

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

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EGYTIAN SEVENTH, EIGHTH, AND NIGHT GRADE STUDENTS' AND THEIR
TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT AND KNOWLEDGE OF CERAMICS: AN
ASSESSMENT OF ART IN THE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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by

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ABSTRACT

Art education is an academic subject in the Egyptian Basic Education Program and ceramics is part of the art curriculum. The ceramics achievement of seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students has never been assessed. In April 1989, 725 Egyptian Basic Education students and their teachers responded to a survey of knowledge and beliefs about the history of Egyptian ceramics. The respondents came from four educational districts—Alexandria, Asyut, Cairo, and Giza. The 94-item questionnaire dealt with background information, knowledge about and beliefs regarding ancient Egyptian, Islamic, folk, and modern ceramics. The knowledge questions were directed toward such things as place of origin, period, style, decoration, and function. The belief inventory was directed toward preferences for Egyptian ceramic forms in relation to ceramics from other parts of the world.

The level of knowledge about ceramics was found to be low. Generally, the students' responses were at the level that they might be expected to achieve through guessing. As expected, the knowledge of the teachers was generally higher than that of students, although it was not high. Apparently the students gained little knowledge of ceramics from the Basic Education Program. Moreover, they appeared to acquire little knowledge of ceramics merely through growing up surrounded by Egyptian ceramics.

One of the most important findings was that, generally speaking the ninth grade students were not as knowledgeable about world ceramics and traditional Egyptian ceramics as seventh grade students. Moreover, they had less knowledge about styles, techniques, and the function of ceramics. Female students had more knowledge of ceramics than male students. They also knew more about historical styles and calligraphy than male students. Male students, however, had a greater knowledge of ceramic techniques and functions. Some of the differences found among the districts were remarkable. Asyut students, for example, were much more knowledgeable about world and folk ceramics than students from Alexandria. They also expressed a much greater desire to engage in ceramic activities than any of the other groups. (Asyut is the area of Egypt in which the ceramics traditions are still the strongest.) Giza students, on the other hand had a greater knowledge of ancient and Islamic ceramics and more knowledge of ceramic functions and techniques than Cairo students. It is interesting to note, however, that Cairo students had more knowledge of modern ceramics than any other group.

In the area of beliefs, students had preferences for ancient Egyptian pottery and Islamic and modern tiles. They had little taste, however, for modern Egyptian and folk ceramics. Female students were generally cognitively oriented toward traditional Egyptian ceramics while male students had a greater preference for modern and folk sculpture. Neither male or female teachers expressed a positive attitude toward folk ceramics. Students and teachers from Asyut generally had the highest cognitive orientation toward traditional and folk ceramics while the

students in the other districts had a higher preference for ancient and modern ceramics.

The findings of the study were used as the basis for the development of a plan for the revision of the ceramics portion of the Basic Education art program. The knowledge and belief instruments will be used as models for the development of other assessment procedures for both art and ceramics in Egyptian Basic Education Schools.