

*Arts Contribution to the Quality of
Living in the Global Village through
“Enlightened Cherishing”*

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“When a society is ailing, its institutions ache, but when it is no longer aware of its ailments, it is very near death.” (Broudy,1972)

Introduction

The impact of globalization on education systems can be traced in at least two distinct directions. One direction, rooted in the economic account of this phenomenon, stimulates attention to the competitive capacity of education systems with specific implications for the governance as well as the programs offered to the students (Hopkins, 1999). The other direction, is rooted in a cultural account of this phenomenon and stimulates thought and action in the sphere of identity formation. The cultural account encourages the development of time-appropriate characters who have a better chance to experience a peaceful and productive life under the emerging condition known as globalization.

This article concentrates on the second direction and offers a new perspective on how education could deal with its implications.

Values Education at the Age of Globalization

Globalization, it is suggested, requires the adoption of two apparently conflicting approaches in the practice of values education. Education systems, in other words, must endeavor to reach a balance state while walking on a very fine line. The balance between the global and local or the universal and the practical when dealing with values and attitudes. This is indeed a real challenge and a rather tall order for any education system. The challenge before the policy makers is to genuinely aim at rearing individuals who can identify with their local culture and cherish its content

while adopting a positive attitude toward other cultural traditions, celebrating differences as potential opportunities that if treated wisely can enhance human ideals.

If either aspect is taken lightly by educators, an imperative of living in the new age is undermined and the resulting condition will be such that in no way could be characterized as global community. In other words, the removal of the physical and geographical boundaries separating nations and human societies, if not managed properly by means available to education systems, can lead to all sorts of debilitating tensions, problems and dysfunctions.

Although different sectors of the society can and must contribute to this end, but the most critical contribution is expected to initiate from the education sector as the pioneering force in the socialization of next generation.

Aesthetic Approach to Values Education

The strategy to effectively handle this delicate and dilemmatic situation regarding values education consistent with the requirements of global age is suggested to be the arts. It is perfectly reasonable, I argue, to capitalize on the unique function of arts to reach the desired states of mind, heart and soul. This unique function is the potential to nurture values, beliefs and attitudes empowered with both cognitive and emotional attributes. The traditional approaches to values education, although limited to a single set of standards, has turned out to be to a significant degree unsatisfactory. This is because education either focused on the cognitive aspect of learning values or its emotional component. In other words, the conventional teaching-learning approach in this realm either yield understanding as the end state with no action to follow or, conversely, lead to an emotional change with action devoid from any understanding. Both the in-action stemming from the first approach and the action derived from the

second approach are far from being educationally desired. None can be considered responsive to the requirements of the new age where a complex combination of values, beliefs and attitudes delicately woven into individual's personality fabric should constitute the basis or justification for every action and reaction engaged in by individuals living in the global age.

Another explanation for the failure of conventional approaches to teaching values can be extracted from Reimer's discussion on the inadequacy of the ordinary language as the medium of instruction. (1999) He asserts:

“There is a gap between the richness and density of our inner subjective reality of felt awareness and the limited capacity of ordinary language to mediate or represent it.” (p.158)

Reimer continues by pointing to the differences between what he calls “emotions” and “feeling” or “affect”. Emotions, he argues are broad classes of feelings. The essence of feelings are not captured within these classificatory concepts such as love, anger, sadness, etc. since they comprise of infinite gradations and combinations. He concludes that what language can do is to represent those broad classes or the emotion categories (p.158). Language, that is discursive language, is inherently inapt to touch on or capture the life of feeling or affect and is not, therefore, the right medium for effective value experiences.

Arts, I contend, can come to rescue by simultaneously engaging the cognitive and the affective aspects of human beings in the process of learning values. The outcome of such engagement is referred to as “cognitive feeling” or “feelingful cognition” (Broudy,1972), which represent the unique and distinct function performed by arts in an arts based-learning approach.

“Enlightened cherishing”, a term coined by Harry Broudy (1972) is the final outcome of this process which denotes the most precious quality capable of saving humanity at the dawn of globalization. Enlightened cherishing can be thought of as” a love of objects and actions that by certain norms and standards are worthy of our love. It is a love that knowledge justifies” (p.8) Broudy continues by adding that, “without it value experience suffers from two defects. One is servitude to blind or capricious impulse and desire. The other is joyless or routinized discharge of conventional obligations whose “rightness” lies less in the nature of the task than in the general expectation that they will be carried out” (p.7.). Therefore, the individual who reaches the state of “enlightened cherishing” is saved from both in-action due to insensitivity and blind action solely charged with emotions. He or she undertakes action, or refrains from one, in line with beliefs and values that are both cognitively understood and emotionally cherished.

Nelson Goodman offers the following insight on the synergistic relationship between cognition and emotion in an aesthetic context presumed to be the key factor in making the aesthetic experience a powerful approach in values education:

“The work of art is apprehended through the feelings as well as through the senses. Emotional numbness disables here as definitely if not as completely as blindness or deafness” (1968, p.248).

What must be further emphasized, however, is that enlightened cherishing thus conceived, is a quality in value experience that encourages both criticality and flexibility and runs counter to dogmatism and rigidity. In other words, a person embracing this quality stands a better chance to reconcile his/her value structure with

new emerging realities if in fact such reconciliation is called for. He/she is better prepared to successfully carry out an exercise of bringing local and universal into harmony and peaceful coexistence.

On the role of imagination

One fundamental flaw in the operation of today's schools which is also quite relevant to the theme of arts - or aesthetic - based values education, is the absence of imagination from the concept of education and, most conspicuously, from its practice. This section offers a brief review of the grounds leading to the current state of affairs and serves as a precursor to the discussion taken up in the next and final section where the process of value education through arts is more fully delineated.

Philosophically speaking, imagination's poor reputation is attributed to the exclusive emphasis placed on intellect for centuries in the history of philosophical discourse. Imagination, in other words, was held to be the antithesis of reason and intellect and inimical to prudential reason (Choi, 2001, p.8).

Schools, too, have given their primary attention to the intellectual operations of the mind, especially those of acquiring facts and of problem - solving by hypothetical - deductive thinking. They have done so without realizing that the raw materials for reasoning of all sorts furnished by the imagination (Ibid).

Imagination is thought to be the bedrock for creative act. But the function of this human faculty relevant to our discussion, that is the role of imagination in aesthetic education or aesthetic dimension of value education, is of a different kind. Values education endowed with aesthetic quality rests on the impressional side of the functions of imagination, not the creative function more widely known. It takes a well developed active imagination, it is argued, to apprehend the creative acts when they

are objectified in poetry, painting, music, etc.. This phenomenon is referred to as “imaginative perception” or “perceptive imagination”.

To further clarify the role of imagination in the process of perception, I rely on Peirce’s three modes of existence in which things are and three modes of perception under which things appear. (Levi, 1962). The three modes of appearance or perception are: firstness, secondness and thirdness (pp. 140-144).

By firstness Peirce means the immediate qualitative aspects of all perceptual existence, the color of pine, the odor of jasmine, the sound of a train whistle, the taste of a coffee, etc. It refers to all the experiences that are immediate and spontaneous. If firstness corresponds to the feeling qualities of the universe, secondness refers to its activity. Whenever we have the experience of tension, the sense of things conflicting one another or causing one another, secondness is the focus of our perception. It is, in other words, the sense of the action and reaction of bodies, of dynamism in the world and the sense of strain and muscular effort in our bodies.

If firstness exists in the quality of things, and secondness exists in their oppositions, then thirdness exists in their meaning. All elements in experience have the capacity to symbolize ideas or meaning, which transcend their own particularity. Whenever there is generality and individual elements in experience symbolize general features of classes, thirdness is present.

Aesthetic perception, so crucial in achieving aesthetic experience and feelingful knowledge, although dependent on the first two layers of perception, namely the sensory and the formal aspects, nonetheless lean most heavily on the third layer of perception. The imaginative power of the mind is most seriously involved at this level of perception and must, therefore, be stretched to its limits. In other words, this is the occasion where the constraints on the individual’s imaginative perception or

the power of imagination will be unveiled and meaning extraction suffers in proportion.

Reimer's characterization of the role imagination plays in the perception neatly summarizes this discussion. He maintains that:

“Aesthetic experiencing requires a reconstruction by the imagination of the percipient of the imagined interplay of occurrences built into the form by the artist” (p.154)

Values education in the context of aesthetic education

Aesthetic education ought to concentrate on helping the students to perceive works of art, the environment, nature, clothing, etc. in the way that artists in the respective media tend to perceive them (Broudy, 1972, p.66). In opting for perception as the proper focus of aesthetic education, two other popular approaches are being dismissed or moved from the center stage to the periphery. They are the performance or otherwise known as production approach and the approach manifested in the traditional courses in appreciation.

The performance approach initiates the pupil into skills of a particular art (p.61), it stresses the importance of expressing oneself (p.62). The only reason given to justify performance approach, is that children must be able to learn the “language” of different media before they can learn to perceive the qualities and meanings expressed through that medium. To this end, art education during the elementary years may place their primary emphasis on the production skills or the art language consistent with efforts to teach the ordinary language.

The appreciation approach or “knowing about” art is no substitute for the perception of the work of art either (p.105). knowing about art, unless accompanied by a very rich amount of aesthetic perception, may not change the fabric of our life anymore than reading about the life of a saint will make the person saintly or reading about the works of a scientist will make one’s thinking more scientific (p.64). Enlightened cherishing as a lofty goal would have been materialized when, and only when the person is able to point to the features of artworks by virtue of which one can defend the judgement that they deserve to be liked.

Understanding aesthetic education within the framework discussed above , i.e.: perceptive approach, requires the understanding of there dimensions associated with it. They are the sensory, the formal and the expressive (Broudy, p.67). These aspects were mentioned in the previous section when the concept of imaginative perception was discussed using Peirce’s three modes/layers of perception. The three aspects discussed by Broudy, correspond to the three modes, i.e.: firstness, secondness and thirdness, which entered into Peirce’s discussion. It would, therefore, not be necessary to engage in a detailed description of these dimensions and a transient account is sufficient.

To start, it is prudent to emphasize that aesthetic experience is a whole comprised of sensory content, form and expressiveness. One can decompose this unity, however, and pay attention to a single dimension at a time only for the benefit of better understanding the process and better implementing it in the educative process.

Perception of sensory qualities or sensory discrimination is part of what a cultivated taste or “cultivated sensibility” (Eisner,1983) is about. Broudy observes

that “the cultivated observer can spend an hour on a segment of a work of art that commands no more than a flick of the eye or prick of the ear from the novice” (p.68).

With respect to the perception of formal properties, many classifications introducing different formal quality that could be located in any aesthetic image appear in the literature. One such classification is offered by Parker (1926) where he identifies five characteristics of aesthetic form. They are principle of organic unity or unity in variety, the principle of the theme, the principle of thematic variations, balance and the principle of hierarchy and evolution. Such classifications make it possible to carry on formal analysis of aesthetic objects more or less systematically.

The situation radically changes when it comes to the teaching of the expressive dimension of aesthetic experience. Nobody can say with confidence just what it is that is to be perceived (Broudy, p.75). This is because as Susanne Langer has reminded us, the language of the arts is not discursive (1957). That is, with a non-discursive mode of language, each unit does not have a fixed meaning attached to it. The arts, she argues, present us with images of feeling, emotions and values. The language is presentational rather than representational and it requires the observer to break into the codes to recognize feeling in one of its infinite guises. As Broudy rightly points out, if works of art were to serve solely as means to direct communication, there would be no art, or it would be displaced by science as fast as possible (p.79).

This complexity, however, should not be interpreted as impossibility. The field of teaching the perceptive or the expressive dimension of art, is in dire need of new foundations and new approaches. The exchange of teaching ideas and experiences among educators throughout the world would add the necessary momentum to this process.

This section will conclude by presenting a concrete example of a teaching episode showing how the capacity of dramatic act could be exploited to reach enlightened cherishing.

“The audience was silent. The dancers stopped. Students through movement and dance had just illustrated the destruction, debris and heartache by the dropping of the atomic bomb. Suddenly these students, deliberately disorganized, ran to pick up scattered ping-pong balls that symbolized the rampant destruction.”

“Thus through movement and interpretation, they began the difficult process of rectifying a horrible wrong and through cleaning up the disarray on the floor symbolizing the initial process of repairing the damage of WWII.”
(Witherell, 2000, p.179)

Concluding Remarks

Art should serve as the pedestal of cultural policy. Arts-based cultural policies, should lead to the restoration of arts in the education systems. Arts, especially with regards to the aesthetic dimension of values education, present itself as an imperative and a critical component of the curriculum in the new age. Enlightened cherishing, as argued in this paper, is the quality that literary determines the quality of life mankind will experience in the future.

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