the ways in which the combination of different aesthetic approaches can support varied, multifaceted, multimodal and balanced teaching situations in school.

This innovative book will appeal to academics, researchers, professionals and students in the fields of arts education, early childhood and primary education and curriculum studies.

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Enriching Arts Education through Aesthetics

Experiential Arts Integration
Activities for Pre-School
and Early Primary Education

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to an inspiration named Tata

Contents

Figures and tables

1 Introduction

Over the last few decades scholars have come increasingly to consider that the arts must have a central part in curricula. A decisive factor in this has been the fact that the arts have been shown to be adaptable to different and complex educational situations, which frequently constitute the environment in today's schools (Copple & Bredeckamp, 2009; Dailey & Hauschild-Mork, 2017; Parsons, 2004). In particular, and of specific pedagogical interest, is investigating the educational contribution of "arts integration", that is, creating "relationships between learning in the arts and learning in the other skills and subjects of the curriculum" (Deasy, 2003, p. 3).

It has become clear that integrating the arts supports not only the teaching of the arts but also the teaching of other academic disciplines (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007; Deasy, 2002; Goldberg, 2012; Hardiman, Rinne, & Yarmolinskaya, 2014; Robinson, 2011; Scripp, Burnaford, Vazquez, Paradis, & Sienkiewicz, 2013). Examination of numerous instances of arts integration has shown that they can be successful and function pedagogically as transformative zones (Bresler, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Russell & Zembylas, 2007; Upitis, 2011), in which children can explore, discover, interpret, cooperate and exchange ideas during the teaching of every subject.

However, the design and ways of implementing arts integration activities are issues that concern recent research and are of theoretical and methodological interest. More specifically, although there are studies that show a need for arts integration in education to have a theoretical underpinning, they do not point to a structured framework (Booyeun, 2004; Cornett, 2011; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Gandini, Hill, Cadwell, & Schwall, 2005; Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2013; Snyder, 2001; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). Furthermore, these studies do not seem to have examined aesthetics as a basis to design arts integration activities. Yet another issue is the fact that even the studies that have proposals for concrete didactic approaches

(Argyriadi & Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2017; Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015; Denac, 2014; Fleming, Bresler, & O'Toole, 2015; Krug & Cohen-Evron, 2000; LaJevic, 2013; Sousa & Pilecki, 2013) do not have a common orientation. For example, using the arts in aid of students' academic improvement is an issue that has divided the research community (Bresler, 2002; Deasy, 2002; Mouriki-Zervou, 2011; Smith, 1995; Winner, 2003; Winner & Cooper, 2000; Winner & Hetland, 2000). Given these issues, both those responsible for the policy of arts education and those who implement arts integration in classrooms feel baffled (Attwood, 2015; Gormley & McDermott, 2016).

From our point of view, coming from the disciplines of aesthetics and arts education, what has concerned us – and this is a concern we share with educators, researchers and theoretical scholars of arts education – is that the integration of the arts in school curricula is being attacked by two sides. At times, the implementers of arts education – frequently individuals who are not specialized in the arts – deal with the aesthetic act as a concept with a loose definition and use activities whose aesthetic nature is dubious. At other times, educators simply do not engage in aesthetic acts because they are intimidated by the arts and believe themselves to be incapable of dealing with them. In this book, we aim to provide a theoretical framework educators seem to need in the first case, and on this basis, we suggest concrete, practical approaches that could encourage educators in the second category to act.

This work contains a specific teaching design for arts integration in kindergarten and primary school. Initially, we examine the theoretical underpinnings of arts integration on key ideas and aspects of different aesthetic theories and approaches. Then we endeavor to organize a structured practice consisting of types of arts activities that correspond to the aesthetic views presented. Finally, the book sheds light on the possible benefits that can be derived when *experiential aesthetics-based arts integration*, as the proposed practice is called, is implemented in school classrooms.

The issue that oriented and guided this study is that arts education could constitute a practical (evidence-based) where aesthetics can be applied to education and where the scope and significance of the "aesthetic teaching" of any subject can be established (Granger, 2006; Macintyre-Latta, 2004; Pike, 2004; Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2012b, 2016). This book is based on two assumptions. The first is that every subject taught in school can be dealt with by the children as an aesthetic stimulus. In other words, during the teaching of a subject, children can participate in arts activities that encourage them to explore the aesthetic qualities of the subject and discover its aestheticity. The aesthetic teaching of a subject arises in this way and its content is based on a second assumption: criteria can emerge for the aesthetic teaching of school subjects based on the different approaches to aesthetic theory. The approaches of aesthetic theory can offer different yet corresponding ways of

treating the aesthetic stimuli that constitute or emerge from, or more generally are related to, the subjects taught in school. These considerations guide the following study of aesthetic theory as the necessary theoretical underpinning to design and implement arts integration. We examine how each aesthetic approach can be utilized as a base to design respective teaching situations. Moreover, we explore the possibility of a combinatory use of activities based on different aesthetic approaches to create the contents of aesthetic teaching for every subject taught.

We would also like to make clear that in this book, the term *art* shall refer to the processes of all artistic modes of expression: musical/audio, kinetic, theatrical, visual arts, literature, etc., as well as to the arts as a whole. Moreover, the reader should broadly interpret the term, as it frequently refers to activities undertaken by children from 3–12 years old. With this in mind, *art* (and/or *artistic activity*) shall refer to children's engagement with the structural elements of the various arts such as with tone, intensity, timbre and sound in music; movement in bodily expression and dance; colors, shapes, forms, textures and size for the visual arts; facial expressions, roles, mimesis and theatrical objects for drama; and symbolic language in poetry and literature. Based on this, the "arts activities" proposed as suitable for children in kindergarten and primary school are designed to be opportunities for them to use artistic materials and to master "proto-aesthetic" skills.

Following the introduction is a presentation of the theoretical background, in which the core ideas of four main aesthetic approaches (the representationalist, the expressionist/cognitivist, the formalist and the postmodernist/contextualist) are outlined and discussed in connection to arts education theories. It is also critically considered up to which point these approaches can serve the purposes of meaningful and well-documented arts integration practices that appear to be connected to each of them. A section follows analyzing the ways in which the main elements of each approach translate into respective ways of designing arts activities suitable to be integrated in teaching, and indeed in the aesthetic teaching of any subject in preschool and early primary school education. Design models of activities usable with young children are described, and in particular activities which aim to have children participate in learning not only verbally but also bodily, and call upon children not only to respond to aesthetic stimuli, but also to create and/or perform artworks. The next chapter examines the position that respective arts activities can have in primary education. There is then a description and analysis of interventions that took place in kindergarten and first and third grade classes. The purpose of the interventions, the sample of pupils, the manner of collecting data, and the criteria on which the data were analyzed are described, as are the results of the interventions. Finally, the findings are discussed and the educational perspectives are presented in the form of conclusions.

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