

## Identification of Current Art Education Approaches in Iran's Middle Schools: A Step Toward Identifying Knowledge Domains

*Reza Saberi, Hossein Jafari Sani, Javad Ghandili and Hossein Kareshki*  
Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

**Submitted:** Apr 23, 2013; **Accepted:** Jun 4, 2013; **Published:** Aug 07, 2013

**Abstract:** As one of multiple forms of literacy, art can cause human to achieve knowledge and insight. One of problems art education in Iran encounters is the lack of correct understanding of art education approaches involved in middle school art education. In this content analysis, traditional, thinking disposition, integration, DBAE, creative problem solving, preparing for the world of work and promoting academic performance approaches were studied and explored in the content of middle school art textbooks. The results showed that the dominant approach in the current the content of middle school art textbooks is art production approach. This approach in the the content of middle school art textbooks is related to *knowing how* in the curriculum. It is expected that the content and curriculum of Iran's middle school art education improve with applying the NCin the next future.

**Key words:** Education • Curriculum • Dualism • Art product • Subject matter

### INTRODUCTION

Curricula are of important and key elements in education systems. The main question is how a curriculum can be considered so important and valuable. The possible answers are regarded from several aspects.

One aspect relates to the mainquestion Spenser that which knowledge is more valuable [1] and what the placement of art is in relation to other subject matters [2]. The placement and role of art can also be studied as to various visions or approaches to art education. These approaches include among others Greer's discipline-based art education [3], Broudy'sperception of expressiveness [4, 5], Gardner's art product [6], aesthetic [7], Perkins' thinking disposition [8], Viggotsky's art and language [9] and others such as traditional (creative self-expression), integrative, visual culture, preparation for the world of work, promotion of academic performance and creative problem solving As he notes, "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" [10] Some of these approaches (e.g. aesthetic one) consider the inner and intrinsic features of art [11] and others (e.g. preparation for the world of work and promotion of academic performance) indicate the instrumental features of art

[12, 13]. In one end of the range, there are approaches such as traditional one which are affected by the dictatorial space of World War II and conceive art as a means for creative self-expression and have not any concern on curriculum design [10]. In the other end of the range, there are some new approaches such as Barkan and Greer DBAE based on Bruner's theory which concentrate on society's knowledge base changes, learners and all who involve in art teaching-learning process [14]. Art criticism separates the latter approach from others. However, its art dimensions are conceptually corresponding to those of Rimer's aesthetic approach. That is, "knowing" within is achieved by art criticism, "knowing how" emerges from art production, "knowing that"embeds in cultural-historical contexts and "knowing why" provides a value structure by which other "knowings" are meaningful and art aesthetic is achieved. It is notable that the discipline of making art is grounded in procedural knowledge, while forms of declarative knowledge give feedback to the practice of procedural knowledge when making art [2].

Despite its importance for education administrators, the identification of dominant approaches and knowledge-domains in Iran's middle school art education

has not been regarded seriously in the related literature. Some research has surveyed the current situation of art education and its role and importance in schools. For example, Kazemi [15] surveyed teachers and students views on art role and placement in middle schools in Semnan State and concluded that despite students and teachers' great interests in art actions, art courses have not appropriate placement in guide school curricula due to superficial and incorrect conception of the subject matter.

In another study, Art Group of Text-book Design and Composition Group in Education Ministry [16] surveyed the viewpoints of 6 groups for exploring the issues and problems involved in art education in Iran's Middle-schools. These groups included 3-grade guide-school students, parents, art teachers, non-art teachers, school head teachers and regional education administrators. The groups each completed a survey tool. The study identified the main priorities of art education in guide-schools as follows: 1. Training professional teachers, 2. Making manager agree and improve reformed programs of art education, 3. Reforming programs involved in art curriculum design, 4. Revising the course and attempting to design new textbooks. 5. Providing art tools and means as educational and aids and 6. Launching new art centers outside schools and under supervision of Education Ministry.

In addition to few studies on art education of the country, an overview on the history of art education itself reveals the problems art education in middle school level encounters. Art textbooks for Middle-school grades 1, 2 and 3 were designed in 1971, 1972 and 1973, respectively and included painting, calligraphy and handiwork. In 1982, matters such as singing, story telling, cinema and theater were added to the content. But, despite the increase in the content, previous two-hours per week class session decreased in one-hour per week ones. The content has been limited to calligraphy, painting and handiwork since 1984 and new designed textbooks in 1989 have incorporated these three subject matters without any notable changes despite of great development in knowledge during recent years[17]. The objectives of the course have not changed since 2000 when 647<sup>th</sup> meeting of Iran High Council for Education was held [18]. From inter-subject matters, of about 933 hours yearly dedicated to 10 various courses in middle school 3 grades,

only 37 hours are for art education. This mean rate is the least among the courses. From intra-subject matters, fields such as music, drama and visual arts and religious-national arts such as puppet show and narrowing have been ignored in current situation [19] despite the importance of arts such as music, drama, dance and visual art in worldwide art education [20, 21].

As domestic studies show, no attempt to identify the current approach in art education and knowledge domain orientations are of gaps in conducted studies [22- 25]. By the identification of such approaches and orientations, other curriculum elements would be considered and determined. Although, existing problems and defects are going to be solved in the National Curriculum<sup>1</sup> (NC), the current study tends to investigate the existing approach(s) in art education and knowledge-domain orientations related to various components involved in Iran's middle school art education.

#### **Research Questions:**

- What approach(s) do the contents of middle school art education textbooks follow?
- What are knowledge-domains in middle school art education textbooks?

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was content analysis. All middle school art text-books in the academic year of 2010-2011 were studied by using content analysis. Content (paragraph), illustration and assignment in the art textbooks were considered as recording units in the study. Based on deductive encoding, categories provided for studying art education approaches.

Based on the related literature[3-10] the encoding categories included traditional, integrative and creative problem solving approach, DBAE approach involving art production, aesthetic, art criticism and art history, the approach of thinking disposition, preparation for the world of the work and promoting academic performance. The reliability of content analysis was investigated by encoding about 10 percentages of the categories by a second encoder. The agreement coefficient between the two encoders was about 86%.

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on this program, Iran's future general education consists of the 4 periods: preschool with 1 grade, primary school with 6 grades and middle school with 6 grades. The latter consists of first 3 grades as the first middle school and the other 3 grades as the second middle school. Iran's current general education system involves primary school (5 years), guide school (3 years) and high school (4 years).

Categories relating to knowledge-domains including knowledge that, knowledge how, knowledge why and knowledge within were provided by reviewing related literature [2, 7, 26]. Using integrative inquiry, conceptual coordination between both knowledge domains and art education approaches were matched with middle school art textbook contents.

**RESULTS**

Research question 1 tended to explore the approach (s) that the contents of middle school art education textbooks follow. As Table 1 shows, in grade 1, from 314 observed frequencies, art production approach with 210 (66/87%) and that of world related visual culture (non-Iranian-Islamic) vision with 32% (lower than 1%) had the highest and least frequencies, respectively. The first two highest frequencies in art production approach belong to painting and designing with 136 (64.76%) and calligraphy with 74 (35.24%), respectively. In grade 2, from 257 observed frequencies, art production approach with 151 (85.75%) and that of world related visual culture (non-Iranian-Islamic) vision with 1 (.39%) had the highest and least frequencies, respectively. In art production approach, the frequencies of painting and designing, and calligraphy were with 106 (70/19%) and 45 (29/80%), respectively. In grade 3, from 312 observed frequencies, art production approach with 180 (57.69%) and that of world related visual culture (non-Iranian-Islamic) vision with 1 (.32%) had the highest

and least frequencies, respectively. In art production approach, the frequencies of painting and designing and calligraphy were with 147 (81.6%) and 33 (18.33%), respectively. In total, art production approach with 883 (61/26%) observed frequencies and world related culture vision (non-Iranian-Islamic) with 3 (.33%) observed frequencies had the highest and the least ranks (Table1).

Out of 883, illustrations with 521 (59%) and content and theme with 173 (19/59) frequencies have the highest and the least ranks, respectively. integrative approach in grade 2 had not any frequency. In grade 1, observed frequencies belonged to painting and calligraphy. The integrative approach is manifested in graphics that includes painting, designing and calligraphy (Table 1).

Creative problem solving, preparation for the world of work, promotion for academic performance approaches which are regarded as instrumental approaches had not any obvious frequencies in the analysis units.

DBAE with 4 dimensions including art production, aesthetic, art criticism and art history with 79/47% has the highest frequency in the content of middle school art textbooks. As the approach es comprehensive and does not focus on an especial learning field in arts, it contains the approaches such as aesthetic approach concerning the issues of art nature, appreciating art aesthetic and criteria of art evaluation. As art criticism in DBAE approach is not considered in Iran's art education, it could not conceiveas DBAE (Table1).

Table 1: Description of art education approaches in the content of Iran's middle school art textbooks(grade 6,7 & 8)

Factors	Frequency												Total	Percentage
	CE <sup>2</sup>	TD <sup>3</sup>	TD <sup>4</sup>	AM <sup>5</sup>	A <sup>6</sup>	AC <sup>7</sup>	AHW <sup>8</sup>	AHP <sup>9</sup>	CPS <sup>10</sup>	PWW <sup>11</sup>	PAP <sup>12</sup>			
Them	5	60	3	51	0	9	0	37	0	0	0	173	19.6	
Illustration	3	55	28	334	0	2	2	97	0	0	0	521	59	
Assignment	13	10	4	148	0	9	1	4	0	0	0	189	21.4	
Total	21	125	35	541	0	20	3	138	0	0	0	883		
Percentage	2.4	14.2	3.9	61.3	0	2.2	0.33	15.6						

<sup>2</sup> Creative self- expression (Traditional)

<sup>3</sup> Thinking disposition

<sup>4</sup> Thinking disposition

<sup>5</sup> Art product

<sup>6</sup> Aesthetic

<sup>7</sup> Art criticism

<sup>8</sup> Art history of world

<sup>9</sup> Art history of Iran- Islam

<sup>10</sup> Creative problem solving

<sup>11</sup> Preparation for the world of work

<sup>12</sup> Promotion of academic performance

The result in research question 2 showed that knowledge-domain in the content of middle school art textbooks is knowing how (art education). Totally, out of observed frequencies relating to the content of guide school art textbooks, 541 (61.2. %) relate to knowing how, 141 (15.9. %) to knowing that (art history of Iran and World) and 20 (2.2%) to knowledge within (art criticism). Knowledge why which tends to recognize art, its nature and appropriate indicators for its evaluation was really ignored.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

There is some evidence that shows that art curriculum in Iran [1,27] and throughout the world, despite their differences in details, focus on knowledge how for art production [2, 8, 26, 28-34]. This kind of knowledge is embedded in the physics rather than mind. Knowledge that is located in the mind. This dualism has historical origins and is manifested in paired terms such as extremity and manners, individual and society, child and curriculum and physics and mind [35]. Plural idea which is deconstructing finds its way in art. The notions that art doesn't require declarative knowledge and that knowledge how is independent from knowledge that must be reconstructed conceptually.

Then, despite some other internal things for thinking, thinking originates from objective, expression and social situation [ 36, 37] and meaning construction can't be made without visual, audio and sense conceptions [4]. Gardner [6] argues that in school years such as middle school ones when students begin to develop their abstract thinking, it can be possible to reduce art production approach and focus on cultural approach as art history. Any art work either in the form of encoding (art production) or that of decoding (such as art perception) finds its meaning in broad cultural, historical and social contexts which include broad cultures such as out-school and out board ones [38]. These contexts effect on both selected content and teaching-learning methods. Exchanging "existences" and "not existences" [39] help us to identify neglected art approaches. The lack of appropriate exposure to visual cultural approach in the form of world's art history in Iran's middle school art textbooks deprives Iranian students from excellent art experiences and great artists' products. There is not deep exposure to art work in these textbooks. As Ibn-khaldoon said, in history studies, we should go beyond simple historic narration and explore the causes of historical events [40].

Exploring knowledge why results in aesthetic approach in which the notions embedded in the approach, such as art nature, art importance and appreciation and its evaluating criteria can be traced in art cultural-historical context [11]. Such an exploration was not considered in the context of art education textbooks. However, it can be seen somewhat in approved objectives. This shows a significant disagreement between the content of the art education text books and the approved objectives. In addition, these objectives concentrate on knowledge that while the content of art textbooks focus on knowledge how, which in turn reflects curriculum designers' unawareness of art education approaches and knowledge domains.

Different approaches to art education are not stable issues and all participate in a complex network of art education incorporating context, content, learner and teacher (why, what, how and who), When selecting an approach or some approaches, in addition the necessity of regarding philosophical, sociological and psychological principles, we need to answer the question of what reasons we consider for selecting a certain approach and not selecting others.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Mehrmohamadi, M., 2004. Art Education as General Education: What, Why, How. Tehran, Madrese Press.
2. Cunliffe, L., 2010. Representing and Practicing Meaningful Differences in a Well-Structured but Comply Art Curriculum. *J. Curriculum Studies*. 42(6): 727-750.
3. Greer, W.D., 1984. Discipline-Based Art Education: Approaching Art as a Subject of Study. *J. Studies in Art Education*. 25(4): 212-218.
4. Broudy, H.S., 1987. The Role of Imagery in learning. The Getty Education Institute Press.
5. Bresler, L., 2002. Harry Broudy on the Cognitive Merits of Music Education: Implications for Research and practice of Arts Curriculum. *J. Art Education Policy Review*. 110(3): 27-34.
6. Gardner, H., 1990. Art Education and Human Development. The Getty education institute Press.
7. Reimer, B., 1992. What Knowledge Is of Most Worth in the Arts? : Education and Aesthetic Knowing. Chicago University Press.
8. Perkins, H.S., 1994. The Eye: Learning to Think by looking at Art. The Getty education institute Press.

9. Zakin, A., 2005. A Vygotskian Approach to Art Education: Cognitive Functioning in the Artistic Process. Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, New York University.
10. Eisner, E., 2002. *The Art and Creation of Mind*. Yale university press.
11. Smith, R.A., 2001. A View from Aesthetic Education. *J. Research Studies in Music Education*. 1(17): 60-69.
12. Paige, R., 2004. Key Policy letters Signed by the Education Secretary or Deputy Secretary. Washington D.C Press, Department of education.
13. Seely-Brown, J., 2008. How to Connect Technology and Passion in The Service of Learning. *J. Chronicle of Higher Education*. 55(8): 55-67.
14. Stankiewicz, M.A., 2000. Discipline and the Future of Art Education. *J. Studies in Art Education*. 41(4): 301-315.
15. Kazemi, A., 1996. The Placement of Art Instruction at the Middle School from Teachers and Students' Viewpoints. Tehran, Institute of Education Studies Press.
16. Amini, M., 2001. Designing an Appropriate Art Education pattern for Primary School. A Doctoral dissertation. Tehran, Tarbiyat -Modarres University.
17. Hosainierohoamini, J., 2001. The Evolution of Primary School Curricula. Tehran, Secretariat of High Council of Education Press, Forth Edition.
18. Joozi, H., 2008. *Art Education Methods and Techniques*. Tehran, Madraseh Press, first edition.
19. Saberi, R. and B. Mahram, 2011. The Place of Artistic Facets & Structure of Meaning in Art Teaching Text-books at the middle School Period Education. *University Chamran J. Education*. 6(1,2): 61-82.
20. Consortium of National Arts Education Association. 1994. *Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts: what Every Young American Should Know and be Able to Do in the arts National Standards for Arts Education*. In the Proceedings of the 1994, Reston Music Educators National Conference, pp: 81-92.
21. State of Florida, Department of state. 1996. *Florida Curriculum Framework the Arts: pre-k-12 Sunshine State Standards and in Situational Practices*. The State of Florida, Department of state Press.
22. Mirzabaygi, H., 1991. *The role of Education in Children Psychology health*. Tehran, Madrese Press..
23. Harati, M.M., 1987. *Art Education for Teachers*. Tehran, Education Ministry Press.
24. Koochakzade, R., 2005. The Reflection of Natural Elements in Imitation and Performing Ta'ziye. The proceeding of the 2005 The First Conference on Art and Natural Elements, pp: 67-76.
25. Ghorchiani, M., 1995. *The Situation of Art Education at The Middle School*. A MD dissertation, Tarbiatmodares University Press.
26. Cunliffe, L., 2005. *The Problematic Relationship Between Knowing How and Knowing That in Secondary Art Education*. *J. Oxford Review of Education*. 31(4): 547-556.
27. Saberi, R., H. Jaferi Suny, J. Ghandili and H. Kareshki, 2012. Identification Approaches in the Approved Objectives, the Syllabuses of Teacher Training and National Program in Iran's Case. *The Proceedings of the 2012 World Conference on Design, Arts and Education in Turkey*, pp: 106-11.
28. Fild, D., 1972. *Change in Art Education*. London, Rutledge And Keegan Press.
29. Eisner, E., 1972. *Educating Artistic Vision*. New York, Macmillan Press.
30. Leondar, B. and D. Perkins, 1977. *The Art and Cognition*. John Hopkins university press.
31. Taylor, R., 1986. *Education for Art*. Harlow, Longman Press.
32. Abbs, P., 1989. *Ais for Aesthetic*. London, Falmer Press.
33. Best, D., 1992. *Reason and Feeling in the Arts*. London, Falmer Press.
34. Efland, A.D., K. Freedman and P. Stuhr, 1996. *Postmodern Art Education: An Approach to Curriculum*. Reston, Virginia, NAEA Press.
35. Pring, R., 2000, *The False Dualism of Educational Research*. *J. Philosophy of Education*. 34(2): 247-260.
36. Smith, B., 1988. *Knowing How vs. Knowing That: Practical Knowledge: Out lines of a Theory of Traditions and Skills*. London, Croom Helm Press
37. Tolumin, S., 1999. *Knowledge as Shared Procedures: perspectives on Activity Theory*. Cambridge university press.
38. Bresler, L. and C.M. Thompson, 2002. *The Children's Live: Context, Culture and Curriculum*. New York, Boston, Moscow, Kluwer Academic Publisher.
39. Eisner, E., 2005. *Reimagining Schools: The Selected works of Elliot Eisner*. Selected Articles, Rutledge.
40. Shaeikh, M., 1978. *Research in Ibn- Khaldon Works*. Tehran, National University Press.