

Art and Education

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In this essay I will be discussing the view that art has only a minimal role to play in education. I am basing it on the reading off Maxine Greene's paper, *'The Artistic-Aesthetic and Curriculum'*. As I don't agree with the view of it having a minimal role, I want to highlight the importance of art with in education. I will discuss some of Maxine Greene's opinions on the same views of the arts and the educated. I will also analyse the importance of imagination and its role with in art education and how it is viewed upon the different levels in which it is delivered as a subject and as an individual creativity. How this contributes to us as human beings and therefore to the society in which we live will feature also as an important point.

To me, to say art has only a minimal role to play in education would be plain and simple, wrong. Although art is treated as just a 'hobby' or 'happy-go-lucky' in many schools and viewed like this by many teachers and other people, it is so much more, it is "one of the most fascinating of educational topics" (Gehlbach, 1990, p19). This is highlighted by Maxine as she looks at how the "artistic-aesthetic might play in contemporary curriculum" (Greene, 1977, p284) she touches on Camus's concern for the "reconstruction of the world" (Greene,1977, p284). This shows that if art, the artistic aesthetic, was shaped and if "we in art education need to address at least 6 problems" as Hope (2004) suggested in Dorn's paper. (Dorn, 2005, p51) then the educated in the of area art could help shape the world as their future. One of the many reasons for this not being the case in education is due to the aims of the schools. As Maxine talks about the schools aims to "focus mainly on the teaching of skills, on the "basics", " (Greene, 1977, p284). This being to do with what is seen to be the most important; maths and English or whatever the national language may be. Yes, these may be the most important for a human to get by and on with in the world, but it is also important for people to learn about art and to develop their imagination, to step back look at the world and to break out of "the ordinary and the mundane" (Greene, 1997, p294) world of numbers and letters. This is what it takes to look at things differently and through this people can get a sense of the world

and help develop “gather information, determine significance, and make meaning”. (Stankiewicz, 1997, p5). This is the beauty of art it can aid oneself or many. Is this not important in life? To find meaning for yourself with in the world and to think about “breaking with the mechanical, the sporadic, the routine” (Greene, 1997, p286). Getting out of the idea of just going with it and do what the others are doing. That’s not living, but with the aid of an addressed curriculum for art this can be developed and accomplished.

There is no argument that the use of art with in education is undervalued. I believe this is because the focus of art is not realised and understood by all and quite frankly, I don’t think it ever will be. When people hear the word, “art”, most of them would think of, a person standing with a paint brush and painting what they have laid in front of them. This is not just the case, although it can be the practical side. Like this it is not just the purpose of art with in education to teach someone to pick up a brush and paint a fruit bowl or a vase of tulips. To take objects for example it isn’t to just create the “exact representation of objects” it is about “interpreting the objects of experience in terms of fresh values.” (Temple, 1928, p231). What is being gained of this is the experiences of analysing the object, taking the experience in which, it has “awaken his awareness” (Temple, 1928, p231). Art education is to awaken a part of humans for them to be aware, not to just be oblivious to their surrounds or to, “look” but to, see, engage with the objects, (world) in a new way. Therefore, art needs to have new meanings with in the education and not to have, only a minimal role. For this to happen the meaning of, “art” needs to be addressed with in schools and society in general, people need to be educated with the meaning of art and to the fact that it is not just about, painting the fruit bowl.

As children most of us have a fantastic imagination! Although at the time we don’t acknowledge it until we say what it is, we are thinking and as mad or courageous as it is, we get the response, “Don’t be so silly” and this continues to be the case for some. We are born in to this world and as we grow physically and mentally, we develop our minds and with this we create our imagination. It is a

fundamental factor of our bodies and our personalities. "Without imagination, nothing in the world could be meaningful." (Johnson, 2013, p(ix)). We have this beautiful factor that is part of us, and we use it but then it begins to get knocked from us and it is belittled, through the education system. From we enter the educational structure and as we progress in it up through the levels, our imagination begins to deteriorate. Many people leave school with little more ability to express themselves through the various art forms than when that had started (Wan & Winner, 1980). For this being the case there is obviously need for adjustment and change with in schools, but this must start at the bottom. Just like all structures there must be a solid foundation. "Primary school teachers do not seem to play the game either." (Gehlbach, 1990, p20). This being the game of creating art or teaching art for what it is. "Children's earliest finger smudges called "art"." Just because the medium of paint is used does not make it in to art or because it is in the "art centre". (Gehlbach, 1990, p20). Although I do see this and know this as the case from experience, but I can defend the current development of the primary art curriculum. There are sincere objectives in teaching the young and developing their artistic abilities, but it is lacking due to the educators. Yes, there is the curriculum they are thought and therefore meant to 'regurgitate' it to the children but if they themselves lack confidence or interest in art then they are depriving the children of the full possibilities of the criteria. Does this indicate that some may need or want to leave "the teaching of art to specialists" (Jeffers, 1994, p95) and if that were the case how would this fit in to the school's structure? If this continues to be addressed and built upon it has the possibilities of becoming a more uniformed structure to begin the artistic journey and developing arts role in education.

In comparison to the primary level, to look at art in what is seen as the advanced stages in third level we have, Visual Culture in Art Education (VCAE) this is seen by "some art educators as the next new emphasis in art education" (Dorn, 2005, p47). This is an important aspect to the teaching of the arts. It prepares us and encourages us to ask why? To look at the objects and society's around us in our culture and to explore them. Although VCAE is in third level it is being integrated in an alternative format in to the second level art curriculum which was, support studies. This is essential to the

learning of art because it is important to address your art work with the work of other practitioners but it is also vital to be aware of what is going on in the world around us and this is what art does it gets us to have a “present experience” (Temple, 1928, p231).

From reviewing the different aspects of art in the education structure and the views on how it is delivered and interpreted it has become even more apparent to me that there is a real need for us to “build a stronger, more convincing case for art being an integral part of the school curriculum” (Jeffers, 1994, p96). Until we can do this, and this will not be as simple as even a “Berlin artist said, “I don’t know what art is. I just know that I do it.” “(Gehlbach, 1990, p20), art will continue to have the view of having a minimal role in education. This leads to the fact as I have reiterated that children will lack the ability to use their imagination, to ask why and this will stay with them throughout there lives unless worked upon. But if the role is addressed, we can generate the possible aesthetic experiences for the students and therefore “enabling our students to live.” (Greene, 1977, p295). For them to engage with art, their imagination and find meaning.

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