

## AESTHETIC EDUCATION IN THE MODERN GLOBAL SOCIETY

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### Abstract

In our time, aesthetic education gets new dimensions and new meaning for the individual development of every person and the life in the modern global society.

In this respect, we can discuss the conditions which prerequisite the need for aesthetic education and, moreover, determine its systemic and conceptual positioning and realization.

The modern theory of aesthetic education completely accepts the attitude that there are social and individual preconditions determining the need for aesthetic education and esthetic values supposed to permeate a modern person's life.

The objective grounds for putting in the focus the aesthetic education in today's conditions of human life and work are most directly related with the global contradictions originating from the scientific and technological revolution and the spread of the scientific and technological process in all the spheres of human work and life.

Today, the beautiful becomes a phenomenon intertwining life in its integrity and complexity.

The need for perceiving the beautiful and estimating the esthetic values in art demands to create in every individual the ability for estimating what is esthetically worthy in art, and what is trash. Such a need has special importance in these times when we are swamped with activities of, softly speaking, dubious quality.

**Key words:** *Aesthetic education, esthetic values, the beautiful, pedagogy, global society.*

### 1. Introduction

In today's global society, the beautiful becomes a category that fulfills the whole life of every individual.

The beautiful features of art as a basic kind of spiritual and practical activity, are that they not only make the artists, as well as their public, acquire knowledge about the world and the people in it, but they also condition emotional and evaluating attitude towards the environment and the one's self.

In the context of the contemporary goals of aesthetic education, in the most recent times there is emphasis on the need for creating and developing the individual's esthetic culture, correlated with the esthetic values.

We can define esthetic culture as an accepted valuation contact with the esthetic activities; as an ability for experiencing esthetic values; as a creative attitude towards esthetic values; as being qualified for their evaluation; but also as a creative attitude towards them and introduction of esthetic values in everyday work and life.

In this context, the need the people to implement the laws of the beautiful in their lives is constantly accentuated. This means knowing how to dress beautifully, to move beautifully and

graciously, to arrange beautifully the premises in which they work or live, et cetera. Exactly such demands become prerequisites which determine the modern esthetic education.

## **2. Social and economic prerequisites for esthetic education**

Aesthetic education is preconditioned by the general cultural orientation of a particular society, and by the attitude of the person in a particular society towards culture as a phenomenon of worth.

Modern life emphasizes the need for aesthetic education also from the aspect of the modern person's demands for and attitude towards the beautiful forms of the products, i.e. how they are designed.

The products of the work, the means for work and the working process itself must also contain esthetic features.

As early as at the World Exposition held in London in the distant 1851, and in the Movement for Artistic Education, demands emerged that the industrial products must contain some esthetic values too.

Also, the tools, devices and machines for production, with their forms and construction must satisfy the esthetic requirements. Furthermore, with these requirements must be harmonized the forms, the rhythm and the way of performing working activities as well as the total ambience and the conditions at the workplace, first of all, as prerequisites for obtaining a friendly atmosphere for work and higher productivity.

As early as more than two centuries ago the factory-owners and other manufacturers noticed the need that for the good sale of their products it is not sufficient only their quality, but also the looks of the products. In the modern era of globalization, massive production and big market competition, the manufacturers from all the branches make big efforts for achieving good looks of their products, being aware that without a beautiful design the same won't be competitive on the market.

In the literature from the field dealing with the importance of aesthetic education in social scale, we can find even some statements that give the aesthetic education the function of an ambassador of the country where the product comes from and the country's culture. Today, different forms of presenting the own culture and folklore are devised in a large extent, via many events, international contests and so on. Such manifestations, among else, contribute to the better mutual acquaintance between different nations or ethnic communities, thus bringing them closer.

## **3. Development of personality as a prerequisite of the modern aesthetic education**

The definition and the innovation of the goals of education, begun in the 1990s, today is a completed process in most European countries.

What is common in the redefinition of the education goals, is the following:

- stressing the importance of developing the personality;
- preparation for living in a multicultural community;
- raining the students for observing the values of: tolerance; peace; religious, racial and other particularities. (Ratković, 1977)

So, central problem of the modern education is the development of a student's personality.

Therefore, in the current endeavors for redefining the goals of education, the insistence on the development of personality emerges as an educational issue of highest priority.

Of great importance for a personality's overall development is the unity of children's esthetic development and overall development.

In the context of this issue, it is necessary to stress the individual need for the beautiful, the esthetic culture and esthetic values. Every person strives to make the own life more substantial, more beautiful, more fulfilled, more valuable.

As L.N. Tolstoy said: "The need for apprehension and realization of the beautiful lies within every person, and this need must be satisfied." (Quoted by Kostova, 2004)

By the acceptance of the esthetic education as one of the fundamental fields of education and an essential component of a person's complete development, we define such development of the personality as a fundamental prerequisite of aesthetic education.

In this context, we must not regard the aesthetic education as some appendix to the overall education, being in the function of one's own leisure. Quite the opposite, aesthetic education is a field of education that is on equal terms with the other educational fields and is in the function of the overall development of the human personality.

Viewed from this aspect of the human individual development, we ought to point out the fact that in every person there are potentials for aesthetic education and upbringing and for developing esthetic capacities.

It is well known that the abilities are not given in a completed form with the very birth of a human being and that every human being inherits dispositions which can, but don't necessarily develop into abilities. The development of these abilities is preconditioned by the such realization factors (environment, education and an individual's activity).

Thereof the need for providing the realizing factors for developing these abilities. This is especially notable in the process of developing esthetic abilities. It is often pointed out that a person may be born with dispositions for being a top musician, but, if the same lives in an environment where music is not commonplace and he/she is not educated in this field or does not invest enough efforts in it, e.g. for practicing, this person won't develop musical skills. (Kostova, 2004)

In this sense is the need of correct systemic and conceptual positioning of aesthetic education and its correct realization.

The correct positioning and realization of aesthetic education is, in a great deal, conditioned by the efforts and activities of the international associations FEA and INSEA. They distinguish with their modern concepts and programs, where esthetic education gets new dimensions in the context of the overall education and shaping of a human being.

We have already stressed that aesthetic education is in the function of a person's complete development. However, we mustn't forget the fact that the complete development of a human's personality is a product of all the educational fields being mutually related and entwined.

In this common effort, aesthetic education covers all the areas of mental life: the rational, the emotional and the volitional. This means that thanks to esthetic education the cognition of the reality deepens, the experience enriches, and the creative expression improves thus becoming of a higher quality. Such action is very complex.

The beautiful, or the esthetic, should cover all the human work and life. That's why we must train the children and youngsters, as well as all those adult people who lack the feeling and sense of beautiful, to be able for noticing and experiencing everything that is esthetical in the nature, in social life, human relations and in arts. Therein lie the importance and the basic goal of aesthetic education. Such a goal has wider meaning, and consists of four essential elements of the sense of beautiful, namely: perception, experience, evaluation and creation of esthetic features.

#### **4. The development of pedagogical science as a prerequisite of aesthetic education**

The system of aesthetic education is predetermined by the general principles of the science whose object of study is education. Therefore we must emphasize that the basis of the laws of aesthetic education are, and ought to be, the more general laws of the pedagogical science.

When we speak about the process of aesthetic education, in fact we speak about a specific process of esthetic adoption of the activity which manifests in the process of social development as a syncretic unity of the basic types of human activity: cognitive, value-oriented, artistic, transformative and communicative. (Belova, 1997)

This determines the need the components represented in all the types of activities to be included in the contents of the pedagogical process and connected into forms and models. On the other hand, a necessity is indicated for amalgamation of all the types of activity with the main components of the esthetic process, precisely, with the value-oriented and artistic activities, which are most closely connected with the formation of esthetic behavior.

All this, basically, is connected with and preconditioned by the mental development of the children of different age. To this effect, for each age the leading activity from the area of esthetic education is determined, namely – by the compulsory and facultative activities in the curriculum and by the number of students' activities in their leisure time.

Such a step has a meaning of its own if we think based on the insight that esthetic culture in students is formed only through proper activities.

The main moving force of these activities is the degree of a person's esthetic development. There from, the activities in the area of aesthetic education ought to be different for each particular age of the children and must correspond to the issues in the educational process. In this sense, Vigotski warns that during the years of children's' maturation, by the laws of nature emerge the so-called sensitive periods when favorable internal conditions are created for the development of the psyche, which increase the capacity for doing one or other activities, and later fade. (Vigotski, quoted in: Belova, 1997)

The character of the sensitive approaches in the esthetic development of the students assumes activation and intensification of the training process in the school subjects of artistic nature, in such way that the achieved level of artistic development to be at a such level of incompleteness that determines the sensitivity in the training process.

The principle of unity of the person's esthetic and overall development has special importance for the general and esthetic development of the children. It must be emphasized that the process of aesthetic education raises the level of the specific development of the mental activity in children and is important also for the development of the reason, thought and speech. (Dimitrov, 1994)

Activation of all mental powers in the esthetic education process leads to the development of these abilities through all the other activities. Also, the abilities developed in the mental, labor and other activities are in the function of the development of esthetic capacities.

On the other hand, the development of artistic capacities in children contributes to the development of overall esthetic capacities and is a fundament of the overall esthetic development.

The basic activity on which the esthetic development rests is the creative activity of students, including the self-initiative creative activity. All this requires special attention to be paid to these activities.

The personality of the child and its development must be in the center of aesthetic education.

However, the principle of development is closely related to the principle of individualization and differentiation. The thesis of Vigotski on the closest development ought to be a benchmark for the aesthetic education too.

Belova emphasizes that the development of a student's personality is most closely dependent on the development of the teacher too. In this sense, as much the teacher creates conditions for a student's personality development, that much the teacher himself/herself develops too. (Belova, 1997)

In the sphere of aesthetic education is also important the requirement for using and activation of all the educational aspects of the pedagogical action that lead to the development of students' personality.

A modern requirement in the field of aesthetic education is the bigger and bigger orientation towards adopting esthetic values and building esthetic culture in students. In this process, a central place belongs to the creation of abilities for perceiving and experiencing the esthetic values and the development of ability for esthetic creation.

The need for perceiving the beautiful and estimating the esthetic values of art means to create in each individual the ability to know how to estimate what has esthetical worth in art, and what doesn't (i.e. is trash). Such a need is especially important today, when we are swamped by activities that are, softly said, of dubious quality.

Addressing this issue, Valentin Angelov wrote a study, titled "The Death of Esthetics" (Angelov, 2004). In this study, he makes an attempt for disclosing the quintessence of the modern neo-avant-gardism prefixed with the attribute "**anti**", meaning, in example: anti-music, anti-theatre, anti-poetry, and so on. Angelov describes this phenomenon in details, including all its negative features. The requirement the children to be able to distinguish what is esthetically worthy and what isn't, imposes itself in the process of aesthetic education as an inevitable issue if we have in mind that such ability is not acquired with the birth, on the contrary – in order the adult persons to be able for estimating what has esthetical worth in art and what is trash, an appropriate training process of children and youngsters is necessary.

Along the lines of Angelov's thesis, Perniola claims that the time we live in is not a period of esthetics. But this doesn't mean that in this period there are no texts from the field of esthetics.

That what characterizes this period is the endeavour of esthetics to exceed the level of the philosophical theory about the beautiful and the good taste.

This theory now strives to establish a much more creative relations with various fields of art: fine arts, literature, music, and so on. In this process, on one hand, many novelties are being introduced, and even some risky experiments are being accepted, and on the other, esthetics gets

a discerning position of being constantly organized and correlated with all the fields of art and all the works of art. (Perniola, 2005)

When we speak about the emotional side of esthetic education, we emphasize the importance of training the children to be able to experience the beautiful. One famous thought in this context is that of Belinski: "The apprehension of the beautiful with the senses before it is apprehended with the heart, means apprehension with the legs." (Belinski, quoted in: Kostova, 2004).

The ability to experience the beautiful requires the same to be practiced in the process of aesthetic education. Namely, to encourage the children to feel joy if some work of art is beautiful, to cry if the same is sad, to laugh if it is funny or cheerful, and so on.

The basis of aesthetic education is building in children the capacity for creation. But it doesn't mean insisting each student to become an artist in the end, on the contrary – it means insistence each student to become capable of implementing the beautiful in his/her everyday life, including work.

Aesthetic education ought to be viewed as an extensive social process. This requires the same not to be performed only within the school system, but also to take into account the whole of the factors that are in the function of the realization of this educational field. In this context the importance of the family is specially emphasized. On that how the family looks on the esthetic values and what meaning it attributes to them, in a great deal depends also the attitude of the children and young people towards esthetic values and esthetic culture in general.

## 5. Conclusion

The theory of education discusses five educational areas through the realization of which we can influence the complete development of the personality. However, it is a well-known fact that the classification of education into separate fields is only a way how they can be studied better, which means that a person's development is not realized partially and separately, but it takes place simultaneously following the laws of the person's wholeness.

In the context of those educational fields, aesthetic education has a very important place.

If the human being has become, among else, a "homo aestheticus" because of the essence of his/her nature that is closely related with the beautiful and the beauty of life and work, then esthetics is a science determining the existence of the human being.

In the process of the society's historical development, esthetics and aesthetic education, as social and human requirements, are present in the whole period of its development.

That's why aesthetic education must be viewed as one of the very important fields of education. It has kept its importance in today's modern global society too. It is in the function of the human individual development, as well as in the function of the modern social, cultural and production development.

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