A general evaluation of art education in Turkey

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the condition of art education generally in Turkey and especially in universities. The evaluation is a kind of evaluation effectuated through personal observation and experiences. As a student, research assistant and lecturer who takes place in art education for almost 18 years, it contains a general evaluation of art education. In this study, what is meant by under the name of universities is newly-established universities and these universities’ fine arts education painting departments. The obstacles that lecturers faced in terms of both education and personal academically development are discussed under the title of “lecturers’ motivation”. Students’ qualifications as a student and teacher trainees are discussed under the title of “students’ qualifications”. In the conclusion part of this evaluation, some deficiencies are revealed in terms of a proper education environment, art educations’ distinctive conditions for an artistic sensitivity and expression

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1. Introduction

If mankind was a being who is emotionless and acting with only his brain, perhaps there would not been a need for art education. However, human is a being who thinks and feels. This characteristic makes art education necessary. Information is something which is learnt and forgotten fast. Yet learning addressing to individual’s emotions and thoughts prepares him for society more healthily.

The functions of art are aesthetic-based in terms of its content and bear individual, social, cultural, economic and educational qualifications. The educational function of art composes artistic learning-teaching activities and arrangements related to them towards developing behaviors enabling individual, social, cultural and economic functions to effectuate properly, effectively, productively and beneficially (Uçan, 1992:107)

Arnheim (1969:294) discusses art in his work named “Visual Thinking” as an important tendency resulting from mankind’s need of understanding himself and the world in which he lives. He indicates that art’s general aims are dependent on this basic cognitive function, too and so art reaches science’s meaning and result.

Kagan (1982:46) says “art, in fact, is the most effective means that makes cognition’s all mechanisms be opened and work” on expressing art’s educational function.

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According to M. Barrett (1982:45), art education is related to our way of “meeting” the world and to symbolizes, materialize, understand, arrange, express, communicate and development of our feelings as a method for solving our problems related to these all.

Rudolf Arnheim (1997:11) indicates art’s necessity with these words: “I have always believed that art education is an essential instrument in order to educate intelligence expertly needed for whatever will be learnt”.

The idea that art is not a discipline makes art education become useless in school systems. However, artistic knowledge and experiences are gained to child or young in a system, too.

While obtaining information, developing concept are accepted as related to cognitive field, excluding art and artistic evaluation with its aesthetic, practical and intellectual aspects from cognitive field has removed art from being a teachable and learnable field.(Kırıçoğlu, 1992:85).

Scholz and Volger (1992:205) indicated that cultural gain get through visual arts, handicrafts and design education is dependent on development of observation, perception and expression competences which is important for human’s every type of development.

At the top of the characteristics differentiating human from other beings, there comes his creativity, looking for beauty and creating ability. As for his creativity, it shows itself mostly in the field of art. Consequently, historians take ancient states’ art works into account rather than their political organizations or movements while they are passing judgment on them because art obtain its facts and features from society and try to dignify society. Culture level of a society is formed mostly by the artists it raised and the art works they created. (Kavcar, 2003).

Lecturers Motivation

It is observed that in schools or educations systems where the education of art and emotions is attached importance, while emotions are being educated, mental abilities, thought and intelligence are also being improved. As art emphasizes inter-connection between art and thought, it is an effective assistant of learning and development process, too. (Erbay, 1997: 4-9)

Firstly, physical and sensual conditions should be at an appropriate level in order to work excitedly. Because physical conditions’ importance is accepted by everybody, it has not been explained again. As for sensual conditions, they can be summarized as material and emotional support, being understood and valued.

Realizing the value and importance of art educators working at education faculties is among the subjects that should be considered carefully. The value of the job that art educators do is known by only art educators. On the basis of faculty and university, other departments’ level of appreciating and valuing the productive art educators is low. The interest showed to works at exhibition halls is not something beyond “a bauble and flower in a vase”. Perhaps, realistic and understandable works are admired, yet; that bears the meaning of displaying only the ability. In addition to that, the level of admiring and appreciating is not more than “expertly made-imitation of real thing”. Artist’s or art educator’s creativity, contribution to society, active intelligence, contribution to education is not among the qualifications being considered. Instead, the opinion that artists and artist educators have a physical characteristic for ability and expertness, not a quality is common. It is normal for art educators working in these conditions to lose his excitement, motivation, creating power and ask the question of why I am here. Performing art only for the sake of art reduces the level of appreciation and admiration totally. Alienation of each art educator or individual interested in art in an institution like a university is an artistic corruption. It is the sign of going back with fast steps, not further. It grows difficult as does it today to look further in the societies where the importance of art educators having qualifications such as bearing aesthetic concerns, being sensitive to his environment and society and creating. To express it in general terms, art is a need for society. It is primarily Universities’ duty to emphasize the importance of it.

The other topic title is the fault in the promoting and assignment rules of the lecturers at universities.

“The most important duty of performers is to study on their major, to improve themselves. If you apply general rules and regulations to artistic performers and want them to write essay-article-book-paper, the result will not be development, but chaos; that person will be in a difficult situation and it will cause ridiculous results. As a consequence, lecturers should be divided into categories such as performance-practice and theory-musicology in art schools. Artist lecturers should fill their files with the works they created and their concerts.”(http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2469778)
As it is stated above, the art educator, making practice, is supposed to make practice activities. Otherwise, there will be a decline and confusion in production. If specializing means to be the best in your field, assignment and promoting criteria should be within the framework of the field.

**Students’ Qualifications**

Art education is necessary for the students who will get or are getting art education to become firstly an individual and then an intellectual. Eliot W. Eisner (1972:184) summarizes this necessity as below:

- Art education for an intellectual necessity (It increases communication inter-persons, creativity and learning wish),
- Art education for social necessity (it increases contribution, it enables the person to gain the ability of expressing himself/herself and choosing the right),
- Art education for individual necessity (it provides physical, ethical, aesthetical, emotive development of person)
- Art education for productive necessity (individual values his/her free time, he/she has a job, he/she makes contribution to production)

For a better education in respect of these necessities, there is a need of appropriate physical structure, qualified lecturers and students who are open to learn, desirous, and have this capacity. Unfortunately, most of the students are reluctant to learn, study, and strive. Since they are university students, they have not got enough background and quality they need. In addition, they have not got enough effort and desire for their fields that require to study hard. There are a few students who have expectation for the future; if so, their abilities and determination are limited. Undoubtedly, the only responsible of all these negations are not young. The effect of society, circumstances that cause the students to behave in this way is unquestionable. However, this is another research subject that needs to be studied on in detail.

In addition to characteristics of the students that affect the arts education in universities, the effect of the features that are looked for in aptitude tests is large. Except for the fact that to choose student by means of stereotype drawing methods that are learnt by heart in preparation courses is a big delusion, it is another wrong to apply conceptual arts education that does not depend on design after choosing student by means of design.

**1. Result**

Art education policy has been affected by the change of values, technology, and technique. Popular culture, developing opportunities of aesthetic delight, decline of desire for high artistic success, commons’ developing and breaking, culture guided by media, psychology and therapeutic world view’s becoming widespread, cultural universe’s (horizon) extending and improvements in technology have been affected arts education profoundly. In this case, arts education is affected by the all parts of the society (Arts Education Policy Review: 2000).

The most important problem of our age is maybe to balance the relationship of technology-human. This balance is important in becoming life and person together. Art is one of these balance means and strengthens the connections by transforming the individual from part to whole, stimulating for thinking, learning, and improving himself/herself.

Today, the societies give importance to the art have a certain intellectual level and enough background. The same societies have reached the level of welfare economically and produce knowledge, science, and art. While the members of this society give importance to the art and artistic production, they have placed it in required position in their education system. The scope of the arts education is large as far as possible. Depending on these, the same person needs of artistic production in respect of seeing and owning. In this way, there is an enormous position for the artist, his/her production, and the arts educator. Hereby, the continuity of success is provided by supporting the artist and the arts educator materially and spiritually.
References


