

## 12. AESTHETIC EDUCATION AND THE FORMATION OF SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE YOUNG SCHOOL AGE

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**Abstract:** *Involved in the process of formation of the personality and of the self-formation, aesthetic education aims at the development of the ability to correctly perceive and understand the beauty in the real life, the formation of aesthetic consciousness, aesthetic taste and sense, the need and possibility to participate in the creation of beauty in art and in life. Through the aesthetic education, we aim to prepare pupils for the act of valorization-reception-assimilation and the act of creating aesthetic values. The article presents ways and strategies to contribute to the development of the competence of self-instruction of pupils, in terms of education for beauty, so that they become efficient and autonomous in daily school activities, assume responsibilities, develop skills inside and outside the classroom. The conclusion of this article is that by encouraging pupils to be independent and responsible in their learning, they will become adults with motivation for lifelong learning.*

**Key words:** *aesthetic education, skills, self-education, education for beauty*

### 1. Introduction

In primary education, a particularly important aspect of taking responsibility for one's own learning is the formation and development of self-instructional skills, with the help of which the child becomes autonomous and independent in learning, regardless of the subject.

Involved in the process of formation and self-formation of the child's personality, aesthetic education aims to develop the ability to perceive and understand correctly the beautiful in reality (in nature, work, social relations, and art), the formation of aesthetic awareness, taste and aesthetic sense, the need and possibility to participate in the creation of beauty in art and life. In other words, aesthetic education aims to prepare the child, the human being in general, for the act of valuing-receiving-assimilating and creating aesthetic values, "the aesthetic culture proposed by programs and manuals has a theoretical-practical character, being made up of a system of aesthetic skills."<sup>362</sup>

### 2. Discussions

Aesthetic education can have a strong influence on moral traits through affective experiences as against artistic works, in contemplating the landscapes of nature, in observing everything that is right and beautiful in the behaviour and activity of others. It is the education of those senses on which the conscience, intelligence and creative thinking of pupils are based, aiming to cultivate affectivity, sensitivity, to form aesthetic taste, taste for beauty.

Aesthetic education is intertwined with intellectual education and requires the formation of mental qualities at a young school age, qualities which are based on the formation and development of the spirit of observation, of flexibility of thought,

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<sup>362</sup> Văideanu George, (1970), *Cultura estetică şcolară*, E.D.P. Bucharest, p. 163

of inventiveness and originality in the knowledge of one's own emotional feelings, which influence the moral traits of the pupils by observing everything that is beautiful and correct in the behaviour of others. Through all the actions they take every day at school, pupils form an image of what is beautiful and sensitive in nature and life, they can understand why it is necessary to learn and how the knowledge they gain can help them in their daily lives. The interest that the teacher instils in different actions can develop the child's motivation for learning and self-instruction.

In order to develop self-instructional competence, the child first needs to form and develop a correct, artistic and nuanced language in the Romanian language classes, a long process that requires sustained work on the part of the teacher and the student. Literary texts contain a large number of lexical combinations capable of making the pupil experience moments of deep aesthetic emotion. Literary works communicate artistic information organised in a specific message, and the teacher must differentiate the figurative nature of the aesthetic information from its own, highlight the expressiveness and formative nature of literary works: they contribute to the development of thought, language, memory, imagination and to raising pupils' awareness.

At early school age, there is a poor content of children's speech. They do not succeed in capturing and conveying the essence of what they have read, seen or heard, they do not make connections between ideas, they cannot communicate freely and fluently their own thoughts, feelings and impressions. The teacher makes the most of children's intellectual resources, the wealth of knowledge acquired in nursery school or at home, improves their speaking skills, develops their thinking, memory and imagination, educates their feelings of will, provides them with valuable models of expression that will make them want to imitate and express them continuously, and develops their ability to study using effective and easy-to-apply techniques such as repetition and underlining. What is important is that the learner understands that attention and concentration during study will lead to efficiency, to achieving the results they want. Cultivation of children's expression is also achieved through the teacher's everyday expression who, by his or her model, in all circumstances and in all situations, becomes an example for pupils.

Romanian lessons have been and will remain a workshop of beautiful and correct speech. These lessons can have a pronounced formative character through the many issues that are addressed with students and the confrontations of opinions that arise. In this way, pupils from the first grade onwards can be subjected to a rigorous discipline of intellectual work and the affirmation of their ability to study. If in grades I-III the emphasis is on enriching and activating vocabulary, from grade IV onwards, the Romanian language lessons create the opportunity to practise vocabulary in order to develop artistic language. By constantly asking pupils to look for "new meanings" for certain words and expressions, by asking them to find several variants for expressing the same idea, we activate their vocabulary, instil care for their own expression and provide them with models for effective self-instruction.

The study of literary fragments from Romanian language textbooks provides students in grades II-IV with models of expression, encouraging meditation, the search for beauty in literature and art. The great variety of artistic creations

belonging to different genres and literary species highlights the receptivity of young schoolchildren to beauty. Descriptions of nature are closest to painting as in the text "Pe Argeş în jos"<sup>363</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> grade). Like the painter, the writer uses words with great care to capture the essential in order to "paint" in the dark objects that cannot be seen. The description of a place, a person, a thing or a scene is done by choosing those details which give effect, which leave room for meditation.

Contact with literary texts makes it easier for the young pupil to understand human relationships and rules of conduct, as in the story "Puiul"<sup>364</sup> by I. Alexandru Brătescu Voineşti. The aesthetic message of the reading can be emphasised by asking pupils to learn rules of behaviour, to understand the love of a mother for her children, the desire to save the healthy ones from the cruelty of the fast-approaching winter. Reading is remarkable for the simplicity of the artistic means used, while having a great emotional effect.

Taking as a starting point the wealth of "beautiful expressions" with which pupils come into contact in reading lessons, it is necessary to consider increasing their number. Pupils can be encouraged to transform these acquisitions into personal creations, their own constructions, thus developing independence and autonomy. In order to develop self-instruction skills, pupils can be given the task of finding and writing down "beautiful expressions" and using them in new sentences. They will be asked to find different spellings of words and expressions found in the reading texts, to try various explanations of the meaning of words in different contexts, to make use of further reading and even some radio and television broadcasts. Often this activity takes the form of a game, consisting of finding as many special expressions as possible and using them in a new context, an independent activity or in small groups.

For the understanding and deepening of artistic expressions and for the development of imagination and emotions, it is insisted that the text should be read carefully and expressively, „To read expressively means to express suggestively, plastically, beautifully and convincingly the message of the text, the thoughts and feelings contained in it.”<sup>365</sup> It is not enough to understand that the author has used beautiful words and expressions in a text, but they must be translated to the pupils, explained to them, explaining why the author used them, what he wanted to show us through these artistic means. At the end of the Romanian language lesson, the pupil should be sensitized, energized by the artistic means that awaken the aesthetic sense and taste and motivated to use these exercises independently, to form a self-teaching behaviour. Through the Romanian language classes we train the pupil's ability to promptly signal beauty, to react appropriately, to flinch when encountering it.

### 3. Results

The great variety of artistic creations belonging to different genres and literary species highlights children's receptiveness to beauty, provided it is accessible. From reading, the child gathers the most beautiful words and expressions, the most beautiful feelings. Another means of educating for beauty by modelling self-

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<sup>363</sup> *On Argeş down*

<sup>364</sup> I. Alexandru Brătescu Voineşti, (2018), *Puiul*, ROXEL CART, Bucharest

<sup>365</sup> Ion Serdan, (1978), *Metodica predării limbii române la clasele I-IV*, Editura Didactica și Pedagogica Bucureşti, p. 54

teaching behaviour, from an early age, is art education. The child with his vital and optimistic ability to know the world, allows himself to be easily guided and can be formed in such a way that he can easily adapt and integrate into the ever ascending evolutionary process of society.

In the primary grades, the foundations of artistic and plastic education and the general knowledge of the whole aesthetic education are laid. By learning the language of art, by deciphering and mastering a grammar of forms of communication and plastic expression, the teacher enables pupils to understand that art is the main way in which the aesthetic relationship between man and reality is achieved. As a form of social consciousness, art fulfils a function of knowledge and communication. It expresses something, it carries a message, that of communicating the artist's feelings and ideas in its own way.

Fine art develops pupils' sensitivity to all that is beautiful, and teaches them to express themselves artistically through lines, shapes and colours. Just as the reader puts great effort into the process of combining letters into words and then words into an utterance, until communication is achieved, so the artist uses separate elements to construct pictorial symbols. When drawing, children say something, assemble, disassemble, combine, modify and create. They show their joy in trying, inventing and discovering emotions, perceptions, desires or concerns. By putting the child to work, you make him interested in his work, you give him the precious stimulus of the pleasurable senses that surround the action and pay off the success of the effort made.

Education through the language of art is a formative action. Based on the principle of moving from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, like other models of imitation and reproduction, the language of art teaches the child to think plastic, to see beyond appearances. For this reason, art education must begin in kindergarten and continue in primary school with the "discovery" of the elements of plastic language. Through drawing, the child simultaneously seeks to satisfy both his own and others needs, with drawing representing both a way of preparing the mental image and a result of it.

The main objectives of art education are to familiarise pupils with the grammar of elements of plastic language, to introduce them to creative problems and to bring them into contact with the beauty of their environment. In addition to the aesthetic sense, defined as the ability to perceive the beauty in nature and around him, the child must also be armed with a system of knowledge, skills and abilities that will help him in the realization, according to his wishes, of a work of art and to render the beautiful in his works. Without knowledge of the child's age, mental and physical peculiarities, effective art education is not possible.

The child draws out of a need for movement but also for pleasure, because with the help of drawings, he talks about himself, about the world in which he lives. Most of the time, a child's authentic, spontaneous drawing, which has not been directed by anyone, is a spellbinding work, which the adult witnesses like a miracle. With time, a good knowledge of plastic language is necessary, as well as the formation of skills in the handling of various tools: pencil, brushes, watercolours, scissors, needles, etc. The visual arts and practical skills programme and the work with the manual aim to apply knowledge of beauty in life, in accordance with the child's age,

and to apply the laws of beauty from the simplest everyday objects, to clothing, the classroom, the living room, the street, thus educating good taste.

Another aspect in which the child can learn to become independent in action from an early age is that of musical listening. Love and interest in music is based on the emotional side of the child's psyche. Contact with musical work through musical listening is, alongside singing, an important form of aesthetic education through music. Musical auditions enrich pupil's musical culture with works that cannot be included in regular lessons. Children love listening to music. We need to offer musical works in a perfect interpretation, capable of achieving aesthetic qualities, artistic message, all their beauty, which hold children's attention and develop their aesthetic pleasure of listening.

Through musical auditions we must develop pupil's love for Romanian and universal musical values, integrating them into artistic life from childhood. "Knowing how to listen means knowing how to focus your spiritual being and open yourself to music, it means knowing how to free yourself from the rhythms of everyday life in order to pursue the aspiration towards a more beautiful and true life, it means discovering what is truth in the beauty of music and to stimulate in you high ideals and feelings."<sup>366</sup>

Among the forms and means used in the school to achieve musical education we mention: music lessons, choral ensembles, musical auditions, organized participation in concerts, musical competitions, musical bands. In order to achieve aesthetic education through music lessons, we should pay special attention to some problems – exercises that will not be missing from the musical activity such as: exercises to warm up the voice, exercises for training and practicing rhythmic-melodic hearing, songs and games used for training and development of musical skills and abilities, development of speech, thinking, language, attention and artistic creation skills.

In order to be easily and beautifully sung by children, songs should be selected according to the principle of accessibility so that they contain short melodic lines, simple, flowing rhythm, easy-to-pronounce words and easy-to-digest content. Thanks to accessibility and diversity of content, through song, schoolchildren develop their voice, hearing, learn to sing individually and collectively, develop a sense of love for music, family, work, nature, animals, in short, an aesthetic taste for music. Children's songs contain educational lyrics that encourage actions and attitudes, describe the beauties of nature and recreate the happy childhood children experience.

Given the children's pleasure and need for movement, it is necessary that the repetition of learned songs is accompanied by movements corresponding to the content of ideas, rhythmic by clapping, tapping, rhythmic walking. Singing in choir helps most in developing pupil's musical skills, it also develops their interest in music. When the child comes to school he knows little about music. Those who sing have learned this skill in the family, where they have learned a number of songs from their parents or older siblings, or learned songs in kindergarten. Young schoolchildren learn songs by ear. Music education class cannot be designed without maximising the pupil's attention.

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<sup>366</sup> Văideanu George, (1970), *School Aesthetic Culture*, E.D.P. Bucharest, p. 168

They need to hear correctly, to perceive the pitch of the musical sounds so that they can finally play back what they have learned. In order to educate auditory attention it is necessary, even from the first grade, for pupils to learn to play a melody loud or soft, fast or slow, marked or legato. No song or musical activity should be performed in a formal, meaningless way, but with an educational purpose that will awaken emotional states in the soul of the young pupils and gradually develop their artistic sensitivity and receptivity.

#### 4. Conclusions

In order for the schoolchild to master a beautiful song, it is also necessary to stimulate an aesthetic sense in the setting in which this activity takes place. It is good for the room in which the singing takes place to be well ventilated, for the children to sing freely, and for it to be an affective setting, conducive to the lesson. Pupils should have the correct posture when singing, respect the starting signal, regulate their breathing properly and learn the correct diction.

A child who learns a song correctly has the ability to evaluate himself or herself or the performance of peers. Through individual, group or collective practice, they develop the competence to identify strengths and weaknesses in their own or their peer's performances, and through collaboration they share knowledge and learn from each other. By collaborating, children learn to manage their resources, to use the internet to support their learning and thus overcome obstacles encountered, solving problem situations about which I. Cerghit said that “problem solving is quite different from a simple exercise of applying previous acquisitions... it is a thought effort devoted to the discovery of new combinations of previously learned rules by which a new, higher order rule can be arrived at, to an adequate solution to the new problematic situations that have arisen”<sup>367</sup>.

Parents and teachers can model self-teaching behaviour, encourage perseverance and self-discipline, provide support and positive feedback, with patience and ongoing involvement. Enescu's words can be an adult's guide to the art of educating: “What is important in art is to vibrate yourself and make others vibrate”.

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<sup>367</sup> I. Cerghit, (1997), *Metode de învățământ*, E.D.P., Bucharest, p. 136

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