

Enhance childrens
aesthetic
development
education essay



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The way children learn in their early year is important and will indirectly influence on their later development and learning. Therefore quality early experiences are viewed as a crucial component needed for future achievement of the child. Every child has different ways of learning and to bring children's potential to the maximum, they must be given the opportunities to explore and experiment in the different areas of learning and aesthetic learning is one of them. Learning cannot take place without the support from early childhood educators to promote positive attitudes to learning. Children who perceive learning as enjoyable and challenging will look forward to more opportunities and discoveries about the things around them.

Aesthetic is connected with beauty and the study of beauty. It can stimulate children's senses in the form of art, music, dance and drama. A stimulating environment created for such activities will enhance children's learning and thinking. Development of children creativity within a rich learning environment is further enhanced if they are supported by responsive and observant teachers. Providing opportunities to express their thoughts, ideas and feeling freely through art, music and drama not only enable the children to express things creatively, it also fosters the development of other domains such as physical, cognitive, language and social. These developments underpin the strategies used by the teachers in their planning and teaching in class.

Defining aesthetic can be quite difficult as the term used can result in different definition. To put it simple, aesthetic involve the love and pursuit of beauty as found in art, movement, music and life as defined by

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Schirmacher, (1998, p. 222). Feeney and Moravcik (1987, p217) define aesthetic as ' the awareness and appreciation of pleasant sensory experiences' and they further refine it by stating it as ' the ability to critically evaluate works of art according to criteria that are defined by the culture'.

Much had been mentioned by researchers about aesthetic education and the importance of it for early childhood education and the benefits it can bring to the lives of the children.

The importance is viewed as a necessary component to be included in developing a child holistically in child development. Children who are exposed to beauty experiences will develop the skill to appreciate things that are taught to them in their early childhood setting. This development will ultimately lead to the appreciation and valuing of good design in their adulthood. At the same time, the concept development they acquire during the process enable them to have the ability to problem solve that involves thinking and imagining.

As mentioned by Jalongo & Stamp, 1997 (p. 223), aesthetic education in early childhood is to create opportunities to experience and promote interest so as to lean to appreciate and develop the skill to evaluate art forms. Art helps people to understand about other cultures and examples has evidently shown that some of the information and knowledge we acquire about people from the past centuries were not recorded in the form of written words but rather in the form of drawing. The National Art Education Association (NAEA) (P. 15) also supported that arts is the richest sources for understanding culture as it reveal the human activities most of the time.

Aesthetic responses lie at the heart of many daily events. Children's develop aesthetic awareness if they are surrounded by beautiful environment and experiences. Under such circumstances, the stress level is reduced and subsequently leads to positive behaviour. The expose of beauty in nature for art experiences encouraged children to express their thoughts freely as well as observing the surrounding without obstruction or hindrance. Therefore they can enjoy and at the same time make connection to the environment as well as appreciate their art as suggested by Friedman, 2005 (p. 225)

Alvino, 2000. highlighted that arts allows children to enjoy success as it develop children's skills in eye-hand coordination, persistent, patience and good working habits. Besides visual arts, performing together during music, dance or drama also gives children the opportunities to develop social skills as they work together as a team cooperatively.

It is found that learning in other domains also take place through art activities. Through art education, children acquire knowledge, understanding and skills that help them in the development of physical, intellectual, emotional and social domains. (PIES). Other educational experts and researchers also looked into the theoretical perspectives of various children's development by different theorist and how arts can influence and contribute to their development.

The theories of Piaget discuss about children's intellectual development and his interest in finding out how human being construct knowledge. He believes that children built up their knowledge through various stages. The first stage being the sensorimotor stage whereby the children based on their

senses to learn and develop about concepts through exploration and exposure to new experiences. The next stage is viewed as preoperational stage where the child use their past experiences to imagine as representation of objects. Each time, as they explore and experience, they start to find meaning in their representation and by doing so, they build-up their knowledge. During this stage, children also develop their linguistic abilities by using words as substitutes for objects.

The third stage is known as the concrete operational stage whereby the children are equip with the abilities to classify objects, recognizes difference as well as able to reason about relationship between objects.

The theories of Vygotsky focus on social interaction of the children. Vygotsky believes that children learn best in an environment which provide opportunities for social interaction among the children. If they are engaged in activities they are comfortable with, it will motivate them to explore and learn more and thus build up their confidence. Through constant interaction between children and adults, children's intellectual development is enhanced as they develop new concepts, skills and competencies. (Edwards, 2002, p. 25)

Erikson's theory of emotional and social development discussed about the social behaviour of a child at different age group and how the child responded to the people around them.

Howard Gardner's theory is one of the many theories that help us to understand the different forms of intelligence present in the human begin.

Gardner defines intelligence as the ability in problem solving and fashioning
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products. The eight intelligences he suggested are – musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, spatial, linguistic, intrapersonal, logical-mathematical and naturalistic. Each of the

intelligence work differently from one another. By getting involved in an activity, several intelligences can be revealed at the same time.

Having discussed briefly the point of views on the different aspect of development by the various theorists, the other areas to look at is how art influences children’s learning under the domains that mentioned earlier as well as what educators can do to enhance learning. In order for the educators to apply the strategies effectively, it is crucial for the educators to understand the theories and to assess the impact on children’s learning. With little background knowledge, educators can find it difficult to apply the various approaches in teaching arts. By understanding why art is important for young children, educators will find it more easy and willing to see new things and adopt changes. Wright, 2003, p. 153 pointed out that seeing new thing allows improvement in practices through constant exploration. However, that does not mean that the existing thinking or concepts are completely removed but rather it helps to make those thinking and concepts better.

The way children and arts are viewed are equally important to the educators in their teaching. How children are perceived is affected by certain circumstances and each one is different each time by the teaching methods as well as the views on art. On the other hand,