

COGNITIVE DISCOURSES

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

ISSN 2321-1075 ISSN 2347-5692

VOLUME 11

ISSUE 1

JULY 2023

cdimj.naspublishers.com

Published Since 2013

Exploring the Role of Art-Integrated Learning in Fostering 21st Century Skills

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Abstract

As the world changes every day, as we have seen in the post-Covid Era. A natural calamity just stumped us out of all our wits. Hence its becomes very important for students to equip themselves with the much needed skills and knowledge to navigate, innovate and adjust in this ever-changing world. 21st century skills prepare students for a tomorrow that they have not yet seen. It brings them out of the bookish into the real world. This research paper explores the role of art integration in developing and learning the 21st-century skills needed for personal and professional success. As we know that Art helps one express themselves, Art Integrated learning helps students becomes more creative, imaginative, expressive and better at content learning too. By using art integration strategies in their classes teachers can nurture a wide range of abilities such as creativity, critical thinking, and communication. This paper investigates how art-integrated learning contributes to developing collaboration, adaptability and information literacy skills. The paper collates findings from the literature review and firsthand observations and experiences gathered from the field. In conclusion, this study highlights the significance of art-integrated learning as it equips students with essential skills required for success in the contemporary world. This paper provides valuable insights not just for teachers and policymakers, but also for art teachers those interested in preparing students for the challenges of the modern world.

Keywords: art integrated learning, 21st-century skills, school education

Introduction

Art Integrated Learning

When we incorporate Arts like Visual Arts, Music, dance, drama, theatre or puppetry into the regular traditional classroom teaching of English, mathematics, science, social science etc., we are using an approach called Art-integrated learning. According to Silverstein and Layne (2010) “in art integration, students construct and express their understanding of the content through an art form. Students are learning both the content as well as the art. This approach seeks to enhance the learning experience by tapping into the expressive and creative elements of the arts, enriching traditional academic content with artistic methods and perspectives.”

The advantages of Art Integrated Learning are as follows:

1. **Creativity and Expression:** Through Art-integrated learning students are encouraged students to think outside the box, hence developing their creativity and self-expression. It opens up ways for them to express as they wish.
2. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** Art Integrated learning helps students to develop skills like analyzing, and evaluating. They also learn how to make a decision and ways to solve a problem.
3. **Improved Understanding:** students can understand complex concepts through arts, be it scientific processes or historical events. Art helps students make a meaning of it and link its various aspects.
4. **Enhanced Communication:** Art helps students convey their thoughts and ideas effectively as the arts encourage communication in different forms. Some students might want to share their learning and discuss through visual art, some may like to participate in storytelling, and some might want to share their understanding through theatre also.

5. Collaboration: As being connected to each other is so important in this interconnected world, art gives a platform for social bonding, collaboration and teamwork, and hence students create something meaningful.
6. Multi-Sensory Learning: It is not one, but multiple senses that are engaged in the arts, thereby learning through arts makes learning more memorable and immersive. A dance performance on Culture of India might appeal to our eyes and to our ears too and can make us tap our feet too.
7. Cultural Appreciation: Art brings us closer to experiencing various cultures and traditions. It is through Art integrated learning, that students can learn about geometrical shapes through Warli or symmetry through Kolam. Art Integrated Learning helps students appreciate the diverse culture of India.
8. Engagement and Motivation: By integrating art into the curriculum, students get more opportunities to engage with the content and their classmates. Art also motivates them to participate actively in the learning process as students consider it more enjoyable and fun.

Art Integrated Learning can help students with so many advantages as listed above, but it needs both an interested class and an interested teacher who is ready to go beyond her usual chalk and talk. Teachers may use techniques like creating art-integrated lesson plans, incorporating art projects, or even organizing field trips to museums and art galleries. By embracing the arts, students can develop not only academic knowledge but also the skills and creativity needed to thrive in the complex, dynamic world of the 21st century. A teacher can use dance as an Art-integrated learning activity to explore mathematical concepts like symmetry, create visual art to represent historical events, compose music to reflect scientific principles or use drama to enhance language and communication skills.

21st Century skills

Success in the 21st century goes beyond technical and traditional knowledge. Because our world is so interconnected, we need more talents, called as ‘21st-century skills.’ These cognitive, social, and emotional skills help people navigate a changing world.

Critical thinking and creativity are essential for analysing data, making decisions, and developing new ideas. A globalised society requires communication and collaboration abilities to share ideas and build relationships. Information literacy and technological proficiency are also needed to navigate a wide digital world in an information-driven age. Media literacy and digital media implications are thus essential for identifying trustworthy information sources.

Also, Cultural knowledge helps students communicate politely in multicultural settings, whereas emotional intelligence improves relationships. Global competency helps us address global concerns, and adaptability and resilience help us survive change.

Financial literacy also supports personal financial well-being, and leadership and problem-solving abilities enable initiative and group effort. Hence these 21st-century talents include personal growth, active citizenship, and lifelong learning. Their development and traditional knowledge must be prioritised to prepare students for our fast-paced, interconnected environment.

Art Integration Learning for Fostering 21st Century Skills

Art integration helps education become more holistic and engaging as it accommodates different learning styles and develops creativity, critical thinking, and other 21st-century skills in the students. Through this approach, students can understand their content deeper and it can create a love for learning too. There is no better way to learn 21st Century Skills than Art-integrated

learning. Art Integrated learning combines art and creativity to learn school subjects and provides students with a holistic learning experience. Below are some ways in which Art Integrated Learning can help promote the 21st Century Skills.

1. Creativity: Students in a science class, students can be asked to create water cycle in the various artistic ways they know of. The activity not only tests their retention of the class content but also allows them a creative outlet as per their liking. Some may want to share their understanding through a poem, others may want to make an elaborate diagram. While one may depict a dance on it too.
2. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: It is often in a history class, that we want students to approach and understand the same event from different perspectives. Hence they can be given a historical time period or event to recreate. Writing about the various characters and the timeline will make the students critically think and research on it.
3. Communication: In the Hindi, English or Regional language class students can be asked to create slogans, dialogues or mini-stories to convey their understanding of the subject content. These dialogues or stories need to make sense to them and their classmates also, hence the students will make sure that their point is understood well.
4. Collaboration: While creating an assembly presentation on 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', students might want to do a song, dance and visual art presentation-like PPT. And this elaborate visual, musical and dance presentation is a team effort. It needs accountability and participation of all as a cohesive unit.
5. Adaptability: The post-COVID Era is a testimony to our Adaptability Skills, keeping this in mind, it becomes more important for students to learn this skill too. Teachers from geography can ask students to write about a world with low temperatures, and how it

- changes the global landscape. How will man adapt to such a world? This task can help them become imaginative by thinking of many specific and unexpected possibilities.
6. **Information Literacy:** Students in mathematics can be given a research project to create a visual infographic on the various geometrical shapes found in European Architectural marvels. This task uses their digital literacy, data analysis, and information presentation skills and in turn helps them learn about History and Mathematics.
 7. **Emotional Intelligence:** In English or Hindi or regional language class students can read a story and then rewrite certain important events with emotions that the students can identify and relate. In this activity, they can write post-cards from one character to another sharing their actions and emotions. This activity helps students develop empathy with the characters and also makes a connection with their own feelings and emotions.
 8. **Global Awareness:** In the History class, the students can work and make scrapbook of the various architectural styles of the various countries of Asia or the world and find out the similarities and differences. This activity can help students know that they are not alone, yet offer something unique to the world.
 9. **Digital Literacy:** In a science class, students can use digital tools to create multimedia presentations on water conservation. This activity not only promotes their digital literacy skills but also encourages creative expression.

Conclusion

The researcher, who is also a Teacher-Educator and a Teacher, has witnessed firsthand how incorporating art into the learning experience can be a game-changer for the students. Art Integrated Learning seamlessly blends the creative aspects of art with the traditional academic subjects taught in schools. This develops students with well-rounded personalities who not only

have the knowledge of academic subjects but also know how to manoeuvre in the rapidly evolving 21st-century world.

Throughout the Art Integrated Learning Project with students of Class VI to Class VII, the researcher observed the incredible transformation that occurred when art became an integral part of the learning process. It sparked creativity, nurtured critical thinking, enhanced communication, promoted collaboration, prompted adaptability, and boosted information literacy, among many other vital skills. The classroom examples shared in this paper vividly demonstrate how art-infused teaching can be customised for various subjects, ranging from science to social science, languages and mathematics, etc.

This pedagogical approach doesn't only stop at skill development; it also nurtures emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, digital literacy, and global perspectives. As we strive to prepare our students for a world characterized by rapid change, interconnectedness, and the need for innovative problem solvers, it is evident that art integration serves as a bridge between the traditional and the contemporary.

Reeder et al. (2021) found in their study titled “The Creative Classroom Collaboratives: Creativity, Confidence, & Competence-C3” that the implementation of arts integration strategies helps in improvement of students' academic performance and the development of 21st-century skills.

In the ever-evolving world, teachers and policymakers alike should embrace art-integrated learning as a means to empower students with the skills, knowledge, and creativity they need to thrive in the complexities of the 21st century. By doing so, we not only enrich the educational

experience but also lay a strong foundation for the continued growth and success of our future generations.

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