



TURKISH CHILDREN'S VIEWS REGARDING VISUAL ARTS LESSON: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The developments that have taken place on a daily basis from the past have caused great changes in our perspective on art and artists. Along with the developing technology, great changes in art have come to the fore and contributed to the development of modern art movements. We see this development in visual arts as it is in every field. In today's world where communication has developed rapidly, there are many benefits that art has provided to us. Art is emerging as a powerful means of communication with these aspects. Art emerges as an important element in the journey of understanding, expressing oneself about social environment and inner world. This element of art gives a critical point of view against everything that happens in our circle. We can develop this point of view with art criticism. In this study, the participants were asked to produce their views about visual arts lesson. 240 primary school students participated in the study. No time limit was given. The results show that the participants guided their attention and associations more on design principles, elements, environmental factors, materials and abstract thinking.

Keywords: art, visual arts, critical approach, education, social environment

1. Introduction

Art has served humanity for centuries since its creation. In the 21st century, art education emerged as an indispensable element beyond necessity. Many people are far from attaining arts education, ignoring the benefits of art to man. However, art education involves a creative process that creates permanent changes in the individual's life, shaping it more sensitively to its environment, and shaping everything that seems ordinary from the point of understanding the world. One of the most important aims of art education is to teach to see, hear, touch, taste. All of this is necessary for the person to perceive the environment and start to shape it. Enver (2009) describes the place of art

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education in organized and non-formal education; *"All of the educational activities aimed at conveying the feelings, thoughts, and impressions of a person to an aesthetic level of talent and creativity, and to reach such a level of narrative"* (p.90). Enver clarifies this place in the educational dimension of art education.

Art education and the application of different methods in this education have been found important in terms of investigating the effect of art criticism. It shows that art education is an educational field which includes the characteristics of artistry, prepares human being for new situations, changing and changing with the developing technology, and possesses human-specific features. This area has an important role in educating the individual's cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor behaviors. The art education that is spreading in a wide area brings with it some problems and deficiencies. In our schools, visual arts education is confronted with active course contents in order to make up for the deficiencies in this area. Cetin (2001) states that although the classical method is correct, teaching in chronological order, that is to say in the order of history, forces students to memorize names, history and details and thus leads to the formation of a passive teaching. Similarly, İlter (2014) states that direct expression and question-and-answer is a teacher-centered one-way communication-based teaching method.

This situation reduces teacher-student, student-student interaction and does not centralize the learning of the student. However, the method that takes in the interaction and interaction of the group takes a more effective learning by taking the center of the student learning. Therefore, disciplines such as artistic education, art history, art criticism, aesthetics by combine the application, writing, understanding, sight, examination, narration and discussion. *"Art education aims to unite these two fields, because art education and teaching knowledge are taught in isolation from each other."* For all these reasons, art education has broadened its subject areas, combining four disciplines of art as education, application, criticism, art history and aesthetics into education programs" (Kırıçoğlu ve Stokrocki, 1997a, 1997b). It is important to know the history of art primarily within the art education process in terms of establishing the theoretical framework about these disciplines. Art education continues as follows in the words of Artut, who defines the individual as an effort to develop aesthetic feelings within the whole spiritual and physical education integrity, and to mature the power of ability and creativity. Therefore, it can be a good comment to give the name of "Art Education" in the whole education effort made with the aim of reaching the aesthetic level of the creativity power and the abilities of telling the emotions, thoughts and impressions of the individual when the art education is handled in a more general framework (Artut, 2001 p.89).

2. Visual Arts Education

Visual Arts education covers the processes that occur when people express themselves in an aesthetic frame, for their creative purposes, and for their achievement. (MEB, 2017: 5) *"Education of visual arts does not require that it possesses an artist or a very superior ability, but on the other hand, since Visual Arts education provides advantages in terms of positive*

acquisitions and societies for the personal experience of the individual, such as self- age group is a necessity for the individual."

Within the main objectives of the Curriculum prepared in the light of these requirements;

- Having visual literacy, perception and aesthetic awareness,
- Having knowledge, skills and understanding about basic concepts and applications in the field of Visual Arts,
- Those that participate actively in discussions about Visual Arts and evaluate these discussions,
- To examine the nature and origin of Visual Arts, to question its value,
- Those who understand and protect the value of their own culture and cultural heritage of other cultures,
- In visual art works, knowledge, materials, skills and techniques are used effectively and safely expressing thoughts by using,
- Relating visual arts to other disciplines,
- Having ethical behavior in the field of art,
- Recognizing professions related to the field of art,
- A person who inspects his environment, is inspired by him and transmits it to future generations,
- Skills seem to have come to the forefront, with critical thinking and criticism at the same time.

While all these requirements are met, there are some forces in the implementation of the visual arts course. Kahraman (2014), in his research with classroom teachers, has stated that some of the learning areas of the Visual Arts course are elaborate and difficult, and that these areas are at a higher level than the students. Such difficulties have led students to develop negative attitudes towards the lesson.

Art emerges as an important element in the journey of understanding, expressing and expressing oneself and the environment (Tuna, 2007, 2011). This element of art gives a critical point of view against everything that happens in our circle. We can improve this point of view with art criticism. In the art of visual arts, art criticism allows creative individuals to raise new relationships between events and events. However, the curriculums prepared in the course of art criticism apply a method of depriving and inactivating a work of art without thinking of the student at the point of comprehension and understanding.

3. Children and Art in Turkey

Children in Turkey are rarely involved in art and art-related activities because Turkish education system prioritizes social and science classes more than art, drama and art-related topics. In addition, children are expected to learn subjects through multiple choice tests to show their success in education. Although this system has been criticized considerably in Turkey, little progress has been made. There have been studies regarding

children's views of art, drama and play (Acer, 2012; Eristi, 2009; Ordem & Filiz, 2018; Ulker, 2012). However, curriculum and sociology of children regarding these different tasks have been seldom developed because visual arts lesson is often perceived as secondary in schools and outside school environment. Therefore, it is important to create social environment that prioritizes art and art-related issues because sociologically it remains pivotal to negotiate and create social dialogue with children about their choices, preferences and desires (Acavedo et al., 2015; Odabas & Gurdal, 2013; Ordem, 2014).

Children can be allowed to express themselves freely about their inner world and choices regarding classes. Otherwise, children may be affected by ideology of certain systems because these kinds of ideological processes were experienced and witnessed in the past (Colka, 2004; Ranking & Aytaç, 2006; Spyrou, 2000; Yildiz & Ordem, 2018). However, in the twentieth first century, children can have their sociology and social practices based on their will. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of promoting children' social environment and social practices regarding art since art is perceived as a creative activity in humanities. Unlike other subjects such as math, science and social studies, art shows itself as a different discipline for children because children can reflect their inner world and perceptions regarding the world.

4. Research Questions

- What are the associations of Visual Arts lesson primed by 6th, 7th and 8th students in a primary school in Turkey?
- How can these associations primed by the students be interpreted within the framework of Visual Arts lesson?

5. Method

The research is qualitative and is based on inductive content analysis. Therefore, the study was designed as a descriptive analysis. In the study, the associations given by the students to Visual Arts lesson were categorized and classified. Participants who participated in the study were asked to write their priming words about the visual arts free of time limitation. The analysis of the work was done by coding with two experts. Qualitative research is understood as efforts to classify, understand and interpret data. In inductive content analysis, the researcher does not benefit from existing categories. On the contrary, it reveals the categories and concepts by analyzing the text in detail (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Similarly, Özdemir (2010) emphasizes that social science should develop its own research methods, and that one of the best ways of doing this is inductive analysis. Thus, in this study, the researcher utilized the classification, categorization and conceptual schema techniques when analyzing the data of the participants.

5.1 Participants

A total of 240 students attending the 6th, 7th and 8th Visual Arts lesson participated in the study. These students had already taken the Visual Arts course before. The socioeconomic level of the participants came from middle-income families, and most of the families of these participants were highly educated people.

5.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by employing inductive content analysis. Codes were produced via the analysis of data; and the basic and core concepts and relationships between them were examined. Themes were identified through the codes created by consulting two experts in the field (Patton, 2002). Coding was conducted by each researcher separately, and the codes showed correlation and consistency.

6. Results

This study aimed to unearth the underlying associations primed by the primary school students. After the associations were collected, the data were analyzed and categorized based on various themes used in Visual Arts lesson. The associations primed by the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistical Distribution of Associations regarding Visual Arts Lesson

Themes	N	%
Design Principles and Elements	140	58.3
Environmental Factors	130	54.1
Materials	130	54.1
Abstract Thinking	125	52
Emotions	50	21
Technical Elements	50	21
Artistic Work- Pictures	47	19.5
Artistic Terms	20	8.3
Skill-Talent	13	5.4
Visual Arts Teacher	10	4.1

The results show that the participants focused more on design principles and elements (58.3%). Similarly, the students associated Visual Arts lesson with environmental factors and materials at the same level (54.1 %). Abstract thinking was also related to this lesson at a high percentage (52 %). However, it can be clearly seen that associations regarding emotions and technical elements were at a lower percentage (21 %). The artistic work and pictures were associated at a lower percentage again (19.5 %). The elements of artistic terms, skills-talent and visual arts teacher were associated at 8.3 %, 5.4 % and 4.1 % respectively. Thus, it can be deduced that the participants directed their attention and associations more on design principles, elements, environmental factors, materials and abstract thinking, whereas emotions, technical elements, artistic Works, pictures, artistic

terms, skills, talent and visual arts teacher were less represented in their priming associations.

7. Discussion

Art education is an educational field that incorporates the characteristics of art, and prepares human being for new situations, changing and changing with the developing technology. This area has an important role in educating the individual's cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor behaviors. Enver defines the place of arts education as a place of organized and non-formal education as "*all of the educational activities aimed at conveying the feelings, thoughts, impressions, talents and creativity of an individual to an aesthetic level and to reach this level of narrative*" (2009, p.90). Enver clarifies this place in the educational dimension of art education. Likewise, Kırıçoğlu explains art education as the questioning and teaching of all cultural, social, historical values to make the world more livable, which makes it difficult for the individual in creative actions to think, facilitate his life (2014, p.9).

The teaching of art has been practiced for many years. The more the children and the young people meet and practice, the more the art develops. The misconception has lasted for many years, and the idea that it is the skill, the skill and the dealing is dominant at the basis of this miscarriage. Contrary to all these misconceptions, art is neither skill nor skill and effort. In addition to giving artistic products, the aesthetic attitude, cognitive, affective skills that the child shows against art products gain importance. From this point of view, art education is neither applied studies nor art criticism. Art education has become a multi-disciplinary field that includes cultural and historical knowledge in the context of "*past / present / future*" with all this process.

One of the most important goals of education is to improve critical thinking so that students can make good decisions. Although the term "criticism" is sometimes referred to as a negative word in the sense of finding flaws, we can see that criticism has many positive, constructive and beneficial aspects when we get to the root of the word. Art criticism in terms of theoretical and practical dimension is "*to examine, to enlighten, explain and evaluate works and artists*" (Eroğlu, 2016, p.9). Therefore, the course of art criticism, which is taught by traditional teaching methods, is nothing more than the memorization of the names, histories and details about the works of art. Art criticism is a field that is discussed and tried to be handled with new methods. New approaches and new methods in art criticism have begun to be used with the aim of increasing the quality of art education. In this area, it is tried to be related to each other by using more than one method. Herbert Read, in the sense of art, says, "*When we think about a work of art we put ourselves in the form of the work of art, and our feelings depend on the parts we have found there and the sides we know*" (2014, p.). On the other hand, Todorov expresses the pleasure he received from the work of art as "*when we are confronted with the work of a great artist, we are not satisfied with looking at the perfection of the forms or investigating the meaning of each and every individual imitation*" (2016, p.9). In addition to this idea, social dialogue with

children and children's social dialogue with adults and teachers as well as administrators play an important role in promoting their interest (Ordem, 2014) because it is important to constitute sociology of childhood based on their free will (Acer, 2012; Acavedo et al., 2015; Odabas & Gurdal, 2013; Ordem, 2014; Ordem & Filiz, 2018). Although every individual is aware of the importance of art and visual arts in human and children's lives, education system hardly prioritizes these classes. Therefore, social dialogue remains an important tool to help children express themselves freely at educational and sociological level.

Çakır (2004) maintains that art education shows new ways of finding creative solutions to the problems faced by the student. Kavuran (2002) emphasizes that the individual passes through art education by using individual perceptions and rationality in the process of artistic creation to new concepts and new ways. In addition, the arrangements related to the individual environment appearing in the aesthetic searches in the art work arise with abstract and concrete ideas. Thus, the individual who is more sensitive to his surroundings contributes to his country and geography in terms of social and cultural sense. Man does not only develop logically and reasonably, but on the contrary, it is necessary to achieve a satisfying spiritual and bodily satisfaction by incorporating his intuitions into his work. He sees art education as a factor in the rise of academic achievements as well as the process of spiritual and physical exclusion of the person with emotion and intuition. He expresses that art and its culture are the most important parts of the art, emphasizing a lesson and teachable characteristic of art.

8. Conclusion

Art education enables students to make more use of art and art education through the disciplines involved (Yolcu, 2009; Ziss & Şahan, 2016). Although these disciplines are referred to by different names, the content and purpose of creation is the same. Art history, aesthetics, applied studies and art criticism are included in the integrated art education. Accordingly, Artut states that "*four basic disciplines in art education are an understanding based on research-examination, questioning-judging logic, both theoretically and in the context of activity, which can make students' creative action in contemporary art education system*" (2001, p.236). We can say that visual arts lesson can be the main locomotive of imagination so that students can be endorsed in education system of Turkey. This lesson should be emphasized more by the Ministry of education because this lesson can support their cognitive and social functions positively in their present and future academic lives.

Thus, a better understanding of the role of art in culture and society will enable us to increase our appreciation by better understanding art, artists, and artistic viewers. When we consider the above mentioned features of art criticism, we see that the historical process contributed to all the above features. So many written and visual artifacts, documents and resources surrounding the environment are obliged to take us to a critical point of view. In addition, a rigorous sociological criticism should be fulfilled to understand the problems that children experience every day. Critical thought in the field

of education has become more important in recent years. One of the most important aims of education is to educate individuals who are able to think critically, ask questions, make inquiries and make correct decisions. The pedagogical critique has a major role in the importance of this thinking. The artistic nature of the product always requires a critical look.

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