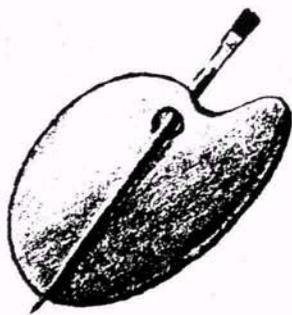


Integrated Art Activities and Concept Formation



JOSEPH A. CARDOZO*

IT SEEMS to be generally agreed that concept development is continuous throughout life, beginning at least as early as the ability to talk. Its importance to education cannot be overemphasized. The fact that there is considerable similarity between concept learning and perceptual learning makes it rather difficult to differentiate between the two. In a very general sense, one difference seems to be that perceptual learning is dependent upon reinforcement, and concept learning is dependent upon verbalization.

Klausmeier and Goodwin state that "an individual's concept of anything is the organized inferences—meaningful associations—that he has formed of objects or events." This implies that concepts are formed from experience. The more varied and meaningful one's experiences are, the greater the possibility for concept formation. The various properties of concept formation depend to a considerable extent upon visual awareness before meaningful associations can be made. The integrated art activities phase of the art program provides for this type of learning.

The integrated art activities phase of the art program considers all areas of the school's curriculum. When art activities are related to other subject areas, children are provided with an opportunity to learn that art is related to many phases of their experience.

When art activities are related to science, social studies, and other subject areas, children become more aware of their environment and learn to make associations that help to develop new concepts.

During this phase of their training they learn the meanings of new words, facts about different countries, and different uses of science and arithmetic. With the aid of pictures, filmstrips, movies, television, and a variety of tools and materials, children are able to use their imagination individually, or in group situations, to experiment and explore. The activity requires verbal as well as nonverbal organizations, and many other properties of concept formation.

For Flexibility

This kind of activity also provides an opportunity for children to become flexible; flexible not only in visual self-expression, but flexible in thinking as well. While using their imagination, children can develop large thoughts from small fragments, and these can be used in a flexible way. Flexibility in thinking involves a change of some kind. The change may be in the meaning, interpretation, or use of something; a change in

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understanding of the task at hand; a change of strategy in doing the task; or a change in direction of thinking, which may mean a new interpretation of the original goal. Of equal importance is the fact that this type of activity affords children an opportunity to deal with concrete (perceived) material as well as symbolic material, and verbally meaningful (or semantic) material.

Consideration must be given to the grade level and other factors such as mental age and socioeconomic background of the children involved in such activity, if it is to be meaningful. It is the teacher's task to determine the degree of simplification or complexity of presentation required to prevent confusion.

Many different approaches should be used in presenting material so that the children will have an opportunity to separate what is relevant from the irrelevant in their particular situation. In other words, an op-

portunity should be provided for them to generalize, abstract, and discriminate.

The integrated art activities phase of the art program can contribute to concept formation by enriching the experiential background of the children through firsthand contacts with their environment and by means of various aids when more direct experience is not possible.

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On Early Learning: The Modifiability of Human Potential

By IRA J. GORDON

- To what extent must we simply settle for what the child appears to be, as a person and as a learner?
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