

Developing Creative Attitude  
in  
Lebanese Children Ages Four to Six  
Through Art Education

by  
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A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in the  
Education Department of the  
American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon

June, 1965

To my loving husband and children  
who have always been  
a valuable source  
of  
help and encouragement

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to express her deep appreciation and gratitude to all those who kindly helped and encouraged her in this study, particularly:

To Dr. G. Hildreth, her adviser, who guided her through the representation of this study.

To Professor F. Frick and Dr. M. Badri, who kindly directed her with their helpful suggestions.\*

To Professor J. Soghikian whose genuine interest in the thesis and readiness to help all through this study was exceptional and most encouraging.

To school administrators, principals and teachers whose willingness and cooperation made this study possible.

And to Miss L. Janoyan who patiently typed the manuscript.

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\* Members of the thesis committee.

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## ABSTRACT

In the title of this thesis: "Developing Creative Attitudes in Lebanese Children", the term "developing" is applied to emphasize the learning quality of creativity. Experts say that creativity is a matter of development, i.e. a child can be taught to think or act more creatively as he is taught to write, to paint or to play ball.

Education in general, therefore, is largely responsible in cultivating the creative urge the child is born with and in developing it into an attitude.

The value of creative attitude is manifold; it encourages the child to express himself, to explore and to find himself in relation to others, it encourages growth in the child's thinking, feeling and perceiving.

Art education is considered as one of the most fertile sources in developing the type of growth just mentioned. However, in order to achieve this growth art education should provide psychological safety and proper physical conditions and facilities.

On the basis of these facts and factors a question is raised which is: Are the art classes of Lebanese schools encouraging creativity? The interviews made and classes observed, as a part of this study forced the writer to conclude that the answer is negative.

Art classes in Lebanese schools are not at present encouraging creativity or the development of creative attitude, due to certain obstacles such as lack of awareness and realization of the values of childhood education and art education. Art in Lebanese art classes is not used as a means to help growth and development in the child. It is used as a means to accomplish certain requirements in the syllabus prescribed by the ministry of education. In most of the schools observed, art is used as an end in itself, to produce certain things in art classes to be exhibited at various occasions. The aim of art education is thus, the quality of the end product and not the effect of the process on the developing personality of the child. There is lack of trained educators who would realize these values mentioned and plan art education for children accordingly.

However, the existing obstacles can be gradually removed. If Lebanese educators would be aware of these obstacles, it is possible to introduce reasonable changes to improve teaching conditions. With more trained teachers and proper physical conditions and facilities art classes can help the child to develop creative attitudes toward art and toward their every day problems.

## CHAPTER I

### THE VALUE AND THE NEED OF CREATIVITY

#### AND THE CREATIVE ATTITUDE

#### Creativity as an Educational Means toward the Total Growth of the Child

##### The important role of education:

"In every human being there lies and lives humanity as a whole, but in each one it is realized and expressed in a wholly particular peculiar, personal unique manner".<sup>1</sup>

Psychologists say that there are two forces which can be responsible for human behavior: heredity and environment. However, we know from experimentation that the best seed will not grow in a dry soil while the poorest seed, with proper care, may grow in a rich soil. It is, then, environment or education in the broadest sense, in all its mental, emotional and spiritual implications which are largely responsible for attitudes and actions, for ability or inability to get along in this world.<sup>2</sup> If a child lives a rich and happy life, it is education

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<sup>1</sup> Froebel, Education Through Experience in the Infant School Years, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1955, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Lowenfeld, Creative and Mental Growth, The Macmillan Co., New York, U.S.A., 1962, pp. 1-2.

that has recognized the need for spiritual harmony and thus has planted the seed in him. If he lives in discord with himself and his environment, it is also education which has neglected to emphasize the growth and development of a creative attitude to help him solve his problems in life and adjust himself to his environment.

### The implications of creative education

Education implies learning and development.<sup>3</sup> In our present traditional system of education all learning experiences still point toward acquiring knowledge. Our one-sided education, with the emphasis on factual subject matter and preparation for examinations, has neglected those attributes of creative growth which are responsible for the development of the individual's sensibilities, needed for his personal and social life.

George D. Stoddard, quoting from Robert Ulich, a Harvard professor, writes that the "brain" alone does not make a man. Of course merely neglecting the brain does not make a man either, nor does it guarantee a healthy nation. A true education, then, as Pestalozzi states, cultivates not only the head but also the heart and the hand.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bulletin of the Department of Elementary School Principals, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Harold H. Anderson, Creativity and Its Cultivation, Harper and Bros Publishers, New York, U.S.A., 1959, p. 192.

In a well balanced educational system in which the development of the whole individual is emphasized, his thinking, feeling and perceiving must be equally developed in order that the potential creative abilities of each individual can unfold.<sup>5</sup>

#### Creativity and the value of the creative attitude

Recent psychological studies reveal that, creativity, the ability to explore and investigate, belongs to one of the Basic Drives, without which man cannot exist.<sup>6</sup>

Creative growth starts as soon as the child begins to invent babbling noises, sounds which he produces, or, he may do it by inventing his own forms which he may call "man", "house" or "boat". It is his form, his invention which makes it a creation.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, creativity in children, is self expression, seeing of new relationships, or a new interpretation of some fact familiar or not.<sup>8</sup>

Creative experience may be considered, then, in two ways: In the more restricted sense, ~~it is~~ the interpretation of one's own ideas, thoughts, and feelings into a tangible form which

<sup>5</sup> Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> Murray See and Dorris See, The Child and His Curriculum D. Appleton - Century Co., New York, U.S.A., 1940, p. 537.

is original with the person concerned. In the broad sense, however, creative experience includes the making of new interpretations and the seeing of new relationships in thinking, feeling, perceiving, and learning.<sup>9</sup>

This ability to see and to respond creatively can be developed into an attitude, which is the aim of this study, through art education.

Creativity in this sense does not refer to a quality which particularly gifted children could achieve, but to an ability or an attitude which every human being can and should achieve.<sup>10</sup> We may postulate that every normal child has some creative spark that education can blow upon and make brighter.

The value of the creative attitude is manyfold. It gives to the child the chance to explore and to experiment. Meanwhile the child becomes aware of his abilities and limitations; in other words, he finds himself in relation to his environment. The development of a creative attitude challenges the child to depend on himself, to solve his everyday problems, and helps him to find ways and means to adjust himself to his environment.

The creative attitude also is an important factor in mental health and in the total well being of a child. If a child is encouraged to make his own responses to a situation, to express his feelings and interpret himself, it greatly helps him

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 538.

<sup>10</sup> Harold H. Anderson, op. cit., p. 54.

to overcome a number of personal problems. It releases the repressed child, gives confidence to the overtimid, to the child with feelings of inadequacy, and it provides a legitimate means of doing something to gain the desired attention. It challenges the children, on the whole, to work to their capacity and helps to identify themselves with their special needs, interests and abilities, and to realize their potentialities and limitations.

Creative Art Education as a Means of Developing  
a Creative Attitude in the Child

The significance of art in creative education

Creativity, as an attitude, is needed and can be developed in all areas of curriculum; however, art is one of the most fertile sources of creative thinking, feeling and perceiving.

Long in the past, Plato and Aristotle both held that art should be the basis of education. Modern psychologists - James, Dewey, Piaget and Gestalt followers, all, emphasized the significance of art education. Lowenfeld states that art education introduced in the early years of childhood may well mean the difference between a flexible creative human being and one who in spite of all learning, lacks inner resources and has difficulty in his relationship to the environment.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Victor Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 2.



According to Lowenfeld, creative art processes stimulate creativeness in general. This important fact in itself emphasizes the significance of art education in the development of creative attitude. Hence, through art education the child develops more sensitivity and increased ability towards other educational experiences.<sup>12</sup> The aim of art education, in general, is then to give opportunity to self expression, self discovery and self reliance; to develop appreciation or enjoyment of art, and better understanding of ones environment which leads to a better adjustment in life.

#### Creative art education as a means to creative development

A child can learn to think more creatively just as he learns to write, paint or play ball say the experts.

"Creativity in children", says Osborn, "is a matter of imagination and it can be systemically cultivated and taught."<sup>13</sup>

Morse and Wingo state that creativity is largely a matter of effort, one can become more skillful in using his imagination just as one can become more skillful in almost anything he does in life.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> A. Osborn, Applied Imagination, (one of the main ideas of the book).

<sup>14</sup> C. Morse and Max Wingo, Psychology and Teaching, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1955, p. 279.

If creativity is largely a matter of cultivation of imagination, imagination is easier to foster in some areas of the curriculum than others. The areas which lead themselves naturally and obviously to the encouragement of creative interpretation and expression are the arts, both the fine arts and the practical arts. Both of them allow for certainty to take expression in tangible products. However, creativity as an attitude is needed and can be developed fully in all other areas of the curriculum.

Creativity can be encouraged through art education by providing materials, space, time and plenty of freedom to explore. Children need to get the feel of materials. Art media requires handling, touching and forming, at first without regard to what is produced. The art work of children, through kindergarten and lower elementary level specially, is important to the teacher in so far as it tells him about the child and helps him to keep alive the child's imagination and also the will to express. Experience, and not the product, is the precious aim of art education in the elementary grades.

It should be clear therefore, that we cannot measure the value of creative expression in art by the perfection of the product, for it is not what the child does to the material or the medium of self expression that counts, but rather what using the material or medium does for the child.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Foster and Headley, Education in the Kindergarten, American Book Co., New York, 1948, p. 113.

This point is most significant for children discussed in this thesis (those from four to six) through all their art experiences namely: singing, dancing, dramatizing, painting, molding or drawing.

This study, however, will be mainly concentrated on drawing experiences, presuming that all kinds of art experiences have problems more or less in common with drawing experiences which are handled either constructively or destructively for the development of the creative attitude.

#### Various approaches to drawing

Some art teachers take the position that art is purely intellectual and should be instructed like any other subject through the mastery of certain principles and elements of art. What the child needs, they say, is a drawing alphabet or vocabulary. This means to them teaching the child, step by step, how to draw lines, curves, geometric designs and later stereotype patterns, such as a man, a house, a boat etc. They believe that, the child, this way, is prepared to express himself more readily. Unfortunately, even though the child may learn to draw these patterns, he will need to wait for further instruction rather than to attempt to use this drawing vocabulary to express ideas of his own. Moreover this method may paralyze his creative impulse and stifle the impulse for self-expression, and

make him unable to meet novel situations.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, there is the laissez-faire concept, according to which the child, as an innate artist does not need guidance or instruction of any kind, he only needs to be provided with material in order to create.

The laissez-faire concept also has done as much harm to art education, as the stifling of the child's creative impulse by the directed detailed instruction. Children often lack sensitive experiences with which they may create. Teaching, therefore, cannot assume a passive attitude; it must be in the form of active guidance, stimulation, and motivation and suggestion through providing experiences, and helping children find various means of expressing them.

Conditions Necessary for Promoting Creative Attitude  
and Growth in Art Classes for Four to Six Year Olds

Certain conditions should be present in art classes to effect the aims of creative art education for young children. They are briefly stated in the following paragraphs as a standard used in observing present conditions in Lebanese schools. They are related to the areas of psychological freedom, proper

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<sup>16</sup> Mable Louise Culkin, Teaching the Youngest, New York, Macmillan Co., 1953, pp. 88-89.

physical conditions, the developmental characteristics of drawing abilities of four to six year olds, and the proper method of guiding, evaluating and developing children's work:

Psychological safety in art education

"My experience in psychotherapy", says Carl R. Rogers, "leads me to believe that by setting up conditions of psychological safety and freedom we maximize the likelihood of an emergence of constructive creativity."<sup>17</sup>

Hence, accepting the individual as an unconditional worth, in his own right and in his own unfolding, no matter what his present condition or behavior, is fostering creativity. The freedom and permissiveness which is mentioned here is not softness or indulgence, It is permission to be free, which also means that one is responsible to the extent of respecting the freedom of others in the class, but free to bear the consequences of his mistakes as well as his achievements through art experiences.

Psychological safety and freedom can only be genuinely possible by emphathical understanding, for if parents and teachers understand emphathically they can see what the child is feeling and doing from his point of view. They can enter his private world and see it as it appears to him and still accept him.

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<sup>17</sup> Harold H. Anderson, op. cit., p. 78.

The climate of safety in art education of this stage, frees the child from external evaluation and criticism, which helps him to find himself. By being encouraged to "open himself" to experiences he will be able to identify himself with his surroundings. He will be aware of his freedoms, limitations and responsibilities and resolve his conflicts and tensions creatively.

On the other hand, if a child has no psychological safety and is heavily oppressed by rigid disciplinary rules and regulations; if art for him, is merely the instruction of certain art activities, based on, and evaluated by adult standards, with no respect to his needs and likings, then, he cannot possibly be creative and find himself. He is rather, forced to follow and imitate and thus may end in frustration and develop a dislike towards art which is in no way helping him to grow or develop his creativity. An example of this can be seen in the following conversation with a Lebanese child who observed an adult sketching:

He: "Do you like to draw?"

She: "Yes, do you?"

He: "No! In school I always get my lines all wrong and then I get my knuckles slapped with a ruler."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Related by Prof. J. Soghikian.

Proper physical conditions, materials, equipment and guidance  
in art education on this level

Most books on art education deal with ideal class room situations and do not face the reality of schools with large classes and limited use of materials. This fact is providing an excuse for not having art classes at all, rather than to have it with insufficient means.

Proper physical conditions such as: large class rooms, light, fresh air, qualitative and quantitative materials and equipment, storage facilities and other conveniences with classes not more than twenty or twenty-five are all important factors which are discussed further in later chapters. However, the lack of these facilities does not preclude the possibility of providing opportunity for creative art experience. All these factors are largely dependent upon the personality, philosophy and experience of the administrators in general and the art teachers in particular.

The teacher's own creativeness, his sensitivity and flexible relationships to environment as well as his understanding and knowledge of the needs of those whom he is teaching are all essential factors for art classes.

The characteristics of drawing abilities in children ages four  
to six

According to Lowenfeld, a child's creative development is

tied up with his general growth and vice-versa.<sup>19</sup> Hence, the art teacher should be familiar with the nature of the child's art work at each stage of development to be able to guide him to evaluate his work in terms of growth components.

Children whose age range between four to six years are in the scribbling and preschematic drawing stage during which their drawings move from mere kinesthetic experiences to conscious drawing expressions of anything that interests and motivates them. They sometimes exaggerate in their drawings, features, that are of special interest to them.<sup>20</sup>

Any drawing expression will permit the teacher to recognize how far the child has proceeded in the grasp of himself and of the surrounding world, to the extent of his general development and social adjustment.

With the intention of helping teachers to become familiar with the nature of the drawings of children, at this stage, the results of an examination of a number of drawings and paintings are stated here. The following characteristics are likely to be found at this level: The favorite subject is the human figure the child himself, or people from his environment. A person is usually represented by a circular head in which eyes, nose, mouth and ears may or may not be indicated. Attached to the

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<sup>19</sup> Victor Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 108-115.



head are arms and legs with or without hands and feet. This figure is subject to innumerable variations, additions and subtractions dependent on the child and the stimulus of the situation being described. The figure is drawn without a background and placed often near the center of the page. Necessary properties of the objects, emotionally related, are placed around the figure according to random impulses. These symbols show continuous change and become correspondingly complex during this stage according to the child's growth and maturation.<sup>21</sup>

Children at this stage use color often with no relationship to reality, but according to emotional appeal.<sup>22</sup>

Topics used for stimulation are mainly related to self body and pets.<sup>23</sup>

Evidences of growth at this level of development are: An increase in the number of parts by which a person is symbolized, an increase in the number of objects represented, the presence of fewer unidentifiable scribbled parts, the more consistent proportions and relationships between objects. In addition the drawings become larger and fill the page more completely, and the child's span of interest increases so that drawings of considerable complexity will be carried to completion through

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel M. Mendelowitz, Children are Artists, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1953, pp. 24-31.

<sup>22</sup> Victor Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

following stages.<sup>24</sup>

It may be stated here that the development of threedimensional, modeling activities carried on in clay and plasticine is parallel to the drawing activities that have just been described. The somewhat random shaping of plasticine gives way to more systematic creation of forms.<sup>25</sup>

It must be realized, however, that there are great variations in the ages at which children enter and leave a given stage.<sup>26</sup>

In drawing as well as in modeling it is wise for adults to refrain from suggesting improvements of the specific forms. The important things to develop are vivid experiences.<sup>27</sup>

According to Mendelowitz, ideal conditions for drawing are not hard to create. Children at this stage, he says, work happily even on the floor. The work surface should be protected by a washable material, a large sheet of oil cloth or newspapers. Clean water, paint rags, sponges, paper towels, waste paper basket and a place for washing hands should be near by. These precautions will avoid messes, and more important, will do away with the need to caution children continually. With admonitions

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<sup>24</sup> Daniel M. Mendelowitz, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

and prohibitions the activity ceases to be fun and the child's expression can be blocked by the fear of creating an unacceptable mess.<sup>28</sup>

In case of painting, cold water paints, mixed to the consistency of heavy cream, large stiff bristle brushes one to two and a half cms. wide, with handles long enough to permit long sweeping strokes; large paper, 45 by 60 cms; newsprint, plain or colored, wrapping paper etc. are needed. Smaller sheets of paper hamper a young child's freedom in drawing or painting. Containers are needed for mixed paints - glass jars, tin cans, milk cartons are preferable because they can be discarded when the paint is used, a new supply is always available. Old shirts with sleeves cut off, worn backwards make useful aprons to protect the children's clothing.<sup>29</sup> The three primary colors; red, blue and yellow plus black provide a satisfactory variety of colors.<sup>30</sup> Materials must be nonpoisonous.

Large wax crayons, chalks and poster paints are also satisfactory in art classes. In using any of these materials the child should not be taught to outline in pencil and then fill in with color. The technical problem of preserving the outline

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Teachers' Guide to Education in Early Childhood, California State department of Education, 1956, pp. 412-413.

<sup>30</sup> Daniel M. Mendelowitz, op. cit., p. 32.

will tend to obstruct expression and the child might become timid and afraid of spoiling the drawing as it is in the similar case of coloring patterns from coloring book.<sup>31</sup>

### Evaluating and displaying children's art work

The drawings, paintings and pieces of modeling should always be looked at and discussed with the child to help in the evaluation by discussing what he was trying to express, and how it was done. This can be best done, particularly in large classes by the teacher going around to teach, quietly, during work, and talking privately with the children, and giving time in part of some periods for children to display their work to others and discuss it. If the child feels it is valuable enough to take home, (and usually at age four to six he wants to take most of his work home), then it should be sent home frequently, at the time it is produced - (not many weeks or even days later), because, his interest in his work and pride in it is at the immediate time it is produced, at this age. On no account should individual marks be given for art work at this age.<sup>32</sup>

Space for displaying finished productions, cupboards and files for storing finished paintings, drawings and other art supplies are important needs of art classes.<sup>33</sup> However, in

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel M. Mendelowitz, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>33</sup> Teachers' Guide to Education in Early Childhood, p. 413.

schools where this is not available, special drawings, to be kept for display may be kept in simple large cardboard folders. Display may be done frequently in the room and corridors by tacking on a simple strip of wood, nailed to the walls. Large displays may be done by stringing rope in a garden or a long room and using clothes pins to hang the paintings.

The important thing in displaying young children's work is that all children's work should be displayed, at various times, not only the "best".

In conclusion, it may be said that with psychological safety and proper physical conditions, children will be happily interested in their art work. They will develop wholesome attitudes towards learning and towards one another. However, it needs someone to stand by, in these early years to watch for and foster their natural endowments and help them grow continuously and sequentially towards their adult role in society.

Children are born with an urge to be creative. Education in general and art education in particular are largely responsible for its cultivation or its extinction.

A small survey of our schools in Lebanon reveals to some extent the present situation of art classes. Answers were sought to the following questions:

Are our art classes helping our children to develop in their creative attitudes? How? If not where do they fail?

## CHAPTER II

### A SURVEY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN

#### LEBANESE SCHOOLS

Before the survey, it is important to introduce the art syllabus, as it is presented within the program of studies, by the ministry of National education. (Decree No 6998 dated Oct. 1st 1946).<sup>1</sup>

In the two years program for the kindergarten there is no mention of art except fine arts: singing and music.

For the 1st elementary, age 6, two hours of drawing and manual arts per week are mentioned as following:

#### Program of drawing<sup>2</sup>

- Practice in drawing silent objects from nature having clear lines and put in the light and right perspective to show curves and projections.
- Drawing geometrical figures: straight curved and round.

#### Program of manual arts<sup>3</sup>

1. For boys: making figures with colored paper (cutting, folding etc.) representing flowers, fruits.
- Straw works: straw work on cardboard making baskets,

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<sup>1</sup> Program of Studies, by Ministry of National Education, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

- hand bags, square boxes, rectangular boxes.
- Plaiting straw: entwined straw - making a small basket - a basket with a lid, trays.
2. For girls: covering cardboard with colored straw - straw knitting, wool knitting. How looms work, uses of threads. Making a mat of straw or wool-bags.
- Embroidery by straw on a network fabric, rug making.
- Supplies: crochet, a pair of scissors, a wooden measure, network fabric, wool, strong fabric for lining.

This program is carried on with some variations through five consecutive years as a part of the total program of studies towards a certificate which the student receives after being officially tested. The examination question for art is stated in the following way: "Drawing (for boys), sewing (for girls) - one hour - coefficient 1. The chairman of the examining committee may, if he so desires, replace the test in sewing for girls by a test in drawing."<sup>4</sup>

According to the above mentioned syllabus, art for children would mean step by step instruction. There is no mention of purpose or aim for the art work chosen, and no special consideration of the child and his developmental abilities and needs, and no aim toward development of creative expression as is suggested in the 1st chapter of this study.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

To see the actual performance of the art program as well as to study other factors related to the total situation of the art classes, a survey was made in kindergarten and first elementary classes in ten available Lebanese schools of Beirut, national and private. The information gathered, follows:

Observation of twenty art classes with respect to the following:

Class room, equipment

Classrooms in general are small for the number of children they contain. It was surprising to see that some modern school buildings with most attractive external appearance had ignored internal details that would better serve the child. Larger partitions and proper positions of classrooms, toilet facilities, playroom accommodations, an art studio, cloak room, running water, wash basin, storage spaces and other facilities would be more or less expected when a school is called "modern", but these often were not found.

There was only one school out of ten that had larger rooms, but unfortunately the teacher did not make use of its value. It was even considered a disadvantage as far as heating and cleaning matters were concerned.

It is worth mentioning here that one of the schools which was most impressive with its luxurious reception room, informed this writer that they had no art classes for their children



from four to six.

Fifteen out of twenty classrooms had formal sitting arrangement. Ten of them had individual desks, and five others had two or three children sharing the same desk elbows over elbows. Five classrooms had group arrangement with low tables and chairs around them.

A blackboard, a bulletin board, and a small cupboard were the only equipment in most classrooms. Few of them had additional shelves or small partitions for storage. Four classrooms had nothing other than a black board, and approximately forty overcrowded children, three at each desk, a small table and a chair for the teacher and a small window and a door as the only outlet of the dark room.

#### Art materials

The art materials mainly consist of colored pencils, small wax crayons, drawing and coloring book, colored paper for cutting, folding, and pasting, scissors, glue or paste, cardboard for shaping and sewing, rulers, pencils and erasers for drawing.

The materials, in general, were unsatisfactory qualitatively. Few schools had additional plasticine paints and colored chalks.

It was interesting to notice that not even one art class used "straw" (raffia) which was emphasized in the syllabus as an art medium.

Only one school had large crayons, colored pencils were

used elsewhere in most cases. One art class had additional spattering with a brush and framed sheet of wire, but the framed wire was too small for the cut shapes used, to cover the paper while spattering.

One art class had additional woodwork but the classroom was too small for the destructive noise of the hammering when other activities going on in the same room would need concentration.

Some art classes, specially performed for the observer, had planned to exhibit as many activities as they could. But by the time the setting preparations were over, time was up, the children could not have enough time to concentrate in their activities.

#### Methods of teaching

Methods of teaching observed were mostly of the direct type, i.e., step-by-step instruction, some teachers were trying to encourage creative activities, but the "corrections" and suggestions made by them concerning children's art work revealed that the art product was more important to them than the child or the art process. The similarity of the student work exhibited on the bulletin boards, the patterns drawn on the board for teaching, children's work with marks on them, given by the teacher were all evidence of the fact that creativity was achieved through their art classes in name only.

In fact, in one of these classes a child asked the teacher:

"This paper is not squared, how shall I draw?" Apparently, the child was more familiar with the directed type of drawing.

Another significant point was brought up by the following incident.

One of the art teachers, who was in favor of creative work, gave the children a drawing subject in a story form and with papers and crayons distributed, asked them to draw. After a while, in looking over the drawings, the observer could easily discern drawing similarities of trees, stars, stickfigures etc; similar shapes were used in common. When this matter was discussed with the teacher it was revealed that the teacher did not make direct suggestions during drawing classes, but being their class teacher, she often drew stars, trees, fruits or other objects including stickfigures on the board to teach children addition or subtraction in arithmetic. Consequently these drawing styles repeated over and over, were taken by children as patterns, indirectly.

This point has a special significance in art education. Methods of teaching in other subjects should in no way destroy or limit what art classes try to build, if they may, in the line of creative growth.

Actual photographic pictures of objects used on a simple flannel board with the pictures backed with flannel or sandpaper will serve the purpose the classroom teacher has without destroying children's creative impulses.

The same point deserves similar consideration in preparing

textbooks or story books for children. Books that are illustrated with stereotype drawings may harm children's creativity for the same reason mentioned above.

One art teacher intimately told the observer about her deep interest in creative methods of teaching art. In fact, she had started to teach her children on that basis, and she was letting children to take their work home when they liked to, but when parents could see nothing but what seemed to them to be meaningless scribbles and untidy drawings which they considered worthless. Compared to the art work their other children had taken home, previously, they protested and complained to the principal on the waste of time. The principal, himself, unaware of the value and process of creative work, asked the teacher to choose activities that were more productive. Hence, she had given up creative methods and was solemnly confessing that she could not afford losing her job for the sake of the creativity of children whose parents did not care in the least.

Creative teachers need the cooperation of parents and administrators to achieve what they intend to, otherwise, art teacher's ambition can hardly survive.

It is interesting to point out however that, in most cases observed, art teachers are totally unaware of the aims of creative method. In fact, several of them teach art because they are assigned to teach it, they are not the least interested in the art lesson as such.

One of the schools had art on the program, but apparently

did not have a teacher to teach it. When the student asked to observe their art class a guest teacher was invited to take care of the performance. The teacher on duty tried to explain that the children were not having art because their class teacher was a part time student in a training school, and did not have time to teach art, (art being often the first subject to be sacrificed), but after mid-year she would start to teach art. The student expecting to discover some encouraging teaching methods planned by the trained teacher, found a chance to meet her, and asked about her preparation in teaching art at this level. She seemed to have nothing to offer except some child-care and sewing lessons related to children's art. As she was intending to teach drawing the student asked if she knew how to teach drawing to children at that level. "Of course," she replied, "who does not know how to teach drawing to children? Are you joking?" This was the extent of her training in teaching methods of art.

Xx A report of samples available from children's art work

While going over the samples available from children's art work the most outstanding fact in common was the application of the art vocabulary which was more or less similar in all of them.

The printed drawing and coloring books with squares and dots to follow and a color scheme to imitate were the main types of the drawing instructions. The drawings were graded

by the teacher after neatness and accuracy. The worst of all were those squared books in which the teacher herself drew patterns with crooked lines and broken curves. The child had to copy a pattern which itself was inefficient or incorrect to begin with. How could a child learn to draw a straight line with a crooked one as a sample?

Children's work collected in folders or exhibited on the walls of the classroom did not show any sign of individuality whatsoever; for example the fish had exactly the same size, the same coloring and background on all papers of a class, the same was true for the eggs, boats, foldings and pastings. In fact those who did not follow the instructional steps were discarded.

In a supposedly free-drawing class, a child was blamed for drawing the sun in the house. "Don't you know that the sun is in the sky?" said the teacher tensely. "But it came into the house," replied the child timidly. He was probably trying to show a sunny room, creatively drawn. He knew what he was doing, but who would understand him?<sup>5</sup>

Another child's work was not approved because he drew a boat, the lines of which did not follow accurately those of the pattern boat drawn on the board. "What is the ruler for, why don't you use it to make the lines straighter?" asked the teacher trying to cover her tenseness. The lines to be

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<sup>5</sup> See appendix No. 1.

"corrected" were those representing the sail of the boat and the waves of the sea. In the pattern book, from which the teacher copied the design, they were straight. The little artist knew better, but who would appreciate it?<sup>6</sup>

Children are artists, writes Daniel Mendelowitz. Children are children everywhere and they can be artists in Lebanon as well as in America, if they are given a chance to be so.

One of the most interesting Christmas cards ever received by this writer was the one given by her six year old daughter, with a human figure drawn on a piece of paper, inside the big head of this human figure was drawn a smaller figure. It was meant to tell her mother that she wanted to be always! always in her mind! What mother would refuse such a gift?<sup>7</sup>

How often children are disappointed when they find no encouraging response, or even are blamed or ridiculed by adults for their creative expressions? How often is potential creative expression stifled?

In some of the art classes after observing the shortcomings of the children in their art work it was hard to believe that they could possibly fold papers so accurately, color so neatly or draw such complex decorative designs that were all collected in their folders for their parents to see. Who was doing them?

In another free-drawing class, while drawing a house a

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix No. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See appendix No. 3.

child pierced his drawing with the pencil, the teacher scolded him saying "Will you not be ashamed if your mother sees that?" and gave him another paper to draw "properly". Later when the observer asked about the "hole" the child replied spitefully, "It was a window."<sup>8</sup>

With a closed window in the next drawing, that same child was closing as well, some creative impulses, tightly within himself, for it was not allowed to come out.

A report of the interviews of twenty art teachers who answered the questions stated in the following order:

1. How many hours of art are taught per week?

There was a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of 2 hours per week. But only few schools had art teaching more than one hour; most of them had less than that.

Due to the fact that the art product is used as an end, and that art activities in most art classes aim to produce a polished result with no special concern for the child's developmental needs, it would not be desirable to increase the amount of time given to art, but if creative art education could possibly be the aim, then art could be largely integrated into all learning experiences of the day.

In order to be able to integrate art activities through-

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix No. 4.



out the kindergarten program i.e. during leisure time and in connection with other play and work, the art materials must be provided so they are easily accessible to the child. An art corner with a few low easels, paper paints and crayons accessible on low shelves would make this possible. However, not one school out of ten had an art studio or art corner where children would go to work when they like at their leisure time.

2. What kind of art lessons are given? How?

The kind of lessons given are mainly drawing and some manual arts. The lesson in drawing is in most classes pattern instruction. Directly or indirectly, patterns are introduced through drawing books, teacher's drawings and through text books illustrated by stereotype drawings.

Several schools had modeling cutting, folding, and pasting, painting and sewing. However, these activities as well, were mostly instructed and criticised after adult standards.

One teacher gave spatter painting in addition to some of the activities mentioned above, she let the children altogether free to the extent that she did not even look at what they were doing.

Children took no pride in their work as the teacher did not care. There were no aims either of the teacher or the children.

Remark of one four year old American boy concerning his art activities in this noisy, confused laissez-faire Lebanese

classroom, copied down verbatim by the mother at the time.

"I'm not going to paint at school anymore,"

"Why?"

"I don't like to paint at school,"

"Why?"

"Because all the boys shout and make noise and run and bump your arm and spoil it. And the teacher doesn't care. She thinks it's funny. And besides, all we do is splatter paint, splatter paint, splatter paint and I think it's silly."

The intelligent remark of this little boy shows that laissez faire in painting with no aims and interest may have just as uncreative results as over instructed classes.

No teacher expected children's cooperation in distributing materials or in fixing certain things. They mostly did for them in stead of doing with them.

### 3. What materials used? Are they satisfactory?

The materials used were those related to the art work mentioned above, but they were usually limited and not good in quality and condition. Crayons were small, papers were also, scissors used for cutting were rusty, and pencils short. A lot of material was used by teachers for decorative purposes for the beauty of the surroundings just as some toys were used to decorate the shelves of cupboards but were not played with or

touched. Even the supposedly modern schools that had most appealing material surrounding in their class rooms could be considered inefficient in the sense that materials were not wisely chosen to encourage creativity in children. Toys materials and equipment were ready made mostly serving decorative purposes rather than meaningful activities. In spite of this fact teachers were proud of them and found them satisfactory.

4. What facilities, if any, are provided for art?

Only one school had a sink and running water in the room, no other school had any facility worth mentioning, except the black board and a bulletin board mostly used by the teachers.

Some schools had limited storage spaces but not large enough to be efficient.

There were no toilet facilities near classrooms even in "modern" schools. During art classes children often asked permission to go to W.C. which meant lingering along the long way to its location.

One teacher had a pail of water kept in one corner, for washing and painting purposes.

5. What are the expected results? Are they satisfactory?

The results expected were mostly manual dexterity, neatness, accuracy, better drawing and color combination.

Few teachers mentioned the development of imagination,

creativity and individuality.

Some teachers did not even know what to answer, they had not thought of expecting any special result other than the product as such. However, every one of them expressed satisfaction with the results received or not received.

#### 6. Teacher's background experience and qualifications

Four teachers out of twenty had college education in child development but no special training in teaching art. Five teachers had high school and all the rest below high school level. The range of teaching experience lay between two to twenty five years.

Some of the teachers who had years of experience were overestimating their way of teaching, believing theirs to be best. One of them, after praising the value of her experience frankly and firmly stated that free drawing for children was a waste of time, what was a teacher for?

It was interesting to hear one of the teachers, who believed that art was only for the talented; accuracy, correct balance, color harmony were principles to be mastered by children who showed talent in drawing or in manual art. All the other children were graded low, and ignored. "When a pot has two symmetrical sides" she said, "it cannot be accepted otherwise, if a field is to be green it cannot be a foolish violet and if we see such mistakes and do not correct them as artists (she named herself that way) it is very much like not correcting the dicta-

tion mistakes of a composition." She firmly added: "I believe that in art only the talented have a place no result can be expected from the others. Intelligence has nothing special to do with art; sometimes students below average in other subjects are talented in art, its the talent and its proper development that count in the success of the art work from the start till the end." She was very sure of herself; she could draw well and in her opinion only the one who knew how to draw could know the best way to teach it.

This was the attitude of the teacher who was naming herself an artist, the "best" teacher of art education.

The problem of helpers, related to teachers, was a point brought up in some classes. Only two teachers, out of twenty, had each, a helper. When the question was raised with the others, only three of the rest liked the idea of having helpers, the others either did not care to have or refused the idea, they preferred to be by themselves.

The problem of helpers is an important factor to be considered in that they are in contact with the children just as the teachers are. If they have no training in relation to "do"s and "don't"s with children they may be quite harmful and destructive in the development of any wholesome attitude in children. Many stories are told about helpers who have frightened children as a way of controlling them. The teacher should be a guide not a God writes Paul Torrance in his book "Guiding

Creative Talent".<sup>9</sup> It would apply to teachers and helpers equally if they aim to guide children constructively.

7. What is, in teacher's opinion, the aim of teaching art?

Five out of twenty teachers said that the aim of teaching art is to prepare children for the art required to pass the certificate examination.

Few teachers mentioned, as the aim of art, art appreciation and self expression.

Several put the emphasis on manual dexterity.

One teacher said firmly that the aim of teaching art was a search for the talent, the artist by birth.

But one general aim of art revealed was to fill folders or drawing books for an inspection to come.

8. Does the teacher have any personal methods of teaching art or does he follow any officially prescribed curriculum set of methods?

Five out of twenty said their teaching methods were prescribed, others were technically free and they planned their art activities around a center of interest, subjects taken from the four seasons, feasts etc. However, due to the fact that the total program of studies had certain amount of material pres-

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<sup>9</sup> Paul E. Torrance, Guiding Creative Talent, Prentice-Hill, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1962, p. 170.

cribed to be covered within a certain amount of time, all the activities of the program were planned in that direction. This fact consequently limited the time allotted, and the quality of art. This practice, in fact refutes the implication of creative art education.

9. What are, in the teacher's opinion, the most important points to consider in teaching art?

Fifteen out of twenty mentioned neatness, accuracy, understanding.

Four of the rest mentioned originality, self dependence.

One teacher insisted on order, quietness and patience of the child as the most important elements considered in teaching art.

10. Any personal comments or suggestions by the art teacher concerning art education in Lebanese schools:

More space, more materials and variety was mentioned by most of them.

Five teachers mentioned freedom from a set program of assigned subject matter to have more time for art.

One teacher earnestly said that if she would ever think of having a school of her own she would surely have desks and chairs fixed on the floor so that children would not be able to move around.

Several teachers complained about the darkness of their

classrooms and commented on having rooms with more sunlight and fresh air.

Some teachers could not think of commenting on anything, taking the present situation for granted. To one of them, who had forty one children in a small room, the interviewer asked: "Would you care to have a larger room?" She was delighted and said: "Certainly." "Then why don't you say so?" asked the interviewer. "Well, what is the use!" she replied.

Some teachers apparently were afraid of expressing themselves frankly enough, thinking that the consequences might endanger their position. One of them cleverly stated: "You see what we have and what we don't, make your own comments accordingly."

#### Art class observation

It was interesting to observe twenty art classes, each one of them had something to add to the total picture of the present situation.

However, to avoid repetition of certain details, the recorded descriptions of only three art classes are chosen to describe the meaning of art lessons in Beirut schools in general. With the exception of few details, conditions were more or less similar in all of them.

The recordings of the three art classes follow consecutively.



Class 1

A rather small, moderately lighted classroom, decorated with blue paper ruffles all around the bulletin board, here and there to emphasize boundary lines, around teacher's drawings on the board and around twenty chosen stenciled copies of coloring done by children.

Children in blue uniform aprons came in, orderly, from their noon recess, hands at their back, and stood quietly at their individual desks. They are boys and girls aged four to five, thirty five in number. They all sit together at the teacher's notice in a hushed atmosphere, with eyes gazing at the observer.

The art project of the day was: "making a salt-pot of paper". The teacher had one made on her table, too far for children to see.

After announcing the project of the day, twelve centimeter squares of red papers were distributed by the teacher, one for each, "Do not touch the paper until I tell you to do so" she said. Those who tried to touch were scolded. When all papers were given the teacher started her instructions: "Take the paper and fold from exactly corner to corner." Some got it some did not. "Wait for me" she said "if you can't do well". With every new step instructed she went around to help, or do for those who could not follow instructions. Those waiting for the teacher were often reminded to be quiet. Some children's work

were corrected because they were not accurately folded. There came a time when the children, except for the very few, stopped doing anything and waited for the teacher. In the meantime they pushed and pulled each other and got scoldings over and over. The very few who could follow, were praised for being better than the others.

One child folded the paper in a boatlike way and pretended to float it, waving it in the air. The teacher saw him and shook him severely, took away his boat and gave him another paper with which he was to follow instructions properly.

Another child, all of a sudden, burst in tears. "Why are you crying without a cause?" asked the teacher, "Are you a fool? What is the matter with you?" "I can't do it" sobbed the child. "Then, wait for me, didn't I say so?" said the teacher.

Several papers were spoiled in children's hands while waiting for their turn, the teacher replaced them with new ones, hardly controlling her tension. Every now and then trying to justify herself to the observer. "You see, it is not easy to teach children, they will never be able to accomplish something unless they are helped."

## Class 2

The children stood up when the principal brought in the observer and remained standing until notified to sit down.

Thirty two boys and girls aged five to six, dressed in

pink pinafores, with individual desks, overcrowding a small room. Two large windows on one side, a small blackboard and bulletin board on the other side, over the bulletin there was a row of fish cut and pasted on papers all the same size and the same color.

It was a drawing class, the drawing lesson was usually given in drawing books where patterns were drawn by the teacher. But every now and then, on special occasions children were given stenciled patterns to color, as it was intended that day.

The teacher asked the children to prepare their colored pencils quietly, they took their pencil boxes out of their bags put them on the desk clasped their arms and waited for the next step, curious to know what was coming.

The teacher reminded them before giving out the papers that the one who talks will not be given a paper to color.

The teacher then distributed stenciled copies of three eggs in a basket. When all papers were given she asked: "What colors do we use for Easter eggs?" From the colors mentioned by children red and blue were accepted. A child raised his hand and mentioned brown. "Don't be foolish" said the teacher, "Where have you seen brown Easter eggs?" "Yellow" mentioned another. "No, the basket will be yellow", said the teacher and to cut short she added: "Now, start coloring first the middle egg red, then the one on the side of the windows, blue, the one on the side of the door purple." Some children did not know the purple, the

teacher went around to choose for them the purple pencil. The teacher had one, painted, she pinned it on the wall for them to follow.

When the teacher was busy in choosing colors for the children the observer asked the child who had mentioned brown for the color of the egg why he had chosen brown. "I like chocolate eggs, they are all brown" he said eagerly. The teacher could not think of that, before refusing the brown.

Children started talking more and more, exchanging pencils and moving around. "No talking ! No moving around!" came the order. "I'll take the paper of the one who talks" said the teacher, and she actually took the paper of a child and sent him to the wall for punishment.

The teacher did not use individual names. Children! boys! or girl! were the words used, to call them. Towards the end, the teacher left the children for a while, came near the observer, and started telling about her talent and abilities, but she was blaming her bad luck for having to teach mostly "dumb" children, coming from a poor background. What else could she do with them?

She suddenly realized that she had forgotten the children. "Stop talking I say!" she shouted and went to punish some more of them, the bell rang, art class was over.

### Class 3

It was a drawing class, in a small suffocating classroom.

Forty one girls aged six and more, in black uniforms and white collars were jammed three at each desk hardly enough for two.

There was a small table and chair for the teacher and a small blackboard, a smaller window and a narrow door.

Inside this room children had their drawing books open in front of them, overlapping one another. Those who had forgotten their drawing books were told to cross their arms and sit still.

Geometric designs with dots and guide lines were printed in the squares of the drawing book to follow. A black pencil and an eraser was used by each child. No talking was allowed whatsoever. Children, afraid to raise their hands from their books, were drawing, erasing and redrawing over and over for perfection. The teacher, with a ruler in her hand, was going back and forth from the only narrow passage left on one side and quieting the least noise or movement. No instructions were given, discipline, as such, was apparently the only problem at hand. When a child raised her hand and said that she had finished drawing one page the teacher told her to continue drawing the next, warning her that she might take a low grade if it was not well done.

Their behavior was so strangely and unbecomingly serious that the observer could not help asking if they were always so quiet. The teacher said that it was due to a lecture given by the principal just before the observer was called in, and that children are real frightened of the principal. "If it were not

so," she added, "It would be impossible to give them the proper shape."

This and similar other "proper shapes" are given to most of the children through art classes.

Under these "shaping" conditions it is no wonder art work is one of the most unpleasant school activities.

What creative attitudes or expressions could be expected from children who are taught art this way, under such conditions?

### CHAPTER III

#### THE OBSTACLES TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF ART EDUCATION IN LEBANON

##### Lack of trained creative teachers

It is an obvious fact that every teacher "knows" how to teach art in Lebanese schools but not even one out of twenty art teachers was following the implications of art education as it is professionally defined by specialists in early childhood education and art.

The ultimate purpose of all education is to aid the learner in the process of growth. Art is one of the phases of education for the attainment of that goal, therefore it is the art teachers role to discover the potentialities of pupils, to diagnose their needs, determine what is best for each of them and focus the method and content of experiences in appropriate direction.<sup>1</sup>

There is lack of creative teachers who are trained in art education for young children. Most of the art teachers think very high of their experiences, their talents but they do not know much about what art education means to children from four to six. In most art classes in Lebanon the child should not

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<sup>1</sup> Italo L. De Francesco, Art Education, Its Means and Ends Harper and Brothers, New York, U.S.A., 1958, p. 486.

move or talk; he is forced to concentrate in doing or making something which is beyond his capacity; he is praised or punished according to the behavior he exposes during the instruction of the art procedure, his work is directed and evaluated after adult standards; he has no right to divert his art activity from that which is chosen for the class, by the teacher.

Some teachers are briefly informed in the theory of art education but the lack of practical experience and sounder understanding in this field lead them to misinterpret certain factors of creative art education, and therefore, fail to achieve its aims.

The psychological freedom discussed above, for example, is misinterpreted for a laissez-faire atmosphere in some classrooms where no order or responsibility is recognized by either the teachers or the children.

Free drawing or painting is taught in some classes, but teachers are continually making suggestions for improvements based on their own standards.

In "modern" schools, the planning of the physical environment, in general, do not follow the practical needs and requirements of children's art education. Teachers choose materials and equipment that are often fancy or unefficient. Teachers lack knowledge in planning for art supplies that are constructive and encouraging towards creative development. There is a



lot of investment made on ready made or directed toys, on coloring and drawing books, and unefficient materials that decorate or fill the shelves of their cupboards but do not help much to the development of creative attitude in children.

Art teachers, in general, are not familiar with the art standard and characteristics of the art work at this level. They are not informed in the developmental stages of children related to art and growth, hence, the activities chosen by the teachers are not within the abilities of the children.

A glance at the child's scribbling would be very revealing. As long as the child has not reached a stage of scribbling in which he has established control over his motions, it is both senseless and harmful to teach activities requiring proper motor coordination. Teachers encourage scribbling children to draw something "real" to satisfy their own adult imagination. Such attempts would be similar to trying to teach a babbling baby to pronounce words correctly or even to use them in sentences. Hence, imposing ideas that are far beyond the abilities of the developmental stage of the child can be disastrous to his further development.<sup>2</sup>

The findings of psychology indicate that children progress according to certain levels of stages of growth. Such knowledge will help teachers to understand children, and therefore, choose

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<sup>2</sup> Victor Lowenfeld, op. cit., p. 87.

art class activities accordingly. Stated briefly, the following are some developmental factors related to art education and growth pattern of the child:

Visual fusion has not yet completely developed in many children even at the age of seven. A large number of children up to this age are unable to focus their eyes on small pictures or printed symbols. As a consequence, when they attempt to do so their vision is likely to be impaired.<sup>3</sup>

Coordination, involving the use of small muscles is still incomplete. The fingers of young children, at this level, are not deft, and complex movements are difficult for them. Keeping within a line while drawing with crayons, folding and cutting indicate patterns, and writing small letters or symbols are difficult activities for the young child and cause him considerable strain.<sup>4</sup> The healthy child, at this level, has an abundance of energy and vitality - much more than he needs for the essential tasks of living, and in this he differs from the adult and that is why sometimes they fail to understand that the child with his store of surplus energy needs opportunities for using it and that the pattern of his life will necessarily be different from theirs. In spite of this vitality and energy however, the child tires easily and shows signs of fatigue if

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<sup>3</sup> Teachers' Guide to Education in Early Childhood, p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

he is forced to remain in one position such as standing or sitting for any length of time. Mental fatigue and listlessness are easily induced by enforced attention, or by tasks which do not hold his interest.<sup>5</sup> Since attention depends upon interest in an activity and ability to carry the activity through to completion, the attention span of the young child is often short. In fact, each child has his own rhythm of effort and relaxation and needs freedom to live according to this rhythm if fatigue is to be avoided and normal growth encouraged.<sup>6</sup> The young child is endowed with a very lively curiosity which has led him to explore everything in his environment and which continues to be the driving power for his learning.<sup>7</sup> However, it is hard for him to inhibit motor activity, hard for him to stick to a job. A rigid program with little time for gross motor activity for children at this level is positively cruel.

A young child is interested in himself or things close to him, which emphasizes the importance of planning art activities and subjects related to his "self". A young child is self-centered and often impulsive. He seldom thinks through a problem to a reasonable solution, but is impulsive and quick to act. This characteristic often brings about crises and conflicts to

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<sup>5</sup> Edna Mellor, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> Teachers' Guide to Education in Early Childhood, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Edna Mellor, op. cit., p. 50.

which the child reacts by crying, throwing tantrums, or attempting physical combat. He is, thus, highly emotional, he wants to cooperate with his teacher, with classmates and at the same time wants his own way. Enjoying the society of his classmates he nevertheless argues and quarrels frequently. However, the wise teacher takes the child at this level as he is, good or bad, and gives him consistently friendly guidance. With help and reassurance, they learn to endure frustration and to avoid or solve their conflicts by sharing, compromising, or by recourse to adult arbitration.<sup>8</sup>

The teacher should recognize that the classroom program must be adapted to children's varying rates of growth. Urging and pressing for achievement should be avoided, teachers' observations and records may be used in estimating each child's maturity and his readiness for new experience.<sup>9</sup>

Art teachers for the schools of today need to be conversant with the psychology of emotions, the nature and meaning of the creative impulse and of creative activity, and the significance of experience. Human behavior has special significance in art, because art is more than doing and making; concepts, insights, appreciations and then actions are links in the creative act. How and why children react as they do under certain

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<sup>8</sup> Teachers' Guide to Education in Early Childhood, pp. 20-22.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

conditions or stimuli are matter of behavior and a teacher's method is bound with his understanding of human behavior. Method can cause either antagonisms or sympathies or passiveness on the part of the children.<sup>10</sup>

The art teacher in most Lebanese schools is surprised when a sensitive child bursts in tears for not being able to follow the given instruction. She cannot accept children's moving around in the class and their talking to one another. She believes that children do not know enough to make "good" suggestions. The rigidity of her teaching method and the harsh discipline used in the class both aim to make of the child an individual who is far from being self dependent and creative.

The common concept that anyone may teach art to children is projected over all other subjects taught to children. In Lebanese school there is an outstanding lack of realization of the values of childhood education. The school administrators are not aware of the need for trained teachers for kindergarten and lower elementary level, as a result the teachers they have are not able to fulfill their important role in creative childhood education. Several of the twenty Lebanese art teachers observed, did not have a high school degree, a few of them were high school graduates, and very few had a college education.

"We don't have art in our schools because we have no

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<sup>10</sup> Italo L. De Francesco, op. cit., p. 485.

specialists to teach". said a responsible director. Better "none" than the "wrong" perhaps, but there is no attempt made to prepare specialists.

In the Lebanese teacher training program teaching of art to children is not part of the curriculum, and there is a lack of specialists to train teachers in this field. In fact, there are many artists in Lebanon, but very few are those who are aware of the values and means of art education, for children at this level.

#### Lack of importance given to creativity and art in the Lebanese curriculum

The art syllabus prescribed for Lebanese schools does not mention any art for the kindergarten and the program mentioned for the first elementary states certain activities and materials with no reference to their aim and purpose.

The curriculum as stated in the program of studies about drawing lessons and manual arts reveals that there has been no special concern for the developmental needs of creativity of the child at this level. Art education is merely thought of as teaching the way to do something called art, following the logical order of the subject, not of the pattern of child development. Children who cannot follow, are hopeless and are either underestimated or covered up by the teacher's helping hand.

Art in the Lebanese schools is a decorative element in the



curriculum, at this level, it is often considered a luxury and is the first to be omitted when financing and time factor are problems.

Art education in Lebanese schools is taught as a partial preparation towards an examination and not as a means to growth and development. Hence, the end product counts as more important than the process. In some "modern" schools the art teacher's standard is measured by the quantity and the quality of art work produced, which are either collected in files or exhibited at various occasions.

Art work of children are evaluated by grades. The chief reasons for this type of evaluation are: first, education as a whole is still subject-matter-centered; second, because parents still insist on knowing what their children are achieving in relation to other children; third, because institutions of higher education still demand grades as the objective evidence upon which they either admit or reject those who seek entrance to colleges, universities, and professional schools.

Olson states that "The making system may be emphasized to the extent that it constitutes a major frustration in the lives of many children."<sup>11</sup> The inference is that failure, in contrast to success is a poor basis for stimulating growth. Failure

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<sup>11</sup> Willard C. Olson, Child Development, Boston, D.C. Heath Co., 1949, p. 312.

encourages tensions, poorer performance in subsequent work, and poorer social and personal adjustment. Often competitive work causes strain and encourages dishonesty. Children's attitude toward school, parent-teacher relationships, all are strained by the emotional reactions that these traditional grading systems cause.<sup>12</sup>

The purpose of evaluation is to measure the effect of education on a child in terms of behavior or of growth in one or many directions including creative growth.<sup>13</sup>

In the Journal of "Childhood Education" evaluation is considered as a step in planning, and not a rating of an end product. It is then a part of the learning process, in which discussions are made about next steps.<sup>14</sup>

The limitations of art activities and number of hours in the officially prescribed curriculum hinders the integration of art into other subjects of study and inhibits the free development of creative art education. In fact, there is a definite amount and type assigned to all subjects and activities to be accomplished in preparation for an examination, the reaction of which creates a tense attitude towards all learning experiences including art which most of all needs the psycho-

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<sup>12</sup> Italo L. De Francesco, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>14</sup> Journal of Childhood Education, Vol. 30, p. 206.



logical safety and relaxation in the class for creative development.

#### Lack of facilities

There is lack of facilities to encourage and develop creative art education in Lebanese schools. School administrations do not give enough importance to art needs and requirements while planning the school budget. Reception rooms with luxurious furniture are considered more important for the school than the art laboratory or studio. No special art room exists in any of the twenty Lebanese schools visited.

School buildings are not planned and built to satisfy the needs of creative art activities. Classrooms are small, in most cases they have no storage spaces for art supplies. There is no running water, no sink and conveniences in the classroom or near the classroom. In most cases bathrooms are located quite far from the classroom.

The working conditions in the art classes are generally poor. Classes are overcrowded, materials unwisely chosen and are therefore inefficient; there is often lack of light and fresh air, working surfaces are too limited. Most classrooms do not have outdoor art activities. The school yard is not always available because it is commonly used by all the school. Kindergartens are not built as separate units, and therefore, cannot function on their own. There are no places for paintings

to be put to dry. Often they are put on the classroom floor and then stepped upon and destroyed by children's feet.

There are no facilities to take the children out on a trip. Children are kept within the walls of the classrooms. Teachers are not aware of the values of taking children outdoors or there is lack of time or transportation facilities. Therefore children have no chance for active art experiences outside where they can see, touch, feel, and thus learn better.

There is lack of knowledge and understanding on the part of the parents in creative art education. This lack of interest discourages the very few teachers who are aware of the values of creative development and like to teach art on that basis. Parents who are interested in art base their evaluation of art on adult standards and expect from their children art work which can be produced with the step-by-step instruction or help of the teacher and in no ways can help the child to develop his creative impulse towards creative attitudes.

The general attitude towards art is indifference. It is often considered a waste of time while other subjects are considered more important, and given more emphasis and concentration of time.

With these obstacles, mentioned above, creativity is, in Lebanese schools, smashed within its shell and art activities are directed towards aims other than art education.

Obstacles may often exist in life but ignoring them will

not be constructive towards improvements in art education and development of creativity.

There is lack of creatively trained minds that may remove obstacles that drag everywhere year after year.

This urgent need of the creative attitude, itself, justifies all attempts towards its development.

It is hoped that in the near future, as teachers are trained on the university level in both art and early childhood education, the picture so gloomily presented above will brighten and children will be freed to use their creative enjoyment of art.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Lebanon is a democratic country, which insures freedom to all its citizens and demands certain responsibilities. Functioning effectively in a democracy requires a creative approach to living. Learning that conditions, rather than creates, is not sufficient for the demands and needs of either democracy or personal maturity in a rapidly changing world.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, some reshaping of our educational world is essential at present.

Art education is closely related to the total educational structure and cannot function independently. Unless a thorough revision is made of the Lebanese educational system, its goals and activities, and unless they are modified to meet the present needs of child development as well as a democratic society, "education" will remain an external decorative element, or even actually promote preparation of children for life in an authoritarian society.

Creativity, which is the one element making the human being superior to all other is not given a chance to develop.

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<sup>1</sup> C. Morse and Max Wingo, Op. cit., p. 282.

We need to develop in children the independent experimental self directed person who can creatively satisfy his needs and cooperate in the satisfaction of the needs of humanity as a whole.

A child who is trained to be a follower only, cannot be an independent thinker nor an independent executer able to weigh matters and make a judgement on the basis of facts.

A follower may not be wise enough to choose the best leader even if he would be given the chance, hence may blindly perish.

It is high time to realize that "a good beginning is half the success". We have long underestimated the education of the very little ones thinking that anyone may teach them anything, ignoring the fact that the foundations of learning attitudes are laid then and there for the constructive or the destructive development of their personal development or their democratic society.

Art education, as one important area where creative development can flourish, needs proper recognition in the education of children in general and the beginners' in particular. The realization of the ideal situation may be a long term process for all the schools of Lebanon; however, some changes toward better conditions may be introduced immediately and gradually:

Architects who are building new schools in Lebanon and are planning for kindergarten units need to consider internal

factors that make a kindergarten a garden of growth in many ways.

"In actual fact, many schools in Lebanon are built by contractors without the advice of trained architects, as a means of "saving" money. Teachers and principal must know what their needs are and work with an architect-engineer while plans are being drawn. Schools should be planned jointly by educators, and builders, but often in Lebanon, this is not the case."<sup>2</sup>

As to the old classrooms, some changes and rearrangements introduced by the creative teacher, with the cooperation of the administrator, can much improve the classroom environment. Some improvements could be: increasing the size of side windows, by taking in a porch with a glass wall to gain some space, by supplying new light fittings and furniture, by painting and redecorating the room in light restful colors, by supplying movable art equipment such as a small cart for art supplies that can be taken easily from place to place. For the water supply a faucet may be fixed on a small tank placed over a tub from which a tube is extended into a portable container underneath. This system is better and safer than a pail of water in case running water is too far from the classroom. Movable towel racks, some rags, sheets of oil cloth to protect work surfaces

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<sup>2</sup> Statement by Mr. Shahan K. Soghikian; Designing and Supervising Engineer for International College, Beirut, Lebanon.

are all helpful and not difficult to have.

If the children are too many and the classroom is small for group activities, children may be kept at their seats and activities may be limited to one or two types chosen by the children: drawing, painting, molding or cutting and pasting. In an easy encouraging atmosphere these activities on limited basis may still bring out of the child some creativity if the experiences are within their abilities and are guided creatively.

In other words, a creative teacher will not cross hands and wait for ideal conditions. With some creativity, he can make simple tools and equipment from inexpensive materials and encourage the children to help and cooperate with him and learn to take care of limitations creatively.

If there is any possibility of taking children outdoors, they can work even on the floor, in the garden, in the yard, or even on a safe roof.

Running water in the classroom, and a bathroom not far from the classroom for toilet facility are important needs which should be met. Some rearrangements may make it possible if its importance is realized.

For classrooms that are not large, group arrangement of low tables with chairs around them may be better in many ways. They take less space than the individual desks used in some "modern" kindergartens. They are easier to move and more adop-



table for group activities in general and art activities in particular.

If schools would give up using class equipment and materials as decorative objects and would concentrate on purchasing practical objects that are basic for the creative growth of children at the kindergarten level, any school could afford the essential materials and equipment.

Some expensive materials are cheaper in the long run than inexpensive ones. Thick large crayons, for example, cost more than the small ones that are commonly used, but they last longer and serve better the drawing purposes of this stage, provided large inexpensive newsprint paper is also provided. Sometimes the quantity serves better than the quality. In stead of using thick shiny paper in limited amount, cheap absorbent paper may be used in larger sheets.

It is largely a matter of choice rather than the amount of investment that makes materials practical and more meaningful as far as the art media are concerned in creative art education.

It is a matter of knowing what works best than what looks best.

One of the teachers who was complaining about the shortage of materials had used a lot of paper to change the classroom into a doll's house. If she would be willing to bring down all the dust-collecting ruffles and ribbons from all around the



walls the material collected would be enough to keep the children happily busy for a whole week.

If schools would save the money spent on drawing and coloring books, and instead, give to children some chance of active experiences by taking them out to trips, or by encouraging the teacher to bring to class any object animal or plant that could give the children the chance to see, to touch, to smell, to hear, and feel then their passive knowledge would be activated through their art expressions.

If teachers would realize that an exercise or song dramatized to teach "brushing my teeth" would help children to make a better interpretation of the mouth and teeth in their drawings, they would save their time for stenciling patterns of detailed human figures and concentrate more on active physical experiences. Such as: "catching my ball" to activate the concept of "hands", or "I am combing my hair" to activate their passive knowledge of "hair".

If children would like to draw a cat no stereotyped pattern can teach the child to draw the cat any better than the cat itself. Let the teacher bring a kitten to the art class and have the children hold and feel it. The teacher may direct this exploration by asking question such as: "What color is the cat?" "What color are his eyes, his teeth and his tongue?", "How soft is his fur?", "How long is his tail?", "Feel his ears, his wet nose, his sharp nails on all his four feet." After such explo-

ration when children are suggested that it might be fun to draw kitty, the resultant drawings compared with their former drawings of a cat will show the extent of growth that has occurred after the examination of the cat.<sup>3</sup>

Besides having similar exercises in art classes, children's art may be integrated in all their learning activities to develop: better learning, more pleasant experiences and more creativity. This is of particular importance in kindergartens. Art materials should be available all day long and not regulated to a certain time or "period".

All these activities will neither need more time, nor more investment, but they certainly need a totally different approach to art as a means to growth, than as an end to exhibit.

For the time being it may not be easy to have specialists for teaching art to our children. Schools may or may not be able to appreciate them. Besides that, it is not an easy matter to send away the old teachers to have new ones substituted even if better trained teachers were available.

Something should be done to help our teachers at hand, some kind of in service training to make them aware of better values and methods in art education that will encourage the development of growth and creative attitudes in children.

Actually, this is the job of art "specialists" or super-

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel M. Mendelowitz, op. cit., p. 31.

visors in America. They demonstrate how to teach classes once a week, perhaps, and help the classroom teacher plan her week. This could be done here with art teacher moving through the school or several small schools.

It may be possible for the ministry of national education to assign specialists who may act as art coordinators among various schools to make helpful suggestions for the betterment of the conditions of art classes.

"Teaching creative art" is an important item to be added to the teachers' training program in training schools. When trained teachers are more and more available in this field, then there may be more possibilities of introducing creative art education to children through art classes, to parents and to the public at large through other means of communications such as: television, radio, motion pictures, books, pamphlets, articles in papers etc. etc.

If art education aims to develop creative attitudes in our children, they can happily start their school life, and step by step grow by facing and solving, creatively, every day problems of their world.

Teachers need strength to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that can and should be changed, and wisdom to distinguish one from the other.

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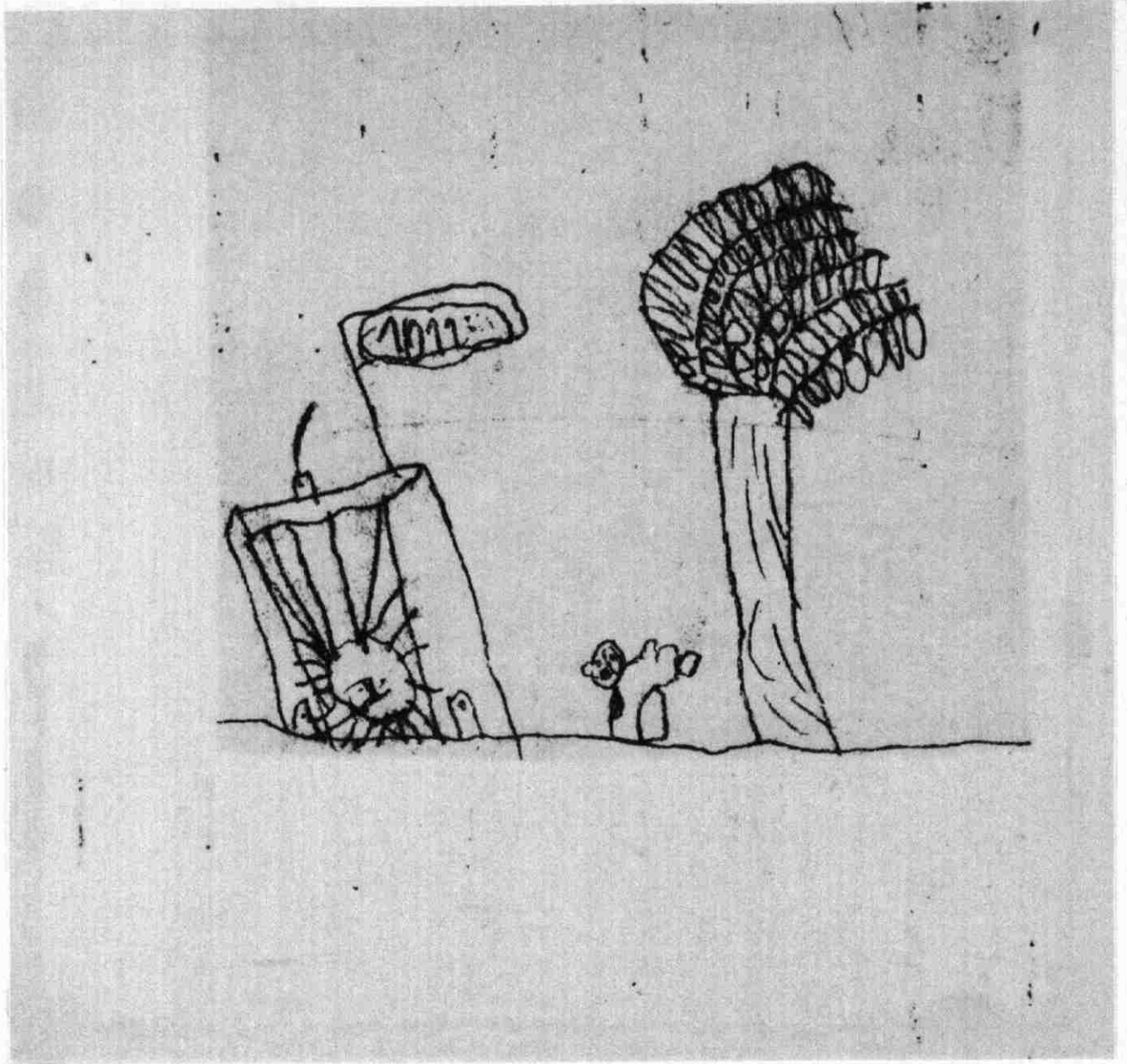
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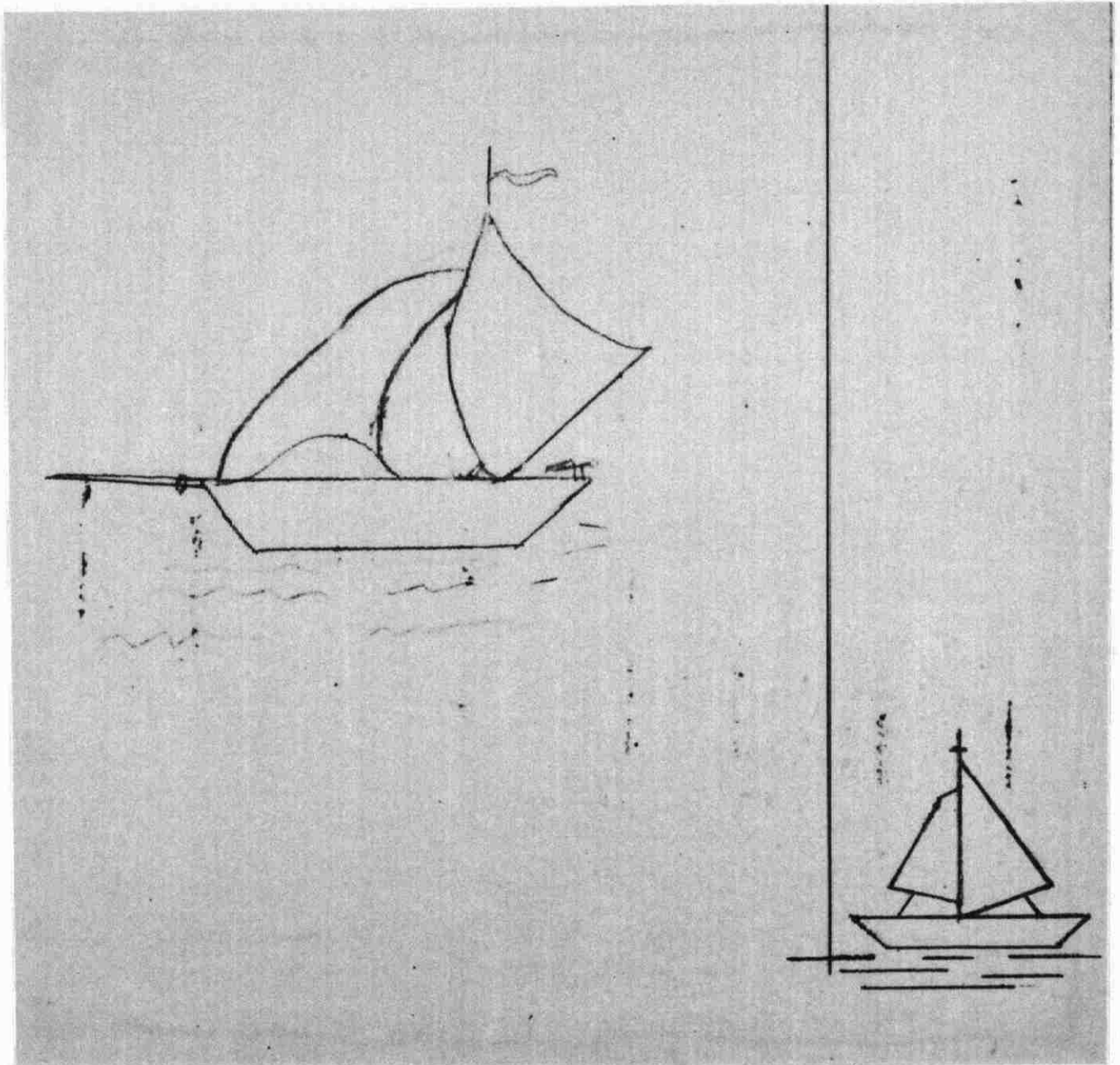
APPENDIX

SAMPLES OF CREATIVE DRAWINGS MENTIONED  
IN THE THESIS

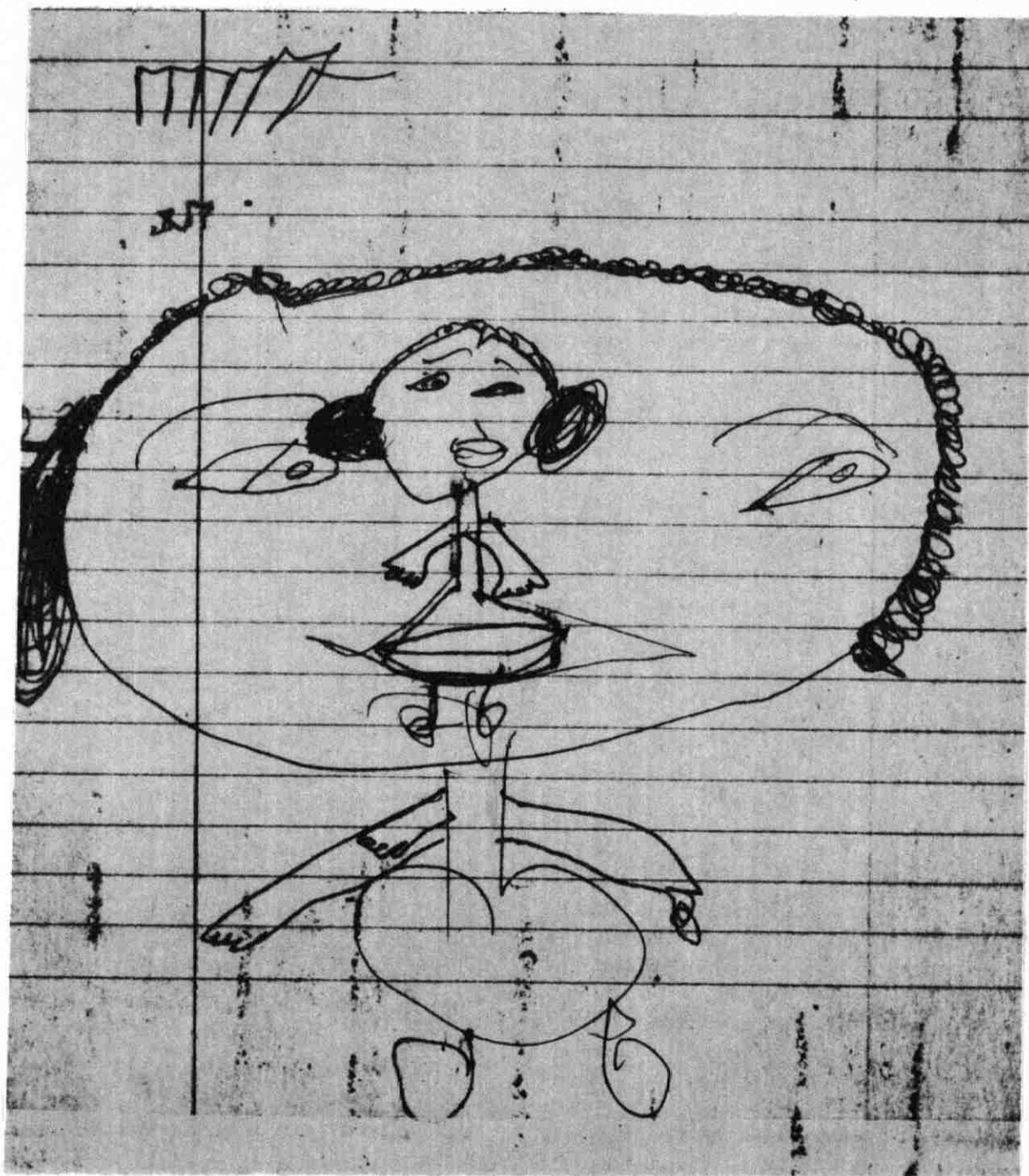




No. 1      The sun in the house      Age 5



No. 2    The boat    Age 6 ±



No. 3

The Xmas card

Age 6

