

## Aesthetic perceptions of art educators in higher education level at art classes and their effect on learners

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### Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the aesthetic awareness of art education academicians working in different higher education institutions of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Qualitative method and descriptive analysis were used in the study. A semi-structured interview form was created to reveal the views of academicians, and interviews were conducted to determine the levels of aesthetic competence with art education. The results of the research reveals that there is a relatively high level of aesthetic competence among the art educators who participated in the study. The participants emphasised that the theoretical structure of art classes can encourage students' creativity and aesthetic perceptions as well as awareness. In addition, the proficiency level of aesthetics may be directly related to the quality of art education curricula of the faculty. As a result, aesthetic perception levels not only help to improve students' success but also enable them to create artworks and motivate students' performance in creating artworks.

**Keywords:** Art, aesthetic, perception, fine arts, higher education, Cyprus.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there are important developments in the fields of economy, technology and innovation (Kohnova & Papula 2018). Education in arts is an integral part of each human being's development. Learning progress through the ages began with Plato (Ladkin, 2018) and has emphasised the importance of arts in the education process. Art education incorporates the disciplines of music, performance, theatre and visual arts (Keser-Cihaner & Erdem, 2018). Art enhances the process of learning. The systems nourished by this process include our integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional and motor capacities, which are in fact the driving forces behind all other learnings (Jensen, 2001; Orak & Demirci, 2018; Seckinli & Arslan, 2019). Eisner and Day (2004) defined art education as an education research and practice that gives a voice to the intellectual rigour encompassed in artistic pursuits. He advocated in his study titled 'The Arts and the Creation of Mind' that exploring many perspectives on how learning through art can develop the mind. On the other hand, Kroflic (2007) stated that the value of art should increase in the spirit of postmodernism, because it is a key instrument that recognises various perspectives. According to Spivak (2012) who claimed that individuals can escape from emotional isolation with the help of humanities.

However, Fiske (1999) stated that the impact of the arts on learning is that it can reach students who are not normally influenced by traditional methods of teaching. It transforms the learning environment into one of discovery. Students connect with each other more effectively. The arts provide challenges to students at all levels and students become sustained, self-directed learners. Teachers who teach at schools and kindergartens work with artists to increase the cultural level of individuals and nations (Nevanen, Juvonen & Ruismaki, 2014). For example, Reggio Emilia schools and early education programmes, such as the Montessori Method, focus on art and creative expression (Cadwell, 2003). As much as how important the school areas and teaching method in art education, it is also parallel important as target and contents. While talking about the target of art education, there is an important point that it should be gained the aesthetic aspect on the person (Hursen & Miralay, 2016; Komara & Kucharczyk-Brusb, 2018; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). Through the historical aspect and when it is investigated as an aesthetic concept, Aesthetics has been explained in a philosophical manner to discuss the relationship between the viewer and art. Again, throughout history, the practice of aesthetics has transformed. The German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, first used the term aesthetics in 1744 to mean 'The science of the beauty'. Today, aesthetics can be defined as the study of beauty and the mind responses to it. At the same time, aesthetics is a branch of philosophy concerned with art. In particular, it focuses on art created sources, forms and effects. A beneficial way to achieved greater understanding of the evolution of aesthetics is to ask the question, "what is the art?" (Baglama, Yucesoy, Miralay & Demirok, 2018; Parsons & Blocker, 1993).

The question is that really art is the one of the most important questions with many answers that children ask when they observe a sculpture or painting in the classroom environments (Cetinkaya, 2017). Through the use of aesthetics inquiry, students can learn new ways to appreciate and value art. The other important aspect of art is to provide students with models of the intellectual tools that will enable them to make their own critical reading (Pittard, 1988; SoyLucicek, 2019). As these aesthetics disciplines are translated into art education, this provides the foundation for classroom teachers to provide aesthetics education (Freedman, 2018). At the same time, aesthetics is one of the sub-disciplines of Discipline-Based Art Education, along with art criticism, art history and art production. In addition, DBAE (Discipline-Based Arts Education) helps to initiate change in art education by making it a positive experience for each person involved in the educational process (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018). Another factor is that the DBAE curriculum includes aesthetics and offers expanded opportunities for students to engage in aesthetic analysis of nature and the creative world (Cowan & Clover, 1991). Aesthetic study activities allow the teacher and students to analyse nature and various characteristics of aesthetics experiences. Aesthetics experiences involve the consciousness of emotional states (Adams, 1985). When it was investigated at the higher education, it has been determined that the research on the sufficiency on the aesthetic of the art educators at the faculties is not enough. Also,

the research on the art education and contents is limited. These findings show that how the topics on art education are not considered. So that it is so necessary to make scientific research on that. Specially, it must be thought to the stages of the aesthetic educations and art education to make, perceive, aesthetic anxiety, and context, learn and evaluate these phases. The another important point is that the teachers have so important duties on the investigation thought about the student's working progress and behaviour to led them their right way (Miralay, 2017). From this point of view, it is important to do research on this topic and talk about the art educators sufficiency. The last point is that art teachers are not required to be aestheticians, but they must have a basic understanding of aesthetics through the skills for teaching students. Aesthetic experience gives art a special quality, which allows the recognition and sharing of knowledge (Kroflc, 2007).

### **1.1. Purpose of the study**

This study describes, analyses and evaluates the art educators' understanding of aesthetics and the role of aesthetics on art education, as well as the effect on social and environmental factors. In this research, teachers on the programme and their student's artworks, it may be criticised from the aspect of art and aesthetic. Therefore, teachers should gain discrimination and improve students' aesthetic judgments. Because it is hard to improve the aesthetic anxiety spontaneously and it is possible with creating specific areas. The aim is to make profit to teachers on any artworks with activities and materials, artworks and also show all these in the school areas. As a result, art educators should have knowledge and experience on the aesthetic of the relationship with this topic.

## **2. Methodology**

The method of the research is qualitative. A qualitative study is a method used for in-depth research on participants. The art educators have been asked semi-structured questions focused on the awareness, perceptions and approaches of aesthetic. The interview form has been occurred with five questions ( $n = 5$ ) and in two parts. The first part, for being determined of the participant's demographic qualities, has been art discipline and genders. While the interview questions were been preparing, it has been asked to experts to suppose of the extent acceptability. The interview form has occurred with five questions. The participants have been chosen from several universities in Northern Cyprus society. The data have been collected as documents by the researchers. The research questions have been determined as below:

- What is the definition of aesthetics?
- What is the importance of aesthetics on art education?
- What is the impact of aesthetic anxiety on art education?
- How do you teach the subject of the aesthetics to your students?
- Is there any effect of aesthetic education on social and environmental matters?

### **2.1. Participants**

The participants were three art ( $n = 3$ ) educators selected from art and design faculties in different universities. The educators who have participated in this research and investigated their demographic qualifications; two ( $n = 2$ ) participants are male and the other one is female ( $n = 1$ ). Three ( $n = 3$ ) participants have graduated from the art education and their work periods are between 5 and 10 years. When participants' work areas have been investigated, one of them is ceramic discipline, other is art and the last one is a graphic designer.

### **2.2. Data analysis**

Data gained from the research have been collected by using the descriptive analysis method. The aim of this method is to evaluate from collected data. The data have been classified, summarised and

evaluated. Between the data has been found a relation with reasons and results and compare between the phenomena. To this extent, the data gained from the participants have been analysed from different topic in depth and also supported with quoted text.

### 3. Findings

In this part, the data that were gained from the interview and participants have been placed

#### 3.1. Participant 1

##### *Q1. What is the definition of aesthetics?*

Aesthetics has a philosophical and artistic meaning, at the same time, the meaning has transformed throughout history. It is also an important phenomenon that can be observed all the time. However, aesthetics can be perceived as a 'science of beauty', and can be defined as a process of how people understand and perceive as well. In order to understand beauty, several specific elements are required, namely, harmony, dominance, integrity, balance and proportion. These elements are significantly important for a painting or work of art to be considered beautiful.

Although aesthetics is a concept that includes beauty, on the other hand, in modern artwork, aesthetics can involve the opposite concept of beauty, namely, ugliness.

Therefore, aesthetics means beauty; but at the same time, the perception of beauty can vary from country to country. From this perspective, it is another matter, because, it is a subject or philosophy that depends on the viewer's perspective of the object.

*'Philosophical, science of beauty, there are specific elements, perspectives that can vary from around the world'.*

*'Definition of aesthetics is beauty of the nature'.*

##### *Q2. What is the importance of aesthetics in art education?*

In art education, the aesthetic approach is the most important as well as the most delicate. This is because we try to understand what art is through aesthetic anxiety and struggle to do that in artworks or practice. Art education and aesthetics are complementary. Through aesthetic anxiety, students can gain thorough and interrogate abilities when both art education and aesthetic are, can be occurred an aesthetic and art appearance, students only can express their thought and feeling on the papers, canvas or any sculptor by the aesthetic anxiety. In this context, aesthetic education has a significantly important impact on art education. Therefore, art education cannot exist without aesthetic awareness and approaches.

*'Art education cannot be imagined without aesthetic awareness. It is the factor that gives something an artistic appearance'.*

*'Importance of aesthetics on art education and impact of students'.*

##### *Q3. What is the impact of aesthetic anxiety on art education?*

Aesthetic approaches can be extremely beneficial when used in an appropriate manner as well as purpose in art education. It can even be said that aesthetics are the raw materials of arts because it is the mind and soul of arts. Any artworks that are created with positive emotions can evoke positive feelings in the viewer's mind and soul and leaves a positive impression on the viewer's perspectives. For example, when we visit any art exhibition, a positive impression may be imparted when leaving; however, at the same time, we may remain stuck on any aspect of the paintings. In this connection, this demonstrates the influence of aesthetic satisfaction on our artworks and the viewer's perspective.

*'Aesthetic is a raw material like the mind and soul. It leaves a positive impact on the viewer and influences aesthetic satisfaction'.*

*Q4. How do you teach the subject of aesthetics to your students?*

In order to explain aesthetic elements to the students, art educators should talk and discuss about these elements to increase the appreciation levels of the students. After discussing these elements, art educators should explain the process of aesthetics and practice on works of art. These elements are integrity, harmony, dominance, balance and proportion. When these elements are combined in any painting, we could say that the artwork is beautiful. However, the opposite could be said regarding aesthetics in the modern art world. For example; contrasting colours could be used to talk about harmony because these contrasting colours divert the viewer from ordinary situations and can create different and new appearances in paintings. Consequently, balance in harmony or proportion in life drawing is important and should be applied in a correct manner, which enables people to have aesthetic satisfaction and abilities.

*'Specific subjects can be discussed, processed and practiced on this theme'.*

*'Subject for teaching aesthetics in art education and get their result'.*

*Q5. Is there any effect of aesthetic education on social and environmental matters?*

Aesthetic anxiety and consciousness not only refers to the students being able to remember things. In fact, aesthetics is a way of expressing our way of life and the social process throughout our lives. This is because we can understand if we have aesthetic anxiety by examining our surrounding environment and the buildings where we choose to live, which reflects our aesthetic approaches. As a result of the aesthetics knowledge which is acquired by students through art education, it reflects their own lives as well as their social lives. Therefore, parents first have many duties in this respect and students have many responsibilities in their own education so that they can pursue a beautiful future. Resultantly, if people share these responsibilities and duties and also struggle collaboratively, a more aesthetic and contented society can be created.

*'Aesthetics and education Expresses our way of life as well as the environment and buildings, which can affect our social lives. Parents have duties and students should take responsibilities to create a more beautiful and contented society'.*

*'Effect of aesthetic education on environment and society'.*

### **3.2. Participant**

*Q1. What is the definition of aesthetics?*

Aesthetics can be described as a systematic way of thought and beauty and it shapes the quality of aesthetics. Additionally, art education can be thought of as such a system. However, at this point, we need to ask ourselves this question: how can art education be taught in schools?

*'Beauty and quality are meanings of aesthetics. Art education is such a system. The question must be, how can art education be taught at school?'*

*"Definition of aesthetics in art education".*

*Q2. What is the importance of aesthetics on art education?*

Aesthetic anxiety does not only take place in art education but also plays a crucial role in all disciplines, as there is an easy transition amongst various disciplines. Thereby, that level of aesthetical anxiety can be seen, felt and appreciated. I think that it is very important to receive feedback from participants throughout the process.

*'Aesthetic anxiety doesn't only take place in art education and also transition amongst disciplines is important to receive feedback'.*

*'Importance of aesthetic in art education'.*

*Q3. What is the impact of aesthetic anxiety on art education?*

First, the messages need to be understood by the listeners. These messages can be in the form of shape, sound, colour, movement, interaction and technology.

*'The messages must be understood by the listener. The messages are shape, sound, colour'.*

*'Aid of aesthetic anxiety on masterpieces'.*

*Q4. How do you teach the subject of aesthetics to your students?*

It is vital to emphasise the description of these aesthetical experiences in today's society as the boundaries have expanded.

*'Aesthetic experience in today' society as the boundaries have expanded'.*

*'Boundaries in society are included as subjects in aesthetic education'.*

*Q5. Are there any effects of aesthetic education on social and environmental matters?*

Culture together with creativity and design arouses curiosity and helps individuals to improve their personal development and experiences by defining these sociocultural values through focusing on art, as it opens doors to virtually any subject or issue.

*'Culture, creativity and design help to improve development and defining of social-cultural values in art education'.*

*'Aesthetic and social and also environmental impact on our life'*

### **3.3. Participant 3**

*Q1. What is the importance of aesthetics in art education?*

It would be a more correct approach to investigate the definition of art and art education in terms of aesthetics. Although the definition of art has changed throughout the years, it clearly stands as an evolution of humans against nature. This opposite standing of art in nature has a close relationship with nature. In fact, it emphasises the concept of beauty in the definition of aesthetics. Art education should be included in pre-school programmes as well and should be systematically taught to learners. Individuals with flexible art approaches would be more creative in finding solutions to problems. An individual with some aesthetical knowledge would take a critical approach against all the things around him/her. Therefore, those individuals would be able to define the concepts in a more appropriate manner. For example, we might use the concept of beauty in the context of defining a meal... Thus, instead of saying 'the meal was nice', it would be more appropriate to say 'the meal was delicious'.

*'Definition of art and aesthetic are the same. Art education must begin from pre-school. Art is a way to find solutions to problems'.*

*'Definition of aesthetic and also art education in today's art world'.*

*Q2. To what extent is aesthetical anxiety important in art education?*

Aesthetical anxiety is vital in art education. Basic art education and basic design need to be integrated into lessons in art as the main elements or principles. A learner could be successful if he/she passes a test in art with high results. However, achieving a high mark in art does not mean that learners will be successful later in their lives unless they are observed to apply what they have learned

into practice. For instance, those learners could show their understanding of art, even with the clothes they are wearing or their relationship with society.

*'Basic art education has main principles and elements. Putting into practice is more important rather than getting high marks'.*

*'Importance of the aesthetic anxiety in art education'.*

Q3. *What particular topics would you choose to transfer the concept of art to your learners?*

The concept of aesthetics should exist in each lesson programme and learners need to put into practice what they have already studied in each lesson. Each student who is interested in arts must also take 'History in arts and aesthetics, philosophy and sociology of art'.

*'Students must take history in arts and aesthetic, philosophy and sociology of art to learn the concept of art'.*

*'Aesthetics should be a subject taught in art education'.*

Q4. *Is there any benefit from aesthetical anxiety in society?*

Aesthetical anxiety could bring society closer in a peaceful and respectful manner. To prove this point, societies with aesthetical anxiety already exist in the world. Those people who have a high level of aesthetical anxiety would have a more common view about the world, even if their religion, language and nationality are all different.

*'Aesthetic anxiety helps to create a society that is peaceful and respectful'.*

*'Benefit of aesthetic anxiety on the society'.*

Q5. *What are the advantages of aesthetics in teaching art to learners?*

Aesthetics help learners to have better perspectives of their surroundings. Learners would have various points of view by observing the topics from different angles. People with a high level of aesthetical anxiety would follow the concept of 'more' and thereby continue to practice, question and try to learn as much as possible in life.

*'Aesthetics help to have better and more different viewpoint about the environment'.*

*'Advantages of teaching aesthetic to learners in art education'.*

#### **4. Discussion and conclusions**

The aim of the research determines the art educator's aesthetic anxiety at the art higher education. Through the research, under aims have been explained in this way. As a result of these three different perspectives, it is evident that there are many definitions for the word aesthetics. One view holds that, the beauty and how we perceive it. Participant point of view and culture is affected and influenced by our ability to discuss harmony, freedom, equality, balance and perceptions. However, another result shows that aesthetics is a result of systematic thinking and the definition of quality. Another third view holds that, in order to define aesthetics, need to research art and learn the educational aspects. Art coexists with nature and it is in harmony. It draws attention to the idea of beauty and aesthetics (Smith, 2014). Learners believe that art education and practice should take place in schools. In the same perspective, experts believe that the knowledge of aesthetics is acquired at an early age (McClure, Tarr, Thompson & Eckhoff, 2017; Unver & Cakir Ilhan, 2019).

The research also questioned the role of aesthetics in art education and instructors said that efforts had to be made in order to understand this in greater detail. Aesthetics and art education are whole; however, whether an artful visualisation can be obtained is questionable. Do aesthetic awareness and art education go hand in hand? A second view holds that aesthetic anxiety is not just a part of art education, but also a part of other disciplines. Also, the programmed which have been applied at

school aesthetic perception will be gained so many things through the lesson. For example, Savoie (2017) support to have balance for student and be more creative personality in schools. Another viewpoint is that aesthetics is the main topic in art education. Messages about their topic were shapes, sound, colour, movement, reaction and technology. Another view is that it should be part of the curriculum, a part of education. In the literature, specialist believes that art history aesthetics, philosophy and sociology are lessons that students need to learn (Docherty, 2018; Smith, 2014; Twigg & Garvis, 2010). In another research study, the foundations of aesthetics were questioned. For example, if a student does not possess philosophical information, then nothing can be practiced. Aesthetics can be taught and practiced within the framework of modern society. It will provide peace and hope and can exist in harmony. Even with different religions and cultures, aesthetics can develop. For example (Mamur, 2012) said that progressing of aesthetic perception and discrimination help to grow up the person who protects him/her by itself as a social and also can be able to think in success and quality (Selvakkumar, 2019).

Another aim of the research measure of aesthetic awareness within society was questioned. This topic will be developed through education and position. Aesthetics has a significant impact on society; cultural creativity and design go hand in hand. For example, Uz (2018) said art education, the necessity of drawing courses and development of creativity and aesthetic skills through drawing courses. This enables us to have a better perspective and we can develop socio-cultural values as a result. This is not a topic to be ignored or disregarded. Education is of significant importance, as it provides us many benefits, as discussed and shown above. Last, the realisation and presence of aesthetics within social life and its effects are observed and questioned. The result of aesthetic education shows 'sensitivity' and 'value' based attitudes towards the environment. Thus, it is of utmost importance. It has been seen that fields such as culture, creativity, design and social environment are significantly strengthened as a result of this educational field. Consequently, it is obvious that aesthetics is an important stepping stone for the education system. As we see on the teacher's viewpoint from the interview, for gaining aesthetic consciousness to student, education system and art education is so important too. Moreover, teaching the concept of aesthetic to the student is necessary for the art education programme and it should be progressed through in theory and practice as well. It is also necessary to teach art history and philosophy side of the aesthetic to the student. Last, another effect of the aesthetic conscious help to learn to have more sensitivity personality to nature and social life.

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