

**School Activities Course**  
**for**  
**Women Art Teachers in Baghdad,**  
**held at the**  
**Directorate of School Activities**  
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**Subject: AESTHETIC EDUCATION**

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## Aesthetic Education

### Definition

- A. The following definition was used by the Minister of Education in his speech during the Regional Symposium on Aesthetic Education held in 1976. He said: "Aesthetic education is an educational process aimed at the creation of genuine contemporary awareness of beauty; the responsibility for it rests with the home, the various mass media such as radio, television, the cinema and the theatre, as well as with all other social institutions including educational institutions".
- B. According to one of the experts who attended the same Regional Symposium, aesthetic education aims at developing the creative faculties in our children in order to enable them to participate in the universal stream of creativity.
- C. The definition used in the Final Report of the Symposium states that aesthetic education is an integrated educational process that helps man to develop his creative capabilities, to be aware of beauty in the physical and social environment and to understand the system of positive values in the national and universal heritage with a view to utilizing and developing them for the improvement of society.
- D. In the book "Eduquer et instruire", Robert Dottrens states that the aim of aesthetic education is, by developing the child's love of beauty, to encourage him to appreciate and seek impressions that will enrich his mind, gladden his heart and enable him to enjoy pleasures of a high order, satisfactions devoid of any material or utilitarian character.
- E. In his book entitled "Education and Teaching Methods", Abdel Aziz Salih states, "Aesthetic education aims at developing the sense of beauty latent in human nature by two means: (1) appreciation and (2) creation" (Vol.2, p.341).

It appears from the above definitions that the purpose of aesthetic education is to develop our interior sense of beauty, and it is thus concerned with the awareness of beauty in everything related to us. The promotion of that awareness is the task of education, both in and out of school.

### Objectives of aesthetic education

In the light of this definition, it can be said that aesthetic education has several objectives, namely:

1. Developing and refining the personality;
2. Inculcating, through general culture, an appreciation of the arts and of everything that man sees, hears or comes in contact with;
3. Teaching respect for, and an understanding of the aesthetic values inherent in, both the national and the universal heritage;
4. Training future artists;
5. Fostering a universal outlook and an open-minded approach to the world and to the future;
6. Inculcating appreciation for both natural and man-made surroundings, revealing their beauty and promoting the elimination of all causes of environment pollution.

All these objectives clearly involve the idea of beauty.

### So what does beauty mean?

The following are some views on what the sense of beauty really means:

(a) McDougall, the psychologist, held that the sense of beauty is purely emotional, while psychologists in general consider it to be an emotional harmony between interior sensations and aesthetic stimuli. See "Education and Teaching Methods" by Abdel Aziz Salih, Vol. II, p. 347.

(b) The aesthetic experience is thus a psychological reaction or interaction between the individual and something else (ibid.)

(c) In general terms, we may say that the sense of beauty constitutes a human attitude that finds its expression in appreciation of the environment, in innovation and in artistic creation. It also constitutes a moral attitude that influences man's behaviour within society. Aesthetic education is concerned with this encounter (or relationship) between man as a human being and the different phenomena surrounding him. These are:

- (a) Human and social phenomena, or people.
- (b) Natural and biological phenomena, or other beings.
- (c) Works of art created by man himself.

### Where is aesthetic education dispensed?

The answer to this question involves both a spatial and a temporal dimension.

(a) As regards the spatial dimension, the channels through which aesthetic education is dispensed are the following:

1. The environment: this may be (a) natural or (b) man-made.
2. Works of art which may be subject of understanding and appreciation by man.
3. Works of art which may embody the creative and innovative talents of the artist.

(b) As regards the temporal dimension, the factors involved are, in order:

1. The family;
2. The school;
3. Society itself.

We thus see that, structurally speaking, aesthetic education is a combination of the effect of both spatial and temporal factors on man's innermost being, enabling him to appreciate beauty in his surroundings, in the works of art he sees or hears and in the innovation and creation needed to produce such works himself. This can only be the result of a process of lifelong education, from birth through school years right up to full membership of society. Aesthetic education is meaningless if it remains a mere academic experience that is not transformed into culture in the wider sense.

The role of the school in dispensing aesthetic education is nevertheless both essential and effective since it serves as a link between the other two vital contributory elements: the family and society.

### How aesthetic education should be taught in secondary schools

Apart from practical instruction in drawing or handicrafts, aesthetic education, as a secondary school subject should take the form of a field lesson lasting one or two hours, during which the teacher indirectly encourages the students to look for beauty. This can be done through:

1. Outings and excursions, visits to museums and art galleries, tours of architectural monuments, parks, natural beauty spots, etc.

2. Developing artistic appreciation for arts by taking the students to theatres, art exhibitions (with the aim of enjoying the works exhibited and not just for the sake of being there), cinemas and concerts. Teachers could also devote part of the lesson time to:

1. Analysing certain works of visual art (drawings, paintings, sculptures) and developing the students' critical sense so as to enable them to appreciate the works in question properly. Slides should naturally be used for purposes of illustration and to acquaint the students with the various different schools, both classic and modern.
2. Playing recordings of instrumental and vocal music in order to develop the students' musical appreciation. The teacher will naturally need to have a collection of cassette recordings and playback equipment for this purpose.
3. If the necessary projection equipment is available, the showing of selected films, borrowed if necessary from a school activities centre or from the centre for educational media in Baghdad. The use of films for educational purposes is of course nothing new, but in this instance it will be up to the teacher to choose films that are specifically related to aesthetic education, either through their subject matter - e.g. the beauty of nature - or because they are interesting works of art in their own right (this may be the case not only with feature films but with cartoons as well, e.g. certain famous works of Walt Disney. In all cases it is essential for the showing of the film to be followed by analysis and discussion.

To sum up, the idea is to encourage practical art appreciation, and the necessary equipment for this purpose - consisting of nothing more than a slide projector, a tape recorder and a film projector - should be available in every school. Art appreciation can, however, be encouraged in other ways as well, notably through the introduction of literary criticism in the form of readings and analyses of selected texts (short stories, poems, etc.), discussion of works presented on television, familiarization with the theatre and the dance, etc. The following order should be observed in all cases:

- (a) General analytical introduction by the teacher;
- (b) Showing/playing/reading of the work to be discussed;
- (c) A debate (recorded and replayed if necessary) on the work in question among the students themselves.

4. Practical art work (as provided in the curricula) with emphasis on the development of individual aptitude, initiative and creativity. The student should be encouraged to think of art as something more than just a hobby. This consideration applies to aesthetic education in general.
5. An introduction to the artistic heritage and local and other folklore; to the arts of ancient civilizations in Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world; to the arts of Arab Islamic civilization; and to the realist and contemporary schools. Students could be directed to prepare, on the basis of individual research, papers on the above-mentioned subjects as background documents for group discussions.

Every effort should be made to imbue students with love and respect for the nation's artistic heritage, so as to pave the way for a real awakening in this field by eradicating the colonial tradition which tended to minimize its importance.

Office of the Director  
Institute of Fine Arts  
Baghdad

Project submitted by the Committee on Aesthetic Education concerning the opening of a new branch of the Institute of Fine Arts during the academic year 1978/1979

1. The basic idea discussed in this report is prompted solely by educational and cultural considerations, and takes into account the views expressed by the Ministry of Education on the general need for orientation and development in the field of education. In the light of the constructive intellectual basis offered by the Revolution, the Political Covenant and the nation's educational planning structure, the idea could be implemented along the following lines:
  - (a) Teachers of aesthetic education should be trained according to the latest methods devised in Iraq and the Arab world and in line with the latest developments in the world as a whole.
  - (b) Aesthetic education should be developed (educational and cultural development, with the enactment of compulsory education and the elimination of illiteracy, being the logical outcome of economic and social development), but this means that the whole approach to both education and art must be brought up to date as soon as possible. The elimination of aesthetic illiteracy should begin at school or even within the family.
  - (c) In the training provided by the Fine Arts Institute, a balance should be maintained between scientific and specialized culture on the one hand, and general and applied culture on the other. Increased emphasis on the cultural and aesthetic elements is needed to enable Iraqi artists and educators to bridge the gap that has arisen as a result of the rapid changes in the world's industrial and social life during recent years.
  - (d) The new branch would help minimize waste in the field of education, as students will receive the kind of training which satisfies the need for educational rather than specialized art personnel. Those enrolled in the Institute on account of their artistic capabilities will have the chance to acquire specialized art qualifications in other branches of the Institute.
2. It is the settled policy of the Ministry of Education to improve the standard of educational personnel by organizing training courses for teachers and supervisors and by developing school curricula. The fact that all the Arab countries are following a similar policy has led to the emergence of a new, more thoroughgoing approach in which art studies at the various levels of education are not merely theoretical but also involve training in various artistic skills.

These trends emerge clearly from the curricula and educational guidelines applied in Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt and, more recently, from the proposed expanded art education curriculum for primary schools in Bahrain (1977).

A field survey on the proposed Bahrain curriculum stated (p. 6): "The Advisory Committee on Art Education endeavoured to adapt the curriculum in the light of the resources available and the gaps to be bridged. It concluded that, in addition to practical instruction in the plastic or applied arts, pupils of both sexes at the primary level should receive an appropriate grounding in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and life and of the artistic heritage.

As regards Egypt, it is sufficient to refer to the guide for fourth form of primary school-teachers (prepared by a committee of 11 authors), which defines the general fields of art education as: (1) observing nature and its elements; (2) decorative design; (3) collective work; (4) practical work (pp. 14 and 44). It adds that in all these fields due account should be taken of two important factors, the artistic and the educational: in other words, that a balance should be maintained between artistic and non-artistic studies.

In the curriculum applied in the State of Kuwait, the theoretical side is divided into several axes: (1) co-operational; (2) national; (3) educational; (4) artistic (pp. 27 and 29). In practice, the courses themselves cover two areas: (1) practical artistic work; (2) art appreciation, i.e. the ability to appreciate works of art and grasp their different aspects, such as form, colour, composition, method of execution, materials used, etc. The subjects chosen for art appreciation courses should include: the artistic heritage of the Arab region, Africa, and the various civilizations of both East and West; modern art; industrial design; the beauties of nature; music; literature (both prose and poetry) (pp. 38 and 39).

In Qatar, the first-year art education syllabus of the Teacher Training Institute comprises the following subjects: drawing and painting, art appreciation, history of art (p. 60); practical crafts such as hand weaving, pottery, sculpture, stone and wood carving, cabinet-making (p. 61); teaching methods (p. 61). The same subjects are studied in the second year. In both the second and third years the course on art history is supplemented by individual research and the study of teaching methods is expanded (pp. 66 and 67).

In Morocco, primary and secondary-level curricula and teaching directives were developed in line with contemporary European cultures. For example, attention is paid during the first year to artistic language and expression as well as to practical work. The approach is primarily two-dimensional in the second year and three-dimensional in the third; in the fourth year the emphasis is on aerial perspective. So much for the overall orientation. At the specialization stage, the subjects studied on the science side include industrial and freehand drawing, cartography, painting from life, colours and the history of art. On the literary side the subjects studied include drawing from observation, thematic decoration, the graphic arts, general culture, colours, the psychology of vision and the history of art (pp. 7 and 8).

The above was a brief account of the views of other Arab countries on the subject of art education and the methods that should be used to impart it at the various educational levels (more especially the primary level). Here in Iraq, we have sought to avoid the shortcomings inevitable in systems that are not purposefully oriented by the modern revolutionary thinking embodied in the Political Covenant, which has furnished the intellectual framework for the various relevant conferences, symposia and teaching manuals, including the Teacher Training Institute's Manual on Art Education (currently in the press).

In essence, our view is that the aim of artistic orientation in primary school should no longer be simply to make psychologically sound use of the pupil's leisure time, to develop his practical capabilities in art or handicrafts or to promote his aesthetic appreciation through the acquisition of artistic skills; it should also be to create a whole new awareness, both theoretical and practical, using methods appropriate to the level in question. Fortunately, our Institute of Fine Arts, after ensuring co-ordination between its various departments, is in a position to further this aim. The student graduating as a primary-school teacher will be fully equipped to help his pupils develop not only their personalities and skills but also their artistic culture, their respect and love for their civilization's artistic heritage, their objective appreciation of art and their ability to perceive beauty in nature, in art and even in such other, non-art subjects as mathematics and the Arabic language.

3. A contemporary approach to art education must take at least two factors into account: (1) the need to eradicate what we may call "artistic illiteracy", and (2) the need to produce a society in which not only artists but the general public as well are capable of assessing works of art correctly and objectively. This means imparting art education not merely to those with special aptitudes, but to all pupils of average ability. The two factors are inseparable and must be constantly born in mind if rapid progress is to be made. The methods at present employed in Iraq are appropriate in principle but not designed to yield swift results: for this purpose a development-oriented approach is called for. The new art education branch - which will naturally require detailed planning as regards objectives, teaching methods and materials and even such aspects as the examination system to be adopted - offers the right opportunity to introduce such an approach.

In the light of the above considerations, we can say that, in order to meet contemporary requirements, the Institute's art education course for trainee teachers should cover the following aspects:

- (a) Theoretical. Here the aim is to foster cultural awareness as a basis for developing the student's personality and his cultural and aesthetic experience in the following fields:
  - (1) Educational and psychological,
  - (2) National and social,
  - (3) Critical and aesthetic,
  - (4) Scientific.
- (b) Practical. There the aim is to discover any aptitudes the student may possess that could be turned to account in teaching. This covers:
  - (1) Basic artistic skills such as drawing, handicrafts, design and Arabic calligraphy,
  - (2) Other skills such as sculpture, ceramics and graphics.
- (c) Applied. Here the aim is to show the student, on a group or individual basis, how to apply his cultural knowledge and artistic talents in actual teaching practice. This involves:
  - (1) Practice lessons in classroom or studio,
  - (2) Practice in taking school art appreciation lessons with the use of all the different teaching aids available,
  - (3) Practice in promoting, within the school environment, aesthetic awareness, artistic culture, respect for the heritage and collective work,
  - (4) Subjects of study, and the number of hours allocated to each subject over a five-year period;



Theoretical studies

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of hours</u>
1. History of art	250
2. History of civilization	150
3. Aesthetic education	150
4. Arabic language	250
5. English or French	250
6. Education and History of education	150
7. Psychology of art	150
8. General principles of teaching	150
9. Specific principles of teaching (in three parts)	
A. Teaching practice	100
B. Fostering taste and aesthetic awareness	100
C. Fostering appreciation of the heritage and artistic culture	100
10. Sociology and anthropology of art	150

3. Applied studies  
(theoretical/practical)

1. Research and documentation methods (individual research)	150
2. Teaching aids	250
3. Musical appreciation	250
4. Aesthetic criticism (environmental appreciation)	250
5. Teaching (applied) in all channels (for primary level)	
6. Year's work (graduation paper)	
7. Elements of the environment	100
8. Aerial perspective	50
9. Anatomy	50
10. Audio-visual and linguistic documentation	250
11. Art criticism	250

<u>Practical studies</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of hours</u>
	1. Drawing	650
	2. Design	250
	3. Handicrafts	600
	4. Arabic calligraphy	250
	5. Sculpture	
	6. Ceramics	
	7. Graphics	250
	8. Carpentry	250

basic

optional

Four hours per week should be left free for the student.

5. Details of first-year course:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of hours per week</u>
Theoretical	General history of art (ancient times)	2
"	History of civilizations	2
"	Arabic language	2
"	English or French	2
"	General education	2
"	History of Arab art	2
Practical	Practical drawing	6
"	Handicrafts	6
"	Design	4
Applied	Teaching aids	2
Theoretical	Arab society	2
Applied	Musical appreciation	2
Theoretical	Aesthetic education	4
		<u>38</u>
Theoretical hours	18	
Practical hours	16	
Applied hours	4	

Office of the Director  
Institute of Fine Arts  
Department of Visual Arts

(Organization of the Department of Visual Arts Documentation)

1. The documentation library shall comprise artistic and critical sections, to be compiled by the students of the Institute of Fine Arts with the assistance of an employee of the Institute under the supervision of a competent teacher and a higher committee.
2. The committee shall be composed of permanent members, namely the Assistant Director for Artistic Matters and the competent supervising teacher, and of temporary members who shall be newly elected at the beginning of each academic year.
3. The objective of the library shall be to compile and catalogue data on Iraqi artists and critics in the field of visual arts on the one hand, and on important artistic and aesthetic topics on the other.
4. The library shall contain the following materials:
  - (a) Articles published in Arab and, if possible, in foreign newspapers and magazines,
  - (b) Reports and studies submitted by students,
  - (c) Slides (prepared or acquired),
  - (d) Translations of relevant works,
  - (e) Photographs (prepared or acquired),
  - (f) Films (prepared or acquired),
  - (g) Film strips (prepared or acquired),
  - (h) Any other material suitable for cataloguing.
5. The library shall have the following annexes:
  - (a) A special library, distinct from the library of the Institute and containing publications to be used by the students as source material for their research work,
  - (b) An art and folklore museum.
6. There shall also be an alphabetical index of artists, with a separate file for each artist listed. The files should contain a selection of published material, photographs, etc. Photographs, slides and other audio-visual materials should be kept in special cases and referred to on the artist's individual card and in the file.
7. The following general items should appear in each file:
  - (a) A detailed biography of the artist, compiled on the basis of printed forms filled in by the artist concerned,
  - (b) Copies of invitation cards, publicity posters and exhibition catalogues,

- (c) A list of the artist's works,
  - (d) Copies of the artist's theoretical writings (books, articles, etc.),
  - (e) Photographs of the artist's works illustrating the development of his style,
  - (f) Slides and films,
  - (g) A recorded interview with the artist and, if possible, recorded impressions of him by friends or acquaintances,
  - (h) Published or recorded comments by critics.
8. The employee referred to in (1) above shall keep the following registers:
- (a) A register of basic equipment, local newspapers, magazines, recordings, etc.
  - (b) A register of materials lent to students,
  - (c) A register of prepared materials such as recordings and films,
  - (d) An alphabetical register of the completed files on artists,
  - (e) A register of subjects,
9. The responsible employee shall have the following duties:
- (a) Arranging and classifying data extracted from newspapers and magazines,
  - (b) Lending the necessary basic or indexed material to students,
  - (c) Managing the special library and the art and folklore museum,
  - (d) Contacting appropriate bodies, with the agreement of the Director's office and through the administration, with a view to exchanging publications and information in connection with documentation activities.
10. Students in the Institute's Department of Visual Arts, irrespective of their hobbies, specializations or grades, shall participate in the following:
- (a) Preparing studies and reports on artistic topics,
  - (b) Preparing recordings with artists, critics and historians,
  - (c) Transcribing necessary data from private and public libraries,
  - (d) Preparing slides and films.
11. The supervising teacher shall submit to the Committee proposals concerning the annual plan and the primary materials needed for its implementation; he shall supervise the work being carried out.
12. The Higher Committee shall be responsible for:
- (a) Adopting, after discussion, the annual work plan,
  - (b) Adopting, after discussion, the annual working budget as well as the budget of the library and the documentation museum,
  - (c) Generally supervising the progress of the documentation work.

13. The bodies to be contacted by the documentation section are:

- (a) The Institute's store-rooms, in order to obtain the necessary material and equipment,
- (b) Cultural centres and offices of Arab and foreign cultural attachés
- (c) Unesco Department, Ministry of Education,
- (d) Unesco Headquarters in Paris,
- (e) The National Publishing House,
- (f) The National Museum of Modern Art/Ministry of Information,
- (g) The National Commission/Ministry of Information,
- (h) Office of Artistic Affairs/Ministry of Information,
- (i) The Iraqi Association of Plastic Artists and other artistic associations,
- (j) The Association of Iraqi Artists,
- (k) The Union of Arab Artists,
- (l) The Iraqi Museum of Antiquities,
- (m) Information Directorate/Ministry of Education,
- (n) Fine Arts Directorate/Ministry of Education
- (o) Any other relevant bodies.

14. Artists and critics who have achieved a certain standing in artistic circles may qualify for inclusion in the documentation library's index. The Higher Committee shall lay down the general conditions governing such inclusion.

15. The following are some of the means to be used in collecting necessary data:

- (a) Visits by students to museums and libraries inside Baghdad,
- (b) Similar visits, with the Ministry's approval, to museums and libraries outside Baghdad,
- (c) Nomination of persons considered by the Higher Committee to be capable of making a significant contribution to documentary research.

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