

“Children’s drawings should be nice, cheerful, and colorful” – personal notions of preschool teachers related to visual art activities in the kindergarten



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The importance of art education for the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children and youth

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Abstract

Understanding of function of art in general education has changed over time, leading to the parallel existence of old and new notions, even though, in some cases, they are not in accordance with each other. Focusing on some of the older and outdated notions, newer authors in art education (for example, Eisner and Kindler) discuss the myths that are widespread among teachers who teach art in general education. Some of these myths include: the primary function of art is to mainly support the development of children’s creativity, and that we should offer children as many materials as possible when they are engaged in an art activity. The aim of this research was to explore the extent to which preschool teachers in Serbia believe in these so-called myths. This is especially relevant as kindergartens are the first educational institutions in children’s lives, thus establishing an important foundation for the way children understand the role of art and form their attitudes toward art. We collected data (N=135 preschool teachers) using an online questionnaire. The results showed that preschool teachers mostly believe in one of the offered myths (“children should be given complete freedom during art activities in the kindergarten” – with 57.8% agreeing); most of the kindergarten teachers do not believe in four myths (such as “children’s works in which it is difficult to recognize what is drawn should not be exhibited” – with 98.5% disagreeing), but they were indecisive about six other myths (such as “When we offer children only one material in an art activity, we limit their freedom and creativity”). The results suggest that preschool teachers need additional support (through initial and in-service education) in developing their own notions of art in order to transfer appropriate attitudes toward arts to children.

Key words

art functions; children's attitudes towards arts; myths about art; preschool children; visual arts in kindergarten

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