

Art Appreciation Learning through an Art Elements Based Curriculum

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Summary

In recent years, schools, educational authorities and scholars have become more and more interested in integrated curriculum. Studies of integrated curriculum in art education are approaching 479 articles in Eric search engine (Brewer, 2002). Astoundingly, only eleven articles were written before 1988. Therefore, there is no denying the explosion of integrated curriculum studies rage in decade.

However, the purposes and effects of integrated curriculum in art education have some controversies. Basically, art education has two approaches: instrument approach and intrinsic approach. Instrument approach regards art education as an adjunct learning tool to improve students' achievement in other disciplines. However, the intrinsic approach emphasizes the importance of the intrinsic value of the arts and opposes art as an instrument to other learning field in integrated curriculum, due to lots of art educators disapprove the instrument approach and point out the importance of the intrinsic art value (Efland, 1990; Eisner, 1991a; Hope, 1997). Moreover, the effect of integrated curriculum on students' achievement improvement hasn't been known at large. So there is a clear need for more research on intrinsic approach and integrated curriculum and their relationships, and on basic art learning and its effects.

In Taiwan, the arts and humanities learning area in Grade 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines adopt an integrated curriculum. However, the integration of arts and humanities curriculum is superficial, lacking of essential integration, and the relationship between music, visual art, and performing art is weak; therefore, it's hard to facilitate learners' aesthetic cognition and experience.

From the view of the intrinsic approach, each art has its own core and connections. The art educators in Taiwan should identify the core elements of each art and connect one another for students. From the view of integrated approach, current art curriculum should be reorganized around common themes to foster a particular quality of student understanding that is desirable. To strike a balance, the study mainly aims at designing an arts and humanities curriculum integrated with art elements for the elementary school students and assessing the students' abilities of art appreciation after completing the instruction of this curriculum. By team discussing, peer review, and content analysis of related literature, the research selected four basic art elements in each field of arts and organized them into four curriculum modules. Each curriculum module was integrated with highly-related music, visual art, and performing art elements and applying the synesthesia as the core of connection. Each module aims to develop a new ability of art appreciation. By implementing the four curriculum modules, students were able to gradually enhance their art appreciation abilities, including sensation, description, analysis, and evaluation abilities.

This study involved a qualitative approach. The following methods are applied to collect data. Both the "Pre-class Preparation Worksheet" and the "Post-class Worksheet" recorded the processes of students' learning of art appreciation. Through interviewing students and observing the video tapes of teaching, the transformation of students' abilities of art appreciation and art deliberation were recorded and confirmed by students. Students' art works were evaluated by their performance on sensation, description, analysis, and evaluation of the art elements in the modules. All the data from different resources and different people were compared, complementary to one another and confirmed by Triangulation. Findings of this study are stated as follows:

In general, students' art appreciation abilities are increased obviously, including sensation, description, analysis, and evaluation. The integrated curriculum enables to connect every sensory organ, hence students to have a profound experience of appreciating art, understanding and applying the art elements. It makes students' descriptions more concrete and abundant. Accordingly, Students' analyses are deeper and their evaluation abilities are established when they understand the relationships of art elements and the art forms. Besides, low level of the four art appreciation abilities is developed easily for all students. However, high level of the four art appreciation abilities is developed depended on

students' art and language abilities and experiences. Even though all students were interested in exploring the deeper meaning of art works, only a few students can finish it appropriately.

Keywords: art elements, art appreciation, integrated curriculum

