



SIGNIFICANCE AND FREQUENCY OF WORKS OF ART AND REPRODUCTIONS USE IN DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTIC-AESTHETIC ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN OF LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

ZNAČAJ I UČESTALOST KORIŠTENJA UMJETNIČKIH DJELA I REPRODUKCIJA U RAZVOJU LIKOVNO-ESTETSKOG PROCJENJIVANJA DJECE MLAĐEG OSNOVNOŠKOLSKOG UZRASTA

Emina Begović¹

¹Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tuzla, Tuzla, Bosnia i Herzegovina

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine a teacher's role in the development of artistic-aesthetic communication, based on the representation of the use of works of art and their reproductions in art education. The research was conducted on a sample of 220 respondents, of which 200 of them were students and 20 were homeroom teachers. The research part presents the results and interpretation of surveys conducted among teachers and students. The t-test was calculated to determine whether there are significant differences between the obtained results on certain variables, that is, those related to demographic data. The results indicate that homeroom teachers are insufficiently involved in the development of art-aesthetic communication, that is, child's communication with a work of art. Regardless of the fact that 70% of teachers believe that it is important for students from the first to fifth grade of primary school to learn about and analyze valuable works of art, 35% of teachers and more than half of the students (55%) claim that they never use art textbooks. Also, 54% of students declare that they never or rarely discuss art problems with the teacher, even though art problems form the backbone of a lesson, and are found in works of art or their reproductions. When it comes to visiting a gallery, museum or other exhibitions, 51% of students and 54% of teachers claim that they never visit these institutions, while 40% of teachers said that they visit them once a year. The t-test determined that there are no significant differences between the responses of respondents (a sub-sample of teachers) in relation to demographic data.

Keywords: work of art, textbook, artistic-aesthetic communication, art language.

¹ **Correspondence to:**

Emina Begović, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Tuzla
E-mail: begovic.emina@yahoo.com

SAŽETAK

Cilj rada je bio ispitati ulogu nastavnika u razvoju likovno- estetske komunikacije, na osnovu zastupljenosti korištenja umjetničkih djela i njihovih reprodukcija u nastavi likovne kulture. Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 220 ispitanika, od toga 200 učenika i 20 nastavnika razredne nastave. U istraživačkom dijelu predstavljeni su rezultati i interpretacija provedenih anketa među nastavnicima i učenicima. Izračunat je t-test kako bi se utvrdilo postoje li značajne razlike između dobijenih rezultata na određenim varijablama, odnosno onima koje se odnose na demografske podatke. Rezultati ukazuju da se nastavnici razredne nedovoljno angažiraju u pogledu razvoja likovno-estetske komunikacije, odnosno komunikacije djeteta s likovnim djelom. Bez obzira što 70% nastavnika smatra da je važno da učenici od prvog do petog razreda osnovne škole upoznaju i analiziraju vrijedna umjetnička djela, ipak 35% nastavnika i više od polovine učenika (55%) tvrdi da učenike za likovnu kulturu nikada ne koriste. Također, 54% učenika izjavljuju da nikad ili rijetko razgovaraju o likovnim problemima sa nastavnikom iako likovni problemi čine okosnicu nastavnog sata, a nalaze se u umjetničkim djelima odnosno njihovim reprodukcijama. Kada je u pitanju posjeta galeriji, muzeju ili nekom drugom izložbenom prostoru, 51 % učenika i 54 % nastavnika tvrde da nikada ne posjećuju ove institucije, dok je 40% nastavnika izjavilo da ih obilaze jednom godišnje. T-testom je utvrđeno da ne postoje značajne razlike između odgovora ispitanika (poduzorak nastavnika) u odnosu na demografske podatke.

Ključni pojmovi: umjetničko djelo, udžbenik, likovno-estetska komunikacija, likovni jezik.

INTRODUCTION

Significance of studying works of art in the development of artistic-aesthetic communication

A work of art is one of the most important sources of knowledge in art education. "Since the existence of men, starting from early prehistoric art to contemporary art, there have been works of art. A work of art refers to the product of artistic creation" (Surio, 1958: 27). The fundamental role of works of art in the fine arts program is reflected in enabling direct contact of students with the signs and meaning of the visual language. Artistic speech and artistic language are in the same relationship as verbal speech and verbal language. Therefore, knowledge of visual language (along with creative abilities) is a prerequisite for both production and creation, as well as understanding and experiencing artistic values. Every form of communication, including visual and artistic ones, requires knowledge of language as a communication medium. Based on understanding explicitly, we may talk about the development of assessment. Developing the ability of aesthetic assessment is a pedagogically demanding task that requires a teacher, (in addition to knowledge of art language), to know the history of art, as well as, the ability to analyze art composition and, at the same time, it also implies knowledge of children's overall development and the characteristics of individual ages in order to use adequate content (reproductions, textbooks and works of art) and methodical procedures. The reception of works of art is also a complex process, which contains creative components.

The observer's experience of a work of art is basically a reflection of similar experiences and excitement that the artist had when creating it.

However, as the work of art is layered and open, the possibilities of interpretation are also different, depending on the spiritual richness of the observer. The more experienced and richer in their knowledge is the subject who observes the work of art, the more complete their judgment will be (Herceg, Rončević and Karlavaris, 2010: 31). Suzić (2001) states that teachers are often unsure of the approach to analyzing a work of art with students, and this especially happens in situations when visiting exhibitions, museums and galleries or sites of cultural and historical heritage. Even without prior knowledge of the works, they may still be approached based on four fundamental points of view, each of which has the potential to generate a wide range of discussion, questioning and finding answers. These are the artistic motif or theme - in short, artistic form or language, artistic technique and the process of artistic creation, and the impression that the work leaves on the observer. Unfortunately, the reality is that in everyday, as well as in professional discourse, an intuitive approach to art prevails, and intuition is subjective, therefore the reception of a work of art is mainly reduced to questions of taste as subjective questions. However, we must not forget that taste is acquired, and that there are objective criteria for this. In the communication of a child with a work of art, an intermediary is needed, and in art education, this would be the teacher. At the same time, the teacher should encourage and use a variety of methods to establish communication with their students about works of art. A variety of methods and communication are the hallmarks of good teaching. Turković (2006) believes that although a work of art should not be viewed only as a communication structure, it is undoubtedly a message that conveys the life experience of one community in the most direct way, comprehensible to every other community. Through an encounter with a work of art, students can understand that there are other types of communication, besides language, communication that is realized through written and oral expression. In art class, we express ourselves and communicate using a visual language, the knowledge of which should be a priority given the times we live in, and which rely more and more on the power of images and visual communications through the media (Županić Benić, 2011). Studying works of art offers the possibility for children to develop artistically creative factors as competences related to seeing, thinking, reacting and expressing themselves through art. The teacher's role is to support the development of these competencies in students through choosing examples of works of art that students will look at, encouraging students to say their first impression of the work, then directing them to notice the details, and managing the discussion about the work of art.

In the absence of original works of art, reproductions of them are available as teaching aids, both in art textbooks and as integral parts of monographs, lexicons, encyclopedias, websites, and so on. Students should be introduced to well-chosen examples from the world of fine arts, including the structure of the work of art, that is, the basic elements of its composition. This is how we develop sensibility and sense for art in general, for understanding art content and problems (Tanay, 1990:108). Works of art thus become the content of children's consciousness and encourage their imagination to create works of art (Grgurić and Jakubin, 1996). The works of art or their reproductions that we value must correspond to the basic criteria of the art historical profession and the principle of quality. We use works from domestic and international art treasures. When evaluating, we proceed from the most subtle perception of the work of art. »During the development of perception, students are introduced to certain problems of fine art and at the same time train themselves to see a work of art, understand it and enjoy it« (Duh, 2004: 45).

In this paper, an effort was made to determine how often a child's encounter with art products is present, since it is a direct way to develop children's ability to communicate artistically and create independently.

According to Herceg et al. (2010), the ability of children's artistic expression is conditioned by the development of the ability to observe works of art because they are mutually dependent. The authors explain that both activities reveal the level of a child's general and artistic development and their receptivity to artistic messages. Thus, they conclude that the ability to observe works of art in the development phase is ahead of the possibility of artistic expression.

Use of textbooks when teaching fine arts

There are different and conflicting opinions about the use of textbooks in teaching art, from those who advocate the mandatory introduction of textbooks, through those who believe that its use in primary schools is not necessary, to the point of view that textbooks are only needed in the upper grades of primary school. The textbook as a basic educational and teaching tool contains systematic educational content of the most modern scientific and artistic fields, differentiated according to the developmental, intellectual and psychomotor abilities of the students, categorized according to classes or educational cycles, and programmatically divided according to educational areas and subjects (Žužul, 2007, according to Pivac 2008). Artistic reproductions contain artistic text, which is impossible to read and understand if we do not know the language in which that text is spoken. Analytical observation is not just seeing. To master analysis, that is, aesthetic assessment, it is necessary for students to master artistic language, which is one of the fundamental tasks of art class. Considering that textbooks supplement and accompany the curriculum with their content, that is, the selection of reproductions, and that experts from the field of art education methods participated in their creation, it would be useful for teachers and students to, like all other textbooks, for them to be used. However, our reality is that in lower primary education, little attention is paid to the planning of art lessons. Often its concept remains without a prominent goal and without striving to achieve anything, mistaking it for complete spontaneity and freedom. There are also teachers who are mainly focused on "illustrating" content from other subject areas, that is, presenting them in an artistic form. These are usually contents from the field of knowledge of science. At the same time, what is valorized is technical-motor dexterity, while all other factors of artistic creativity remain neglected, even though art and creativity are closely related concepts; they complement each other, that is, build on each other.

Just as the fine arts program is a creative application of general methodological views on the importance of fine arts, and the annual schedule of teaching materials is again a creative application of the fine arts program to individual working conditions and the peculiarities of students, textbooks are a creative application of opinions from the program and general requirements for the acquisition of fine arts, therefore, it is understandable that it is of great use to us (Karlavaris, 1991).

Textbooks proved to be practical, as they simultaneously contain reproductions of works of art and explanations of art terms. Without textbooks, teachers are left to their own devices for acquiring art reproductions and a private collection of literature. The role of textbooks is not to impose a specific, unchangeable way of teaching, but to provide a base on which each teacher will build their teaching style in accordance with the affinities of their students.

Textbooks do not have to be followed as the letter of the law, but they must provide equal information to all students and thus set a standard that cannot be lowered (Košćec, Bračun, and Loher, 2010).

RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the paper was to examine the role of teachers in child's communication with the work of art through the representation of the use of works of art and their reproductions in the teaching of art, and indirectly point out the importance of developing students' competencies through the visual art language.

The research was conducted on a sample of 220 respondents, 200 of them were students and 20 were homeroom teachers. The student sub-sample consisted of fourth and fifth grade primary school students from urban and rural areas. The research was carried out in the academic year of 2020/21, in seven primary schools in the Maglaj municipality.

Research methods

In this research, a survey questionnaire for teachers and a survey questionnaire for students were used as research instruments, which consisted of clearly and precisely formulated closed-ended questions. The questionnaire for teachers contained 15 questions based on gained insight into the importance they attach to children's communication with works of art, through the frequency of analysis of works of art and reproductions in the teaching process. The questionnaire for students was made up of 9 questions based on which we collected answers about how often and in what way the children interact with works of art.

The research part presents the results and interpretation of surveys conducted among teachers and students on the importance and frequency of using works of art and reproductions as teaching aids in art education. The t-test was calculated to determine whether there are significant differences between the obtained results on certain variables, that is, those related to demographic data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents (sub-sample of teachers) according to the demographic data. It is evident from the table that 90% of teachers are female, which is to be expected considering that they mostly choose the teaching profession.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sub-sample of respondents (teachers)

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	2	10
Female	18	90
School		
Urban	10	50
Rural	10	50
Age		
Under 35	6	30
From 35 to 50	14	70
Over 50	0	0
Title		
Bachelor	0	0
Homeroom teacher	20	100
Master	0	0
Length of working career		
Under 10	3	15
From 11 to 25	17	85
Over 25	0	0

Considering the area where schools are located, the sample is uniform, in urban and rural schools. Most of the respondents are middle-aged (35-50 years old), all of them are homeroom teachers, and 85% of them have work experience in the profession of 11-25 years.

Table 2 presents the respondents' answers on the frequency of using textbooks as teaching aids in art education. According to the data obtained, 65% of teachers always and often use textbooks for art in teaching, while there are no teachers who never use them. The differences between the percentage of teachers from urban and rural areas when responding to this question are not significant, meaning that teachers in both urban and rural areas use (do not use) art textbooks almost equally.

Table 2. Overview of respondents' answers (teachers and students) about the frequency of textbook use in art classes

	How often do they use textbooks in their art class			
	always (in every class)	often (in over half of classes)	rarely (in less than half of classes)	never (in no classes)
Teachers working in urban schools	15%	15%	20%	-
Teachers working in rural schools	10%	25%	15%	-
Teachers working for 0-10 years	5%	10%	5%	-
Teachers working for 11-25 years	20%	30%	30%	-
TOTAL	25%	40%	35%	
Students going to rural schools	6%	14%	4%	26%
Students going to urban schools	5%	8%	8%	29%
TOTAL	11%	22%	12%	55%

Students gave opposite answers. 55% of students claim that they *never* (not even in a single class) use textbooks for art. The t-test showed that a significantly larger number of students never use textbooks in art classes compared to students who declared that they *always* use the textbook (test=6.61; $p < 0.000$; $n=200$), as well as, compared to students who stated that they use it often (test=4.79; $p < 0.000$; $n=200$). In the research conducted by Čalo and Kušćević (2006), in which 200 classroom teachers participated, the result was that the largest percentage of them, 50.5%, used the art textbook occasionally, and the smallest percentage, 22% of the art teachers, never used it. Also, 74% of teachers answered that their students do not use the art textbook. Based on the above data, it can be concluded that teachers mostly do not insist on the use of textbooks as teaching aids in art classes. The reason for this is the non-obligation of its use in the lower grades of primary school. However, the fact that textbooks and curricula are co-constructs should be considered. "The task of the curriculum is to connect the contents of the textbooks with regard to the set general goals of education. Therefore, the art textbook is a curriculum builder, and its appropriate application should reveal its contribution to the modernization of art education" (Pivac, 2008: 463). In their research paper on the benefits of using textbooks for art, Bračun, Košćec and Loher (2010) confirmed that textbooks significantly facilitate and improve the teaching of art.

Importance of using works of art (reproduction) for high-quality art education

In the curriculum of art classes, one of the goals of both learning and teaching is to perceive the role of art in society and to analyze works of art. This research attempted to find out how much importance the classroom teachers attach to this fact.

Table 3. Overview of respondents' answers on the importance of using works of art for quality art classes

I believe that using works of art is important for quality art classes			
	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Teachers working in urban schools	45%	5%	-
Teachers working in rural schools	35%	10%	5%
Teachers working for 0-10 years	20%	-	-
Teachers working for 11-25 years	60%	15%	5%
TOTAL	80%	15%	5%

Based on the total number of respondents, 80% of teachers *agree* that the use of works of art or their reproduction is essential for quality teaching. 15% are undecided, while 5% of respondents do not agree with this statement. A significantly higher percentage of teachers stated that the use of works of art is essential for high-quality teaching of fine arts compared to undecided teachers and those who disagree with the statement (t-test=2.91; $0.01 < p < 0.001$; $n=20$). Although most teachers believe that it is important for students to learn about and analyze valuable works of art, the following data contradicts their claims.

Visiting galleries or museums to see works of art

The changes that have taken place in education, which are related to the modern approach to the organization of teaching, have also resulted in a different view of the contextual framework, that is, the environment in which teaching takes place. Visits to museums, galleries or other exhibitions have multiple significance, and are realized mainly as a form of extracurricular teaching.

Table 4 presents the respondents' answers (both sub-samples) about how often they visit museums, galleries and other exhibitions as part of art classes. Based on the presented results, it can be concluded that teachers from urban and rural environments take students to exhibitions equally often (*once a year*), and that the differences between the percentages of teachers from one and the other (with regard to the place of residence) are not statistically significant ($t(%) = 0.56$; $0.7 < p < 0.6$; $n = 20$). There are no significant differences between teachers from urban and rural areas who *never* visit galleries, art exhibitions or other exhibitions with their students ($t\text{-test} = 0.25$; $0.9 < p < 0.8$; $n = 20$). This means that every other student (respondent) has never visited a museum, gallery or any other exhibition.

There are no statistically significant differences between the statements of teachers with shorter tenure (3 teachers; 10%) and those with longer tenure (17 teachers; 30%) when considering visits to cultural institutions and events once a year ($t(%) = -0.7$; $0.5 < p < 0.4$; $n = 20$).

Table 4. Respondents' answers (students and teachers) on frequency of visits to museums, galleries and other exhibitions

We visit museums, galleries and other exhibitions to see works of art				
	Twice a year	More than twice a year	Once a year	Never
Teachers working in urban schools	-	-	25%	25%
Teachers working in rural schools	5	-	15%	30%
Teachers working 0-10 years	-	-	10%	10%
Teachers working 11-25 years	5	-	30%	45%
TOTAL	5%	-	40%	55%
Students going to urban schools	-	-	22%	28%
Students going to rural schools	2%	3%	22%	23%
Fourth grade students	1%	2%	18%	29%
Fifth grade students	1%	1%	26%	22%
TOTAL	2%	3%	44%	51%

Similar answers were given by the students. 44% of respondents confirmed that they go to galleries, museums or other exhibitions once a year with their teacher, while 51% of students stated that they never go. The fact that the largest percentage of students (51%), and the largest percentage of teachers (55%) stated that they *never* visit galleries, museums or other exhibitions is worrying. The importance of visiting cultural and artistic institutions is not only reflected in learning in the immediate reality, but also in the acquiring of aesthetic judgment or taste. According to Kant's theory, taste is based both on a personal and social level. Taste reflects a subjective impression, but also of generally accepted approval of beauty standards, which means that it is both private and universal, individual and social, subjective and objective at the same time (Gronow, 2000). The acquiring of aesthetic judgment or taste in children and youth is one of the basic tasks of art education and is achieved through visual literacy. Visual literacy is expressed by reading, understanding and applying visual language, that is, by interpreting visual information in works of art.

Based on the results of this research, we may conclude that, although the museum occupies an important place in the educational system, as well as in the wider social context, the cooperation between museums and schools is not satisfactory. One of the issues pointed out by Ambrose and Paine (2012) is that very few teachers learn, as part of their own education, how to use the potential of museums in their work. One of the proposals to solve this problem is for museums to organize and offer training opportunities for teachers (Ambrose, Paine, 2012).

Assessing students' understanding and knowledge of art language through analyzing works of art

The teachers' answers to the question of whether they assess the students' understanding and knowledge of art language during classes through analyzing works of art are presented in Table 5. 90% of teachers answered that they *always* and *often* do this. Also, a significantly higher percentage (70%) of teachers during classes *often* assess students' understanding and knowledge of visual language through analyzing works of art, compared to teachers who stated that they *always* do this (20%) (t-test=-2, 24; $0.05 < p < 0.02$; $n=20$).

Table 5. Overview of respondents' answers (teachers) on frequency of works of art analysis during classes

	During classes, I assess students' knowledge and understanding of art concepts through analyzing works of art			
	always (in every class)	often (in over half of classes)	rarely (in less than half of classes)	never (in no classes)
Teachers working in rural schools	10%	35%	5%	-
Teachers working in urban schools	10%	35%	-	5%
Teachers working for 0-10 years	10%	10%	-	-
Teachers working for 11-25 years	10%	60%	5%	5%
TOTAL	20%	70%	5%	5%

The respondents' (teachers') answers on this question lead to the conclusion that teachers with longer work experience (60%) significantly more often check students' understanding and knowledge of art concepts through analyzing works of art, and discuss and lead successful communication with students in the art class compared to teachers with shorter work experience (10%) ($t\text{-test}=-2.34$; $0.05 < p < 0.02$; $n=20$).

Dialogue and discussion about art problems

The purpose of observing works of art (reproduction) in art classes is to raise awareness of a specific art problem, which forms the core of the teaching unit. Developing the ability of aesthetic assessment is a pedagogically demanding task that implies a good knowledge of art language, art history, and the teacher's ability to analyze, and nevertheless, knowledge of children's overall development and age characteristics to use adequate content (reproductions, works of art of all art fields) and methodical procedures. Aesthetic assessment greatly influences the development of artistic sensitivity and taste, which was discussed earlier. The results presented in the following Table contain the respondents' (students') answers about how often they discuss an art problem in class.

Table 5. Overview of respondents' answers (students) on frequency of works of art analysis during classes

We discuss art problems with teacher in art classes				
	always (in every class)	often (in over half of classes)	rarely (in less than half of classes)	never (in no classes)
Students going to rural schools	17%	8%	14%	11%
Students going to urban schools	9%	12%	16%	13%
Fourth grade students	20%	8%	12%	10%
Fifth grade students	6%	12%	18%	14%
TOTAL	26%	20%	30%	24%

When asked if they discuss art problems with the teacher during class, 26% of students answered that they always do so, 20% that they do so often, 30% answered that they rarely talk, however, 24% of students answered that they never talk to the teacher about the art problem. The distribution of the answers offered to the question is quite uniform, but it may be observed that, according to the students' statements, more than half of the teachers *rarely* or *never* discuss art problems in class. Fourth-grade students *always* discuss an art problem significantly more often than fifth-grade students ($t\text{-test}=3.78$; $p < 0.000$; $n=200$). The least number of fourth-grade students answered that they *never* discuss an art problem in art classes, therefore, we may assume that fourth-grade teachers plan and implement art classes methodically more correctly, compared to teachers who teach those classes in fifth grades. This data is not surprising if we consider that art classes in the fifth grades, at least when it comes to the schools included in our sample, are still taught by homeroom teachers.

They often do not have enough education in the field of fine arts themselves. Suzić (2001) states that teachers are often unsure of the approach to analyzing a work of art with students, and this especially happens in situations when visiting exhibitions, museums and galleries or sites of cultural and historical heritage. However, even without prior knowledge of the works, they can still be approached from four fundamental points of view, each of which has the potential to generate a wide range of discussion, questioning and response. These are the artistic motif or theme - in short, artistic form or language, artistic technique and the process of artistic creation, and the impression that the work leaves on the viewer.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the presented results, it may be concluded that teachers are aware of the importance of works of for the development of students' artistic and aesthetic communication, but that, in practice, they do not sufficiently create the conditions in which they could communicate artistically.

For the most part, teachers do not insist on the use of textbooks as teaching aids in art classes. The reason for this is the non-obligation of its use in the lower grades of primary school. However, the fact that textbooks and curricula are co-constructs should be considered. The textbook, as a basic educational and teaching tool, should be an indispensable part of the art lesson, given that it contains systematically processed contents of artistic fields, differentiated according to the developmental, intellectual and psychomotor abilities of the students.

Although teachers are aware of the importance of using works of art as a teaching tool for the development of artistic-aesthetic communication (80% of teachers believe that it is important for students to get to know and analyze them), further results do not speak in this regard. More than half of students (51%) and teachers (54%) claim that they never visit museums, galleries and other exhibitions, while 40% of teachers said that they visit these institutions once a year. The t-test showed that there are no significant differences between the responses of respondents (a sub-sample of teachers) in relation to the place of residence. This means that teachers from both urban and rural areas equally often do (or do not) take students to cultural and artistic institutions for the purpose of getting to know works of art.

The teachers, for the most part (90%), claim that they *always* and *often* assess the students' understanding and knowledge of visual language through the analysis of the visual work during art classes. Contrary to teachers' claims, more than half of them (54%), according to students' statements, *rarely* or *never* discuss art problems in class.

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