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EWA PIWOWARSKA 

Technical Education and Arts Education in the Opinions of Teachers of Early School Education – Selected Issues

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Abstract

Technical education and arts education in younger years of elementary school often contribute to final effects of the activities undertaken by children. This process is connected with the human need to create objects, which apart from being more or less useful should be also beautiful. The study focuses on the difficulties some early school education teachers have to distinguish activities related to tasks carried out within the scope of technical education and those related to arts education. It should be underlined that children's ability to create objects of practical use is mostly emphasized by the principles and aims of technical education, whereas the purpose of art activities is to help children discover beauty by collecting experience. Despite such assumptions, a significant part of the respondents does not notice any distinctive variations between these educational areas, stating that the distinctions are blurred and indicating that selected art tasks are parts of technical classes.

Keywords: arts and crafts classes, fine art classes, teacher, early school education

Technical and art education – theoretical assumptions

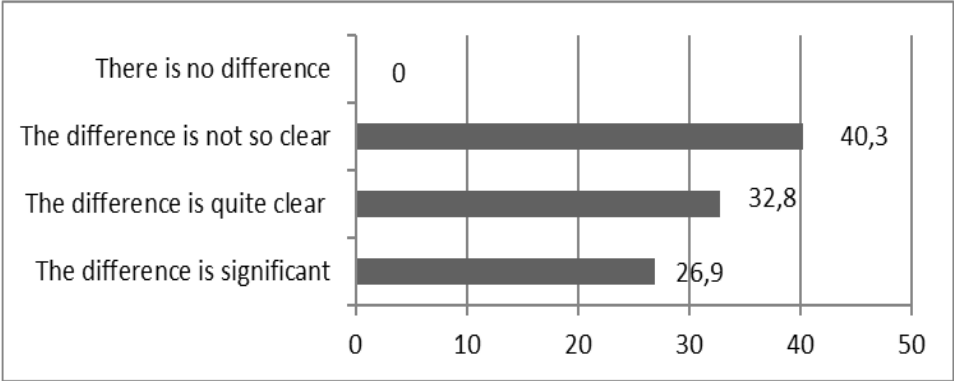
Getting acquainted children with the surrounding technosphere in early childhood education is an essential foundation of technical activities. The process of education for gaining technical skills takes place on the basis of getting acquainted with technical reality through the prism of its components, such as activities, things and phenomena (Drejer, 2010, p. 36). Craft projects worked out on the basis of active cognition, prepare pupils to master – themselves or with a teacher support – their skills and knowledge related to planning the assumed results based on actions, technology for doing it, as well as, learning about properties of raw materials and tools being used, as well as, operating technical de-

vices. By developing operational and organizational skills, pupils enrich “*their knowledge of the basic problems of technology and acquire the language of technology (names of tools, technologies, processes), as well*” (Drejer, 2010, p. 36). As Skiba emphasizes (2015, p. 93), the children’s ability to produce more or less functional objects is the one, which should be most strongly emphasized in the assumptions and goals of technical classes.

As it is indicated in the Core Curriculum for Primary Education Stage I (OJ, p. 16), the sense of working in art classes enables discovering the beauty through accumulation of experiences. Pupils learn to discover the beauty in nature, art works, cultural goods or in artistic products created individually or collectively. Art classes are a source of emotions, experiences and knowledge.

Description of scientific procedure to test the hypothesis

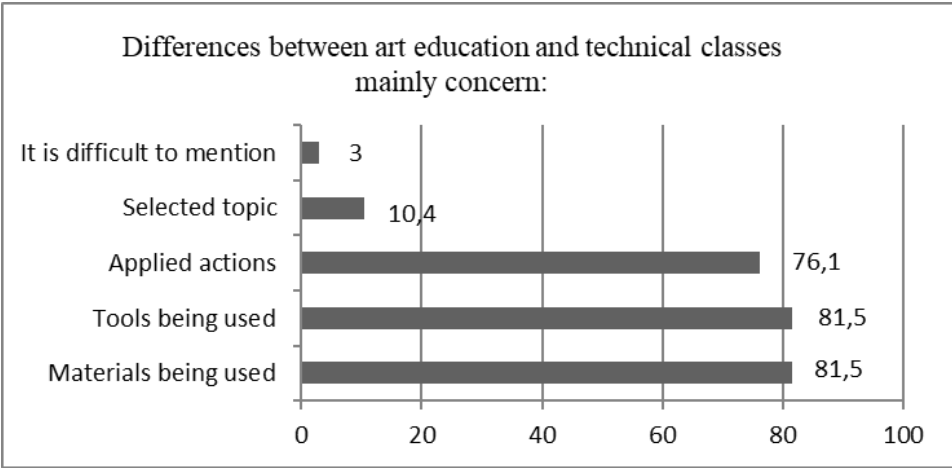
Technical classes and art education in early stages of primary school are common in creating the final effect of the action undertaken by children. This process to the need indicated by human beings to create objects that, apart from being more or less usable, should be beautiful, as well. While preparing future teachers for professional practice, the author noticed difficulties in discerning the difference between activities undertaken in the field of technical classes and those belonging to artistic activity. Hence, finding an answer to the question about noticing by teachers of early childhood education the differences between activities related to tasks carried out within the framework of technical education and those related to art education, became the main concern of the conducted research study, having a pilot nature. The research study using surveys covered 67 respondents.



Graph 1. Differences between teaching art and technical classes, being noticed by teachers of early childhood education

Source: Own study

The preliminary results of the survey showed that according to a significant group of respondents – as much as 40% of the total respondents (Graph 1), the difference between art education and technical classes is not very clear. A quite distinct difference in this aspect is noticed by every third respondent and slightly more that every fourth respondent indicates it as a clear difference. The obtained results allow us to conclude that a large group of teachers who are practitioners have doubts about the difference between activities leading to acquiring knowledge and mastering skills by pupils in two educational areas, which are: technical classes and art education.



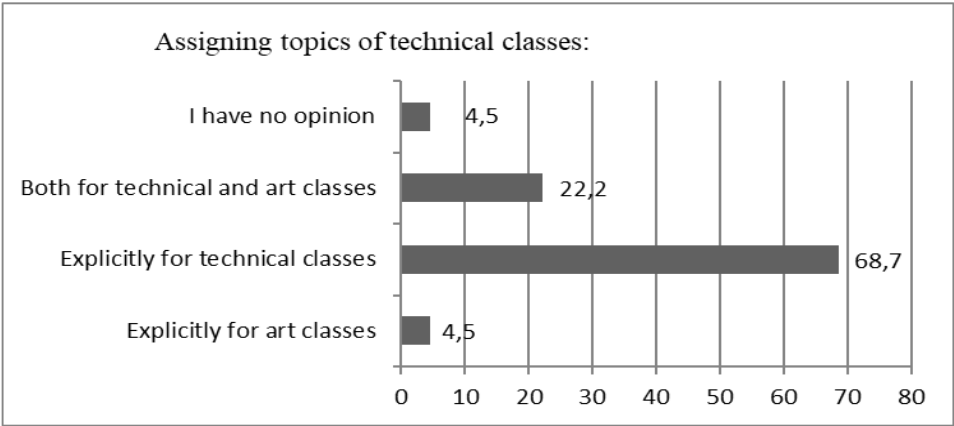
Graph 2. Leading factors differentiating art education and technical classes indicated by teachers of early childhood education

Source: Own study

The analysis of data in Graph 2 allows us to conclude that the vast majority of the surveyed teachers believe that materials and tools being used differentiate activities as being undertaken in art and technical classes. Also, the vast majority of respondents emphasize that this condition is met by actions taken to create a work. A small group notices the difference in implementing tasks in two educational areas, in a selected topic chosen for the classes. Puzzling is such a high response rate regarding materials, tools or activities is puzzling, since children in the early stage education, both in technical and art classes, use the most commonly available materials, such as: paper, cardboard, plastic containers, plasticine, or tools, such as: scissors, punch, stapler and others. Activities that lead to creation of works are mainly drawing, painting, cutting, gluing and sewing. In that case, a question should be asked about the essence of the classes, about the most frequently represented assumptions and goals of these two educational areas.

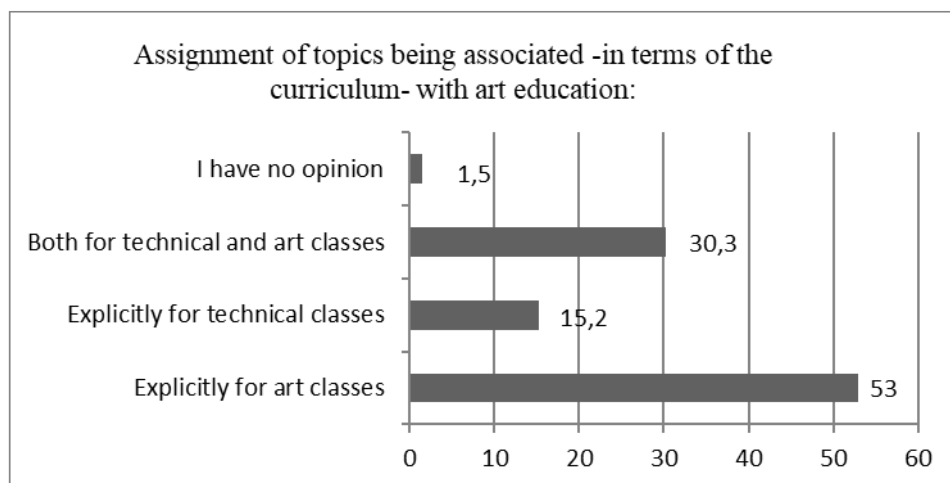
Topics indicated in the survey questions, such as: building utility structures, technical professions, food preparation, operation of electrical devices, history of everyday objects (inventions), thus issues related to technical education – were marked by more than half of the teachers as intended for implementation explicitly within technical classes. Almost every tenth respondent did not have an opinion on this subject or assigned it to art education classes. Furthermore, data indicated in Graph 3 demonstrate that almost every fifth teacher described some of these activities as part of both art and technical education. It can be assumed that a utility object constructed by pupils, such as a pencil holder – decorated in the next stage of activities carried out by children and this activity is stated as an element of works related to artistic activity. Perhaps for the reason of combining these two areas of educational activity – teachers gave such an answer.

Respondents were also asked to assign to the area of art and technical education subjects of the curriculum of art classes. Moulding, sticking, drawing, duplicate printing, constructing and painting various types of real and fantasy figures were indicated as art activities by only about half of the respondents, while approximately one third of the respondents noticed these classes as technical education. Some of the topics selected in the survey, were described by few teachers as belonging exclusively to the area of technical activities. Surprising was the fact that quite a large group of teachers attributed to technical classes such activities made by children as: sculpting in plasticine or snow carving (namely making animals or snowmen). Despite the fact of clear lack of useful functions, these works are not indicated by this group of respondents as children’s art works. A question can be raised here: Are three-dimensional works or even moulding activities considered by teachers as technical classes?



Graph 3. Assigning the topics implementing the curriculum content of technical classes to the area of art education and technical classes made by teachers

Source: Own study



Graph 4. Assigned by teachers to the area of art and technical education in terms of topics related to the content to art classes

Source: Own study

Research findings

It should be stressed that the ability of children to make objects with practical (utility) application is most strongly emphasized in assumptions and goals of technical classes, while the sense of working during art classes enables them – by gathering the experience, gradually – to discover the beauty. Despite such assumptions, a significant part of the respondents does not notice any distinctive variations between these educational areas, stating that the distinctions are blurred and indicating that selected art tasks are parts of technical classes. Where should be searched for the solution for the emerging problem? Perhaps more attention should be paid to educating teachers in this area. The need for self-education, thus searching for solutions in available resources – which are more and more reachable on the publishing market (Jelinek, 2018, 2019) – may also help to alleviate this problem.

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