

# Art Integration: Essence of Learning

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Children are instinctively curious and engage in play with objects and respond to music, rhythm and colours. Right from infancy, children seek pleasure in the interplay of light, sound, movement, shadow, shape and colour. Young children first express their inner feelings through scribbling and drawings are usually the first visual representation of their inner thoughts and feelings. Their inner realities emerge on paper as creative artworks. They also seek visual and tactile pleasures from playing in sand, making sand towers and houses thereby engaging in mathematical and constructive approach. Playing games such as those like *Oonch-NeechkaPapda* and Hide-n-seek displays spatial understanding, whereas, making shadows in sunlight highlights scientific temper. Children also tend to form different closed figures such as squares and rectangles with sticks shows their leaning towards mathematical concept. As children grow, their scribbles and drawings tend to reflect their drawings and sculptures begin to reflect their reflection of the world. Building, stimulating and promoting these natural artistic instincts and innovative minds of children shall be the essence of education so as to enrich learning experiences for them. Usage of art as a medium to connect to the environment helps them observe, explore, think and learn without boundaries and stretches their imagination. It is then through this process that students link their emotions and creativity on a cognitive field which leads to simplification of learning experiences.

Great minds like Rabindranath Tagore pioneered the idea of integration of art and learning, which has also been captured in a book based on his ideas “Art: The Basis of Education.” It has been shown and accepted through various researches that employing arts in process of learning and teaching foster mental ability and problem-solving skills; which ultimately leads to holistic and total quality development of children.

The National Policy of Education 2020 inter-alia states: *Art-Integration is a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for experiencing the learning of concepts across subjects. As a part of the thrust on experiential learning, art-integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions not only for creating joyful classrooms, but also for imbibing the Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process at every level. This art-integrated approach will strengthen the linkages between education and culture.*

Art Integrated Learning (AIL) is a teaching-learning model based on learning 'through the arts' and 'with the arts.' It can be understood as a process which employs art as a medium of teaching-learning, as a foundation stone to understand concepts within limits of any subject in the curriculum. Learners ascertain creativity while learning to build relations between various concepts through different art forms. Visual art experiences such as drawing and painting, clay modelling, heritage crafts, paper crafting, clay modelling etc., as well as performing arts such as theatre, dance, puppetry, etc., pave a way for increased comprehension and knowledge development of concepts. It is the flexibility of arts that helps age-appropriate prospects for learners to explore things at their own pace. This reaffirms the experiential learning approach.

AIL is, thus, a method of experiential learning which delivers an even-handed learning environment for all learners through their own access points.

Art integration is an approach to education in which lessons are taught and assessed through naturally-aligned art concepts. Students are given prospects to construct and establish understanding through various art forms that

readily align themselves to the given objectives.

In an art integrated environment, students absorb themselves in art activities and construct personal meaning through their learning. AIL was envisioned as pedagogy applicable to all levels of school education with the objective of developing the target areas of cognitive, socio-emotional and psychomotor domains of the learner. Art integrated learning opens opportunity to a learning that is not only inter-disciplinary but holistic in nature.

The integration of art does not imply that valuable lessons will be replaced but enrichment of those lessons by presenting an altogether different perspective to view and grasp vital concepts. Not only has art integration been proved to have a positive effect on standardized test scores but has made a remarkable difference in student attendance where ever and whenever it has been executed.

Integration of arts with other subjects implies that arts (visual, performing and literary) become a fundamental part of the teaching-learning processes. It also implies adopting an art-integrated curriculum, where art establishes itself as the root of classroom learning. When arts become the essence of curriculum, it simplifies concept clarification. Art-integrated curriculum can offer ways to associate content of several subjects in reasonable, rational, learner-centric and profound ways. All subjects such as mathematics, science, social science and languages and their conceptualisation can be associated, connected, related and learnt effectually with art as the basis. Learning by this approach becomes joyful and pragmatic.

The pedagogy encompassed in the art-based learning facilitates space for varying pace of different students. Art as medium benefit all children, including those with special needs and varied cultures, in their learning and development. Art inspires, encourages and applies learning to be part of natural process. AIL through discovering, thinking an experimenting makes learning concrete, imaginative and gratifying for one and all. Art is a not a destination but a journey where individuals are co-travellers sharing and moving together as a crew. Art also breaks barriers of language as it has a language of its own. Different children of varied cultures bring in vibrancy to learning through art. It facilitates communication and interaction beyond barriers between children of different

backgrounds.

When engrossed with arts, learners pass through a number of stages, such as observing, thinking, visualizing, discovering, experimenting, assuming, creating, recreating and expressing. These stages involve genuine engrossment of all the three domains: cognitive, psychomotor and emotional; which is why it becomes experiential in nature and ascertains total quality development of children. The advantage of such experiential learning is that it creates a platform for improved learning in other subjects at all level of school education as well. It then becomes pertinent for teachers to be

able to employ art skills as a medium in all subjects. Hence, in AIL, the role of art teachers becomes very essential, wherein they have the dual task of first, using as a subject and integrating AIL and second, to facilitate subject teachers in developing and modifying chalk-talk learning process into art integrated learning mode. AIL has shouldered increased responsibilities to the existent role of art teacher.

AIL helps teachers to homogenise assessment process wherein students are provided with various approaches to prompt their learning. Assessment through AIL aids the educator to move away from the conventional paper-pencil or oral and recall system towards a more perpetual and comprehensive assessment process which can help assess both the learning of the subject as well as the socio-emotional advancement of the child. It, therefore, becomes an efficient means for both learning and assessment of learning.

Though experiencing art offers flexibility, and students do learn in the process of exploring and experimenting, a wide-ranging outline of teacher preparation is critical for the effectual application of AIL. Hence, capacity building, activity planning, time management, classroom management and resource planning are essential for effective implementation of AIL and to realise the best potential of AIL.

Instituting art as a medium requires re-orienting the school system in the use of it as an instructive tool. It is important to orient all stakeholders of school education, including the school management to acknowledge and realise the importance and the significance of this pedagogy. Making

efforts to improve the understanding, skills of teachers and others to execute AIL in their school will reduce an institution's reliance on outsourcing of support or services, and build its internal capacity. It is important to undertake teacher-training workshops and teacher observation programmes so as to bring about a paradigm shift in the ways teachers approach teaching-learning and the ways teachers learn. This would mean that the teachers themselves have a deeper conceptual grasp of the content they are anticipated to teach and the pedagogical

knowledge with suitable skills to develop apposite learning environment.

AIL has provided students the opportunity to think freely; allows them to become more enthusiastic, increases their curiosity, enables them to create new things. Overall, Art Integrated Learning enhances life and brings in excitement to the learning environment. It not only helps overcome fear of learning and assessment but also increases the willingness of children to express themselves.

