

## Concepts Related to Arts Education

### 1. Arts Fields

People in all cultures have always, and will always, seek answers to questions related to their existence. Every culture develops means through which the insights obtained through the search for understanding are shared and communicated. Basic elements of communication are words, movements, touch, sounds, rhythms and images. In many cultures, the expressions which communicate insights and open up room for reflection in people's minds are called "art". Throughout history labels have been put on various types of art expressions. It is important to acknowledge the fact that even if terms such as "dance", "music", "drama" and "poetry" are used world-wide, the deeper meanings of such words differ between cultures.

Thus, any list of arts fields must be seen as a pragmatic categorization, ever evolving and never exclusive. A complete list cannot be attempted here, but a tentative list might include performing arts (dance, drama, music, etc.), literature and poetry, craft, design, digital arts, storytelling, heritage, visual arts and film, media, and photography.

The arts should be gradually introduced to learners through artistic practices and experiences and maintain the value of not only the result of the process, but the process itself. Furthermore, since many art forms cannot be limited to one discipline, the interdisciplinary aspect of arts, and the commonalities among them, must be given more emphasis.

### 2. Approaches to Arts Education

Imagination, creativity and innovation are present in every human and can be nurtured and applied. There is a strong connection between these three core processes. As Sir Ken Robinson has noted, imagination is the characteristic feature of human intelligence, creativity is the application of imagination, and innovation completes the process by utilizing critical judgement in the application of an idea.

Any approach to Arts Education must take the culture(s) to which the learner belongs as its point of departure. To establish confidence rooted in a profound appreciation of one's own culture is the best possible point of departure for exploring and subsequently respecting and appreciating the cultures of others. Central to this is acknowledging the perpetual evolution of culture and its value both in historical and contemporary contexts.

Educational content and structure should not only reflect the characteristics of each art form but also provide the artistic means to practice communication and to interact within various cultural, social and historical contexts.

In this regard, there are two main approaches to Arts Education (which can be implemented at the same time and need not be distinct). The arts can be (1) taught as individual study subjects, through the teaching of the various arts disciplines, thereby developing students' artistic skills, sensitivity, and appreciation of the arts, (2) seen as a

method of teaching and learning in which artistic and cultural dimensions are included in all curriculum subjects.

The Arts in Education (AiE) approach, utilizes the arts (and the practices and cultural traditions related to those arts) as a medium for teaching general curriculum subjects and as a way to deepen understanding of these subjects; for example, using colours, forms and objects derived from the visual arts and architecture to teach subjects such as physics, biology and geometry; or introducing drama or music as a method to teach languages. Drawing on the theory of “multiple intelligences”, the AiE approach aims to extend the benefits of Arts Education to all students and subjects. This approach also aims to contextualize theory through the practical application of artistic disciplines. To be effective, this interdisciplinary approach requires changes in teaching methods and in teacher training.

### **3. Dimensions of Arts Education**

Arts Education is structured through three complementary pedagogical streams:

- Study of artistic works.
- Direct contact with artistic works (such as concerts, exhibitions, books, and films).
- Engaging in arts practices.

That is, there are three dimensions to Arts Education (1) the student gains knowledge in interaction with the artistic object or performance, with the artist and with his or her teacher; (2) the student gains knowledge through his or her own artistic practice; and (3) the student gains knowledge through research and study (of an art form, and of the relationship of art to history).