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ART LEARNING AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE U.S. STUDENTS' GENERAL EDUCATION

У статті висвітлено навчання мистецтва як невід'ємний складник загальної підготовки студентів закладів вищої освіти США та окреслено особливості його інтегрування в різні навчальні дисципліни. Схарактеризовано поняття естетичної грамотності та стверджено, що навчання мистецтва передбачає здобуття студентами базових знань з різних мистецьких сфер, накопичення естетичного досвіду, формування здатності до естетичних суджень і креативного мислення, що загалом удосконалює естетичну грамотність студентів. Розглянуто аргументи на користь включення навчання мистецтва в систему загальної підготовки студентів у США. Зазначено основні стилі інтеграції мистецтва з іншими навчальними дисциплінами.

Ключові слова: навчання мистецтва, естетична грамотність, практичне навчання, інтегрування, загальна підготовка студентів США.

Introduction. Nowadays, the learning process by means of art is accompanied by an internal reward in the form of creation and perception of various aesthetic forms, which promotes a positive transformation of students' consciousness and deepens their understanding of the modern globalized society. Art education combines the collective experience of the visual and material cultures into one formation ensuring the process of communication between them. Such a formation overcomes sociocultural barriers providing young people with numerous opportunities to generate a new understanding of the world and the place of a personality in it.

Different aspects of implementing art education as well as strategies for its

reforming considered by the U.S. scholars: L. Bresler, E. Eisner, R. Gale, M. Gibson, M. Greene, J. Hausmen, M. Larson, D. Oxtoby, E. Zimmerman and others.

According to the professor of art education at Indiana University E. Zimmerman [11], the study of art plays an important role in the education of every person, regardless of age, abilities, socio-economic and cultural background, or religious beliefs. The scholar argues that art education is of great importance in the modern multimodal world providing students with the opportunity to use their creative abilities, to foster imagination, and to establish a successful relationship with the world at large [11]. Students must be able to use imagination and spatial abilities, and to try to solve life

problems without relying exclusively on mathematical or verbal skills.

The purpose of the paper is to highlight the peculiarities of incorporating art learning into the general education in the U.S. higher education institutions.

Presentation of the main research material. It has been suggested by the U.S. educators [3; 5; 6; 7; 11] that within the learning environment of any higher education institution, the emphasis should be made not only on instilling universal values in students, but on the recognition that art, the visual art in particular, enhances students' aesthetic literacy. The latter presupposes "the ability to perceive the aesthetic aspects of objects, phenomena and communication in the language of art" [4, p. 4], which serves a tool for establishing a conscious communication between students and the world [6, p. 7]. According to the professor of art and education at Stanford University E. Eisner, the basis of aesthetic literacy constitutes a complex combination of imagination, feelings and knowledge that provides individuals with the acquisition of aesthetic experience through the study of emotionally and aesthetically marked manifestations of life during artistic and aesthetic activities [3, p. 25]. Additionally, R. Gale [4] identifies the concept of aesthetic literacy in terms of the outcomes of learning, embracing: ability to make aesthetic judgments; development of personal and critical response through judgment and evaluative tools; appreciation of aesthetic values and contexts etc. The literacy aspect implies a critical multidisciplinary approach to art education where contextual knowledge and understanding have particular significance.

Therefore, "in the 21st century, it is apparent that students need to be prepared for a new information age and that educational interventions in art education for all students that foster creative thinking, imagination, and innovation are important for generating solutions to real life problems both now and in the future" [11, p. 394].

D. Oxtoby [8], noted chemist, dean of physical sciences at the University of

Chicago, the ninth president of Pomona College in Claremont in its 116-year history, identifies and enlarges upon four arguments for the inclusion of art learning in higher education:

1. *Impact on society.* As public funding for the arts has diminished, especially in the United States, colleges and universities are among the few places where creative talent is supported and where the creation of art can be promoted for its own sake, regardless of immediate commercial value. For the arts to flourish in society, the college years present a critical window of opportunity to foster social and cultural responsibility. Students' experience in arts on campus will shape their expectations and community involvement well beyond college [8].

2. *Helping students "push their boundaries."* Work in the creative and performing arts represents a different type of learning from that in traditional classroom settings, and it can challenge students and ultimately give them more confidence [8].

3. *The arts and experiential education.* Arts programs pull the education of students from the theoretical toward the practical. Scientists are fully comfortable with this process. It is not that every specialist-will-be needs to learn to paint a picture in order to be successful in his or her academic career, but the experience of creating or performing in a rigorous setting provides a practical understanding of the creative process that cannot help but inform both the professional and amateur understanding of the arts for students in college and throughout their lives. An active program in the creative and performing arts can be considered an extension of the move toward "experiential education" that is primarily associated with the social sciences. Arts disciplines and their emphasis on practical technique, embodied knowledge, imagination, design, and observation have a critical contribution to make toward new paradigms across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities [8].

4. *Teaching creativity.* Innovation and creativity are core goals of the twenty-first-century economy. It is a truism that

success in the future will involve making new connections and coming up with new ideas, not simply using one's training in a well-defined career. The education for such a world needs to respond to this demand, and that requires core courses taken by students during their time in college. The creative arts are thus one of the vital components of a modern liberal education, as they develop a different set of capacities that students will benefit from long after graduation. To prepare creative citizens and leaders, all creative capacities should be fostered through college education [8].

Today, in many U.S. higher education institutions are incorporating art education across different areas of knowledge with the view to developing a greater sense of personal and cultural identity, enhancing students' aesthetic experience as well as creative and critical thinking, giving students the opportunity to make use of the acquired knowledge and to express their feelings in multimodal ways. Such educational practice is nothing new, but it still gives undisputed benefit of increasing student engagement and achievement. It is worth paying attention to a number of generalized approaches the U.S. educators [1; 7; 8] guide in the process of integrating art into other disciplines, which are as follows: creative self-expression of a personality; student-centered learning process; social reconstructivism (rethinking the sociocultural context of the person's life in order to orient them towards success in all spheres of life); multiculturalism; environmental orientation of the learning process; service learning involving students to diverse socially-beneficial activities within the community; problem-search content of learning; sociocultural study of the world at large.

Art education as an integral part of general education in many U.S. higher education institutions is represented by two types of courses:

1) courses based on an analytical and critical approach to the study of various forms of artistic and aesthetic expression (in the field of literature, archeology, architecture, painting, etc.);

2) courses of creative and practical significance from various types of art (music, theater, dance, painting, etc.).

The U.S. students study art not only as a high culture (i.e. products of aesthetic value, which a society collectively esteem as exemplary art), but also as a means of historical chronology of events and the active process of creative design and its embodiment in various physical forms. Acquaintance with art as an eternal value and an integral part of human life through the courses of artistic and aesthetic orientation in the course of general education creates the foundation for further creative activity of students in all spheres of their life and promotes an adequate perception of different forms of art outside the education institution.

Based on interdisciplinary links with other academic disciplines art education confirms the fact that art has become an important part of the personality development of each student. In addition, the integrated skills gained in the course of the study of different types of art play an essential role in metacognition, pointing to the integrity of art as "a sphere of knowledge that is fundamental in a variety of learning settings" [5, p. 7].

Integration, in its turn, like many other concepts, is employed in terms of contents, resources, structures, and pedagogy. L. Bresler [1], a professor of education, sums up the following terms depicting the application scope of the notion "integration" in educational circles: infusion (integrating a particular subject across the curriculum); topics-within-disciplines (integrating multiple strands of the same discipline within the instructional setting); interdisciplinary (maintaining traditional subject boundaries while aligning content and concepts from one discipline with those of another); thematic approach (subordinating subject matter to a theme, allowing the boundaries between disciplines to blur); holistic approach (addressing the needs of the whole child, including cognitive, physical, moral, affective, and spiritual dimensions); multidisciplinary (looking at a situation as it was portrayed in different disciplines); interdisciplinary (considering a problem in terms of different disciplines and

then synthesizing these perspectives in coming up with a more general account; metadisciplinary (comparing the practices within a particular discipline); transdisciplinary (examining a concept as it appears in political and in physical discourse) [1].

Likewise, an American psychologist and cognitivist, a professor at the University of Ohio A. Efland [2] suggests using works of art in the learning process in the multidisciplinary aspect as a means of mental development, personal expression and reflection of the sociocultural context of the personality of life. The scholar considers the intellectual activity of students, in particular critical thinking, as logical-scientific system of symbols, on the basis of which they "create new ideas or images through the combination and reorganization of previous experiences" [2, p. 133]. Art, in its turn, in a variety of forms and approaches, provides education process with these symbols and various ways of expressing abstract ideas. A. Efland relates the process of students' thinking to the ability to understand symbols and interpret their meanings. Referring to the specifics of art as a means of developing students' mental abilities, the educator claims that works of art are cognitive guidelines that direct students in the process of creating a personality map of knowledge domains, which serves as peculiar points of intersection of various methods of cognition, forming a holistic system of integrated knowledge of each student [2]. Thus, the integration of art with other academic disciplines is represented by A. Efland in the form of a logically constructed map of knowledge gained by students, which reflects the interconnection of the diversity of ideas and concepts from various spheres of cognition. This, in his opinion, art education at large contributes to the formation of students' own cultural significance in the sociocultural context of being as the main component of social communication, which in general serves as the foundation for their learning throughout life [2, p. 6].

L. Bresler [1] distinguishes four main styles of integration of art with other academic disciplines, namely:

1. The subservient style implying the use of art as fundamental foundations for one or the other integrative course in terms of its contents and outcomes of learning.

2. Equal with other style (co-equal) based on the "equal" use of the content-conceptual foundations of art and other academic disciplines.

3. The style of emotional influence (affective integration) revealing the potential of art for developing the emotional sphere of students as one of the most important factors in the regulation of cognitive processes.

4. The style of social integration involving students in a variety of project activities within the community.

To illustrate how the art is introduced in diverse learning settings of the U.S. higher education institutions, we suggest turning to some examples of integrated art programs. For example, Soka University of America [9], a private four-year liberal arts college and graduate school, located in Orange County, California, regards imagination and creativity as essential qualities for global leadership. The creative arts courses help students develop these qualities through individual and collective endeavors. As part of the creative arts courses, all students, along with their work in a specific section and medium, participate in a campus-wide Creative Arts Forum. This forum provides opportunities for discussions and presentations about the creative process, opportunities for collaboration across media, explorations of interdisciplinary connections to the arts, interactions and dialogue with the broader campus community, and other common experiences that might include readings, performances, films, guest speakers, etc. These courses are open to all students in the course of general education, regardless of their background in the creative arts. The Creative Arts courses student learning outcomes are as follows:

1. Creative Artwork (to demonstrate development and improvement of skills or craft in the artistic medium in which they work, including the understanding and appropriate use of materials and techniques, resulting in successful

completion of their artistic end product).

2. Tools of Creativity (to demonstrate development and improvement of internal skills that foster the creation of art, including expanded aesthetic appreciation, improved perceptual abilities (e.g., listening, seeing, comprehending), and flexible imagination).

3. General Creative Processes (to demonstrate development and improvement of attitudes and abilities that support creative endeavor in general, such as openness to exploring new possibilities, lateral thinking/brainstorming and, in specific situations, the ability to work in teams across artistic disciplines) [9].

Another example is general education in West Virginia University [10] which involves "The Arts & Creativity" area of knowledge. This academic area is designed to enhance students' aesthetic literacy and creative thinking as well. According to the educators of West Virginia University, creativity, as expressed through works of art, is a defining human characteristic. Regardless of the medium, art communicates and connects us to human innovations and achievements of the past, present, and shared future. Artistic expression employs integrative and creative thinking that promotes transformative ideas capable of crossing disciplinary and cultural boundaries [10].

Thus, today many higher education institutions in the USA have made the art learning a focus of their general education. They are providing new facilities and implementing new initiatives in arts courses and museum programs giving students the opportunities to engage intelligently, meaningfully, and creatively with each other, with human experience, and with the world at large.

Conclusion. To conclude, it should be stated that rather than being dismissed or forgotten, art education has become an integral component of the U.S. general education as it forms part of the human experience. Art education, accessing a way of thinking and knowing, is based on: active participation of students in cultural events and artistic and aesthetic (co)curricular activities;

research of the essence and role of the creative process in various spheres of human life; studying the influence of art on the development of society (e.g. sociocultural contributions of different groups of people, such as women and ethnic minorities); a critical analysis of classical works of fine arts, crafts, etc.

Still, fully integrating art learning into the student experience and into general education will require new thinking, and creative action.

In the context of the problem under study, further scientific research envisages exploring art learning strategies in the U.S. general education.

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