



The Paradigm of Art Education and Assumptions About the Application of Thomas Aquinas' Aesthetic Theory in Indonesia

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Abstract

The general public's view or paradigm of arts education as a means to achieve commercialism and produce profit-oriented artists is not entirely wrong. However, in reality, arts education, in both formal and informal learning processes, greatly helps students to not only develop their skills but also cultivate their senses. The formation and cultivation of skills and sensibilities in arts education should also be supported by a clear concept of what materials are important and of high quality to be provided to students. The application of Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theory, which includes: 1) wholeness or perfection, 2) balance or harmony, and 3) brilliance or clarity, is expected to change how art education should shape quality human beings and artists, and then help change the negative paradigm of the general public about art education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Paradigm; Art Education; Aesthetics; Thomas Aquinas*

Introduction

According to Kristanto (2017: 120), arts education has two different paradigms in terms of the learning process and objectives. These two paradigms are: arts education as a tool used to enable students to master artistic techniques and skills (education in the arts), and arts education as a process of learning about the arts, which does not focus solely on marketable or non-marketable artistic skills, but also serves as the basis for the educational process as a whole (education through the arts). Kristanto argues that education through art is clearly reflected in preschool and elementary school levels. The implementation of learning through art is carried out through teachers conveying concepts to students using pictures as a means of counting or describing something. The view of education through art is certainly very different from education in art, which focuses on an individual's achievement in mastering artistic techniques and skills. However, sometimes both views on arts education in Indonesia remain ambiguous, so that the general public only sees arts education as a way to master artistic skills as a means of commercialization. Regardless of these two different views on arts education, arts education is not only used as a tool for commercialization. According to Soehardjo (2012: 13), arts education is a conscious effort to prepare students, especially for guidance, teaching, and training activities, with the aim of mastering the roles that must be carried out through art. Read and Wickiser (1945, 1974) state that there are two roles that can be carried out, namely, transmitting artistic abilities and skills and functioning as a foundation for learning.

Sunarto (2017: 108) argues that arts education is a tool that can train sensitivity through objectification and maintain ideas with a touch of appreciation given by someone. Sunarto's opinion cannot be separated from the influence of aesthetics (sensitivity) that makes arts education more valuable. Arts education should be oriented towards developing the functions of the soul, which include creativity (thinking), sensitivity (feeling), and skill (craftsmanship), which are obtained through an understanding of aesthetics. Thomas Aquinas' understanding of aesthetics is in line with the concept of arts education in Indonesia, through the three requirements of beauty that he proposed, namely: wholeness or perfection, balance or harmony, and brilliance or clarity. If the understanding of these three requirements for beauty can be applied in various aspects of arts education at various levels of education as a whole, then it is likely to change the paradigm of arts education in Indonesia to be more valuable and beneficial for educational development than merely as a tool for achieving commercialism.

Method

The paradigm of arts education and the assumptions underlying the application of Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theory in arts education in Indonesia were analyzed using Thomas Aquinas' aesthetic theory through qualitative research in the form of a literature study. According to Thomas Aquinas, aesthetics in arts education consists of three important aspects that constitute beauty (Muslim, 2017: 87). These aesthetic/beauty requirements include wholeness or perfection, balance or harmony, and brilliance or clarity. If the understanding of these three requirements for beauty can be applied in various aspects of arts education at various levels of education as a whole, then it is likely to change the paradigm of arts education in Indonesia to be more valuable and beneficial for educational development rather than just a tool to achieve commercialism. The research preparation and data collection process through literature study was conducted over 2 months, followed by data processing and conclusion within 1 month, estimated to take a total of 3 months. Thomas Aquinas' theory will be examined in conjunction with the art education paradigm that has emerged from the general public. The results of this examination will then produce a new paradigm that will arise when this theory is applied to art education in Indonesia. It is hoped that the results of this research can be implemented and used in the process of applying art education in Indonesia and can change the public's paradigm regarding art education.

Results and Discussion

According to Asbullah Muslim (2017:85), the term “arts education” is rarely mentioned and underappreciated, both in formal and informal forums. A substantial obstacle to the arts education paradigm in Indonesia is the lack of appreciation for arts education and a lack of understanding of arts education, resulting in arts education being treated as a supplementary subject in the Indonesian education curriculum. So far, arts education in Indonesia has only been guided by the results to be achieved technically, or can be assumed as a means to meet economic needs only. This has led to another problem, namely the loss of the sense of beauty that underlies the basic purpose of art in Indonesia, resulting in the loss of creativity among artists in Indonesia. After realizing that the results of arts education are of little value and benefit, a common paradigm has emerged, namely that arts education in Indonesia only produces artists who generate profits from their work, without any cultivation of aesthetic sensibility and spiritual development as the foundation for artistry (creation, feeling, intention). The above paradigm has given rise to a new problem, namely a lack of attention to the arts in public schools in Indonesia, because it seems wasteful and a drain on the budget. However, what many ordinary people do not know is that if the implementation of arts education is done correctly, it can be very beneficial. The above paradigm raises a new problem, namely the lack of attention to the arts in public schools in Indonesia, because it seems wasteful and a drain on the budget. However, what many people do not realize is that if arts education is implemented appropriately and in line with its main objective of nurturing creativity, taste,

and imagination, then the arts have enormous potential to support other subjects, or even arts education itself.

The application of Thomas Aquinas' theory of aesthetics in art education in Indonesia may help change the general public's paradigm regarding the function and achievements of artists. According to Thomas Aquinas, aesthetics in art education consists of three important aspects that constitute beauty (Muslim, 2017: 87). The three aspects of Thomas Aquinas' theory of art aesthetics are integrity and perfection, proportion and harmony, and brightness or clarity. The application of aesthetics as a basis in art education is expected to train sensitivity, social skills, and spiritual functions, as well as artistic skills.

1. Integrity and Perfection in Art Education

The integrity of theory and its application in the learning process, especially in art education, is very important so that art material can be fully understood by students. Not only through theory, but also through application and practice in art education, which are inseparable. Of course, in every subject taught, art educators must understand the benefits, objectives, and values to be achieved from the material. Brent G. Wilson (in Iryanti and Jazuli, 2001: 43) defines Bloom's three dimensions of behavior into seven specific dimensions of art behavior, namely: knowledge, perception, understanding, evaluation, production, appreciation, and analysis. These seven behavioral dimensions should be studied holistically as a unified whole in a step-by-step manner so that the goal of art education as a form of holistic education can be achieved.

An effective strategy is needed to develop comprehensive and complex basic competencies in arts education, both in public schools and arts schools. In reality, the development of arts learning patterns is sometimes stuck at the production stage and does not continue to the stages of understanding and appreciation, so that students tend to neglect sensitivity, imagination, and creativity. Arts learning requires evaluation, appreciation, and empathy to achieve arts education that is not only product-oriented but also process-oriented in appreciating the product.

2. Balance and Harmony in Arts Education

In line with the integrity of arts education, harmony and balance in arts education can also be achieved through multicultural arts education. Arts education should teach cultural diversity as well as local arts and arts from outside Indonesia (if there is sufficient time in the learning process). The purpose of providing multicultural material is so that students can respect each other and have a broad view of cultural forms through works of art produced by artists in other regions. Balanced and harmonious arts education requires tolerance and mutual respect and appreciation for the forms or works of others. This process should be applied from an early age, not only in arts education, but also in educational processes outside the realm of art.

In addition to providing multicultural art materials, it would be beneficial if art education at higher levels could implement a system of dialogue between students and teachers. The willingness to engage in dialogue reflects openness and an understanding that there are truths beyond oneself. In order for dialogue to be effective, students must first have a deep understanding of the material and broad knowledge. The learning process that applies multiculturalism and dialogue between students will develop a sense of tolerance, empathy, mutual respect, and broad insight into culture, morals, and humanitarian attitudes. This makes the art education paradigm more balanced and demonstrates harmony in the art learning process itself.

3. Excellence or Clarity in Art Education

Clarity in arts education relates to clear and brilliant functions and objectives in producing artists who have the qualifications needed in the field. The basis of arts education must have clear objectives.

Students must understand that artistic activities, both in public schools and in arts schools in particular, are not just routines that must be done to get satisfactory grades. Students must be given an understanding of positive, long-term goals that they can continue to use throughout their lives, so that they can be beneficial not only to themselves but also to the lives of others. The implementation of clear arts education improves the quality of learning, and it is hoped that the paradigm of students will also change after understanding the functions and objectives of art, which can help cultivate creativity, taste, and imagination.

Clarity of function and purpose in arts education must also be balanced with clarity of the material provided by the arts teacher. Quality material can be presented in class because the teaching resources are also of high quality. Every arts teacher needs to have broad knowledge as a basis for presenting material to students, so that the material provided has a broad and open scope of knowledge. According to Tarjo and Enday (2004), students tend to dislike activities that they perceive as low quality and a waste of time, so there needs to be clarity of material balanced with clarity of purpose, so that students can learn art effectively.

Conclusion

The paradigm of arts education in Indonesia largely focuses on negative aspects, leading many to view art as merely a subject used to complement other subjects. However, in reality, arts education greatly helps students and artists to cultivate their creativity, taste, and imagination, making arts education the basis or foundation of education. This is supported by Plato's statement that "art should be the basis of education," meaning that art should be the foundation of education. Kristanto (2017: 120) states that arts education has two different perspectives in terms of its objectives and learning process, namely education in the arts and education through the arts. These two perspectives are assumed to change the common paradigm regarding arts education from negative to positive, if arts education in Indonesia applies the three main points as the requirements for beauty as proposed by Thomas Aquinas. The three points are integrity or perfection in arts education, balance or harmony in arts education, and brilliance or clarity in arts education. With these points in mind in every art education program and education through art, it is highly likely that art education will produce creative artists who are qualified in accordance with the basic objectives of art as a means of cultivating creativity, taste, and imagination.

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