

Premises, Promises, and a Piece of the Pie: A Social Analysis of Art in General Education

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ABSTRACT

It is argued that advocates of content-based art education and other art educators who are attempting to move art to the political center of general education are struggling against largely unrecognized social realities. The idea is developed that just as the artworld occupies a marginal place in the larger society, so does art education in the society's educational institutions. The roots of this marginalization are argued to be in contending value systems; particularly the dearly held notions of creativity and originality which are at the heart of the artworld, versus acquiescence and conformity which are held most dear within general education. It is concluded that art will never be at the political center of general education, and rightfully so, because the institutional goals of art education and general education are not the same.

Introduction

Reading the literature in art education can be an exercise in schizophrenia. On one hand, writers praise myriad desirable outcomes of teaching art. Among the benefits claimed for children of a quality art education are the actualizing of such worthwhile human capacities as perceptual development and expanded aesthetic understanding (Levi and Smith, 1991), expanded general critical skills and appreciation (Anderson 1990), enhanced expression and cognitive power (Gardner and Perkins, 1991) through increased abilities in imaging and visualization (Broudy, 1979), and even a greater multicultural awareness promoting cultural equality and balance (Mason, 1988; Freedman, Stuhr, and Weinberg, 1989).

On the other hand, article after article addresses art's terribly small piece of the pie in terms of money spent, time allocated, and prestige in the educational structure. Writers of such articles frequently argue, along with Chapman (1982) that if only we art educators could help the larger educational community see the value of what we teach, our prestige would skyrocket and we would take our rightful place alongside English and science at the heart of American education.

Upon reflection it seems that these ubiquitous and continuously unresolved themes of myriad benefits versus little respect and less money are not in diametric opposition as it would first seem. Rather they are more a paradox. Further, it seems that the crux of the paradox lies in a misapprehension by some art educators of what may be the dominant function of general education in America: the socialization of children and youth (Bowers, 1974; 1987a; Beyer and Apple, 1988). It will be argued that this dominant social function of American education as manifested in the public schools stands in direct conflict with much of what is held dear in art education. To develop this argument it is necessary first to establish some social underpinnings of general curriculum.

Premises and structure in General Education

Curriculum is, of course, partially shaped by the ideological commitments of educators, resulting from their perceptions of the goals education should achieve (Eisner 1985). But another immense influence on curriculum is a local community's influence on its schools. Doubts about the local community's power to effect school structure and content can be laid to rest simply by considering schools in different socio-economic neighborhoods within the same school system. Presumably, each school in a system has the same ideological framework as all the others resulting from a common administrative mandate. Yet the differences between a well-to-do suburban school and an inner-city school can be striking. Long term ideological forces may form the administrative skeleton of a school district, whether that be local or even statewide, but local social concerns and needs put the meat on the bones, giving the skeleton its final form. That is why the urban and suburban schools mentioned above are so different.

Further, it has been established that school agendas consist of both the explicitly stated, overtly defined program and the implicitly defined and/or covert activities, patterns and structures of schools, i.e., the hidden curriculum (Anderson, 1985; Bowers, 1974; Eisner, 1985; Friedenberg, 1981; Henry, 1963). It is recognized that when these two types of curricula conflict, they present, at the very least, conflicting demands upon the student, most often sublimating students' individual growth for approved social development (Chapman, 1982). More often than not, however, the existence of the implicit or covert curriculum is completely unrecognized by students, teachers, community members, and even by some educational theorists.

Berger and Luckman (1967) suggest that the root proposition of the sociology of knowledge is the fact that human consciousness is determined by the fact that we are social beings. Consciousness is shaped within peoples's web of relationships to each other. So the covert or implicit curriculum is the social structure which guides and informs educational systems,

imbuing cultural mores, values, ambitions, fears, and ways of interacting within those systems. The implicit social curriculum thus includes the school systems organizational structure, the subject matter content and by extension that content which is omitted. It also includes the physical facility, its nature, ambience, strengths and weaknesses, and the logistics and timing of educational activities.

What or whose purposes are served by the implicit curriculum? Holt (1972) argues that it is not the learners' purposes but the larger society's which are served in educational institutions. If one examines the practicalities of day-to-day curriculum development, it goes almost without saying that the learners' purposes are seldom questioned. Agendas are set, aims are constructed, goals are decided, objectives set, and activities developed with little or no input from students. If the learners' purposes are content-related they have better options for having them met than in the public schools. If students have a drive for relevant content, it is beside the point. The primary point of formal education is to introduce students to the concepts, assumptions, mores, values, and general structures which society holds dear and expects them to hold also (Anderson, 1985). Friere (1973) sees education as the process of domesticating human beings, orienting them to their roles in society, not by working with students, but by working on them, "imposing an order they will have to accommodate" (p. 38). As Henry (1963) states it, "school is an institution for drilling children in cultural orientations" (p. 283). Bowers (1987) says that the largely unexamined liberal assumption that education is emancipatory, leading the individual to empowerment through enlightenment, is false. Rather, formal education is a primarily social device keeping the individual firmly embedded in prevailing traditions.

I would argue if the primary agenda of school is the socialization process, and the vehicle carrying that process is the implicit curriculum, then content areas, generally miscast as the so-called official curriculum, are really serving the so-called vehicle - the implicit curriculum - rather than vice versa as is commonly assumed. The covert social curriculum is the prime driver. Content areas such as English, mathematics, and art,

generally miscast as the so-called "official" curriculum are only valued within the educational structure to the extent they reflect the values and serve the social purposes carried by the implicit curriculum. This is not an intended, planned, maliciously sneaky conspiracy, but simply a natural structural result of public institutions, such as education, which reflect mores of society. What we know is a result of how we frame inquiry which is a result of what we value.

What, then, are the dominating social values inherent in the implicit curriculum? One of these is the tacit acceptance of formalized schooling itself. Although it seems a given and commonplace phenomenon now, mandatory state-validated public schooling is, in fact, very recent. In 1900 only 6% of the population in the United States were high school graduates (Goodman, 1964). Obviously, that did not mean 94% of the populace were professional and social failures. In fact, at that time as in most of human history, most children went through a process of informal education naturally connected to their needs, learning practical skills and social mores from their parents, and possibly a specialized trade as an apprentice to a master. However, with advances in technology, and the need for workers who were narrower and more specialized in their skills, also came the need to socialize such workers to be satisfied with performing more rote and abstract tasks (Illich, 1970). School necessarily became practice for rote tasks and for the abstract deferral of immediate means and ends in terms of tasks to be performed. In short, it taught attitudes as well as skills necessary for the new industrial world, in which humans were needed to do often mind-numbingly repetitive and immediately unrewarding tasks for the promise of a deferred payoff later. Such rewards include a paycheck, Sunday off, and a two-week vacation - extrinsic rewards unrelated to the task at hand. In this sense formalized compulsory education is an organic community function of a specialized technological society. It is a mixed blessing, democratizing a diverse population at one end, but regimenting social mores in the service of technocratic socialization on the other (Goodman, 1964, Illich, 1970). Goodman (Stoehr, 1977) states:

There is no doubt that most children can think and learn far more than they are challenged to. Yet it is likely that by far

the greatest waste of ability occurs because a playful, hunting, sexy, dreamy, combative, passionate, artistic, manipulative, destructive, jealous, magnanimous, selfish, and disinterested animal is continually thwarted by social organization - and perhaps especially by schooling (p. 72).

Teachers know from experience that bright, slow, physically and emotionally handicapped conformists are allowed for in the school system; but the creative nonconformist is a threat and has no place. To the extent one challenges the assumptions of a system he or she will be kept outside that system (Anderson, 1985). "Guessers and dreamers are not free to balk and drop out for a semester to brood and let their theories germinate in the dark, as proper geniuses do" (Goodman in Stoehr, 1977, p. 73).

This emphasis on social compliance is, in many respects, eminently reasonable. The reason that we only occasionally swing from trees and pound our chests is because we have human culture. Human culture is not a biological given. It is learned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling (Harris, 1991). We have designated certain of our cultural institutions, schools among them, to pass along the cultural heritage. The integration of social conventions is fostered in students not by original or creative attitudes, but through acquiescence. All education socializes, but formal education does so deliberately, demanding, coercing, rewarding, and punishing the student into acceptance.

One reason for social acquiescence in school is the idea that if you obey the rules you will do well and get a good job. This makes sense as a foundational assumption if the previous argument, that formal education is socialization for employment in industrial and post-industrial society, is accepted. A driving assumption that one's education should be "useful" is deeply embedded into the North American psyche. The myth is that any newsboy, soldier, or actor can rise to be president or prime minister through hard work. A good education is clearly instrumental in this view. That is, formal education is seen as useful to the extent that it tends to business - the practical business of imparting concrete skills useful in a technological society. Except in clearly-defined, exceptional cases such as a finishing

school, the curriculum in this view should not include too many frills normally associated with so-called high culture (Grambs, 1965). Specific, objective, rationally-based skills which do not challenge established value orientations are highly esteemed. Content and curricula which are expressive, intuitive, and value-seeking run counter to the socializing purposes of the implicit curriculum and are found to be vaguely threatening. Art, music, and foreign languages are seen as frills. This can be exemplified by the periodic back-to-basics movements. Basics in general education mean practical and technological skills, and the mind set necessary to function in a specialized technological context (Bowers, 1974; Mumford, 1938).

The dominant mode of cognitive development desired for the vast majority of workers within a technologically-oriented system of any kind is linear, hierarchical, and knowledge-based, with emphasis on logical, intellectually-oriented thinking processes. The reification which prevails is that through the systematization of factual information, knowledge is gained. The support structure of this assumption is one of linear efficiency with aims, goals, content, and objectives all clearly stated. Desired content outcomes are known before the educational process is begun and planning is directed to reach these predetermined outcomes. Aspects of mental life such as intuition and imagination have been devalued in this system, reducing the accepted functions of cognition to an empirical heap of sensory data. The development of the centre of human activity once called the soul is no longer considered an educationally valid venture. The mind's mysterious unity and creative potential are all but ignored (Barrett, 1985). Thus, there is no room for divergent activity - for "messing around" - within the technologically-oriented curriculum either at the overt or implicit levels.

Evidence to support this theory can be drawn from the structure of the curriculum, the logistics of the school day, and even the school architecture. An example drawn from the logistics of the school day, the passing of classes in accordance with a bell system, is a classic technologically-oriented compliance structure. When it is time to go from one class to the next, or from one subject to the next, it is time to go. There is no way around it, no matter how interesting the subject in which the student is

currently engaged, no matter where it is taking him or her intellectually, spiritually, or emotionally. When the bell rings, the experience is over whether completed or merely truncated, as Dewey (1958) would state it.

Normally, in the technologically ordered curriculum, it does not matter a great deal to the student whether the learning experience is truncated or not. Usually he or she is not terribly interested in the content being taught. Who really wants to memorize all the presidents of the United States; in order? But this introduction of subject matter content in ways that are not experientially or personally meaningful, is no accident. Rather, it is another function of the socialization process of the implicit curriculum which teaches delayed gratification and the setting of abstract goals and rewards necessary to function socially and professionally in a specialized technological society. Students work for a grade, for promotion into the eleventh grade, to make the Dean's list, to earn the sports car when they get all A's, but seldom for love of learning a specific subject driven by an inner need. Curriculum is frequently structured more for its socializing function than to impart specific content.

Likewise, the classic school architecture, which rules the landscape from Seattle to Sarasota, conveys an attitude of technological efficiency. The placement of straight, artificially lighted halls with rectangular classrooms at regular intervals on either side obviously puts a much higher priority on technological efficiency than on local specificity, individual comfort, expressive form, or the myriad other values which could dominate, but do not. Consider the effect of an "s" shaped corridor, idiosyncratic spaces, differing sized and shaped rooms, and soft and private spaces in a school. Consider a school that had no set pass time between classes, that allowed students to begin and end activities as they pleased and to go in whatever direction their personal inquiry needs took them. Certainly, the value structure underlying such a school would be considerably different than that which underlies the classic North American school. In fact, the dominant value system out of which our educational structure has grown probably would not tolerate such a school. As Henry (1963) puts it, "most educational systems are imbued with anxiety and hostility. They are against as many things as they are

for" (p. 286). In interpreting their physical structures it is fairly obvious that schools are generally not only for order, logical linearity, and conformity, but they are also against idiosyncrasy, individualization, and the unguarded softness necessary to intuition and creativity. School architecture fits perfectly in training citizens to take their place as productive members in the middle of the "technocratic pyramid" (Roszak, 1969).

So in general education, we have an implicit curriculum grounded in the premise of teaching students social compliance through the reified acceptance of the primacy of logical, linear instrumental skills within a technologically specialized milieu. To the extent that content areas support and enhance the implicit/covert curriculum which drives general education, they will be embraced or rejected by the educational community. With this in mind, the discussion now turns to an examination of art and some of the premises driving the artworld which influence art education.

Premises and Structure in Art Education

Arguably, the single most pervasive quality of Western art and artists in the twentieth century has been the drive for originality. Picking up almost any anthology or survey of Western art will convince the reader of this point. Art is defined and discussed in historical texts as a series of *avant gardes*, one movement rising from or in reaction to the one before, each attempting to stretch the bounds of art itself, both in conception and practice. Assuming technical competence, good art must be original art.

This value set even extends to art that initially was not executed to be particularly original. It takes art that was made for other than original purposes and recontextualizes it in the value set of "originality-above-all." For example, consider the drop in value of the piece held by the Getty, when it was suspected that it was not an "original" ancient Greek work but only a later Roman "reproduction." What makes it worth less; its own qualities, context, and circumstances or those we attribute to it based on a notion of originality? Likewise what makes a

million dollar work practically worthless when it is found to be a forgery? The physical qualities have not changed at all. Physically it is still the same excellent work that passed for a Vermeer or a Rembrandt. But when it is found that the artist was not pushing the edge, that he or she was merely reproducing something previously achieved, the achievement is viewed as of little significance in spite of the level of craft involved.

Further, what makes a Van Gogh painting worth millions of dollars and an Ansel Adams photograph worth only thousands? The difference is originality. The painting is a one of a kind artifact and the print which comes from a negative is almost infinitely reproducible. In fact, even artists such as Sherrie Levine who challenge our notions about the artist as individual genius or about originality in general, do so in highly original ways. It cannot be claimed, in any sense, that rephotographing a famous print as an artifact, as though it were a landscape or a lamp, is not an act of high originality. It is her originality, not her photo skills, that gain Levine the status and the grudging respect she has in the artworld. It is not her artifact or her craft that count, but the audacious originality of the idea behind them. In the artworld, it is originality that counts most of all.

There has been a definite corollary emphasis on originality in art education in the sense that creativity, by one name or another, has been a central aspect of curriculum planning since G. Stanley Hall fathered the child study movement at the turn of the century. Hall (1911) advised teachers against copy work and against stifling motivation in students. The influence of Hall as well as aspects of Pestalozzi's, Froebel's, Cizek's, Dewey's, and Parker's philosophies of personal development have all descended through mainstream art education theory and practice, promoting open-ended, experientially based, affectively integrated learning experiences emphasizing individual personal development. The emphasis on creativity reached its zenith in the 1950s (D'Amico, 1942; Lowenfeld, 1947) and began a descent in the 1960s; but the premise that creativity is at the heart of art education is deeply embedded at the level of a given. In spite of the current movement toward discipline based art education with its stress on art as a body of knowledge to be learned (Geer, 1984), it is Betty Edwards' books (1979, 1986) emphasizing

creativity that are the best sellers. Likewise, critics of DBAE most often stress that DBAE's Achilles heel is the lack of students' freedom to express something of themselves, of their own dreams and hopes and aspirations (London, 1987). The public and many art educators equate art with creativity.

But even accepting a DBAE position does not negate an emphasis on students' individual creative development. Advocates of DBAE argue that in making art or doing art criticism creative behavior can hardly be avoided; and in studying art history or aesthetics, examining the role of creativity is intrinsic. Art education's preeminent scholars in curriculum development verify the notion that art cannot be totally accommodated through closed-ended or predetermined goals (Eisner, 1985). It belies the nature of the discipline to try. Chapman, who may sell more DBAE-oriented texts than any other author, cites personal fulfillment as the desired primary motivation for teaching and learning in art, with knowledge of the roles of art in society and in a historical context supporting that primary cause (Chapman, 1982). Eisner (1985) has devised an alternative to closed-ended instructional objectives he calls "expressive outcomes," which allow for the unknown and open-ended yet educationally valuable nature of engaging in artistic processes. And in spite of Efland's (1976) contention that school art is "game-like, conventional, ritualistic, and rule-governed" (p. 38) in contrast to the more spontaneous unsupervised child art, what Bersson (1986) calls "individual centred" art education is still alive and well: an integral component of most, if not all art education curricula. Art in the schools may not be very creative, but it is way ahead of what is in second place.

This of course, fosters an official as well as implicit art education agenda which is idiosyncratic, exploratory, often non-linear, and non-hierarchical; content which is often personally meaningful and thus does not emphasize delayed gratification; a structure that often stresses horizontal and divergent learning in which there is a place for guessers and dreamers. In short, the implicit curriculum in art education is frequently in direct conflict with the aims of the larger educational system. That larger structure values closed-ended, abstracted from life, linear, hierarchical, quantitatively oriented content in which answers are

predetermined, in which values are unchallenged, which teach delayed gratification, acquiescence, and the authority of the system. Is it any wonder that mathematics, English (particularly grammar), geography, traditional history, and certain logical types of science predominate? Is it any wonder that the typical English teacher spends so much time diagramming sentences and so little exploring the ideas of Thoreau? In this setting is it any wonder that art is thought of by many other educators in other disciplines primarily as playtime, a frill (Foshay, 1974), a sort of uppity cousin only marginally welcome in the educational family? In an educational structure which values efficiency, measurable outcomes, and conformity, the art program promotes adaptive creativity, qualitative outcomes, and idiosyncratic activities and spaces.

The Piece of the Pie

In this context is it any wonder that the instinct of many art educators is to stress art content and skills which are concrete, observable, measurable, and amenable to unambiguous evaluation? These are values held dear within general education. In this sense DBAE and other content-centred paradigms must be seen, at least partially, as attempts to get more in line with the implicit socialization function which drives general education. As with other adaptive organisms, such art educators are acting on their instinct to survive.

The conflicting values which lie at the heart of the continuing debate between pro-content centered art educators and those opposed lies in the conflicting traditions of two cultural institutions. Those who are pro-content may be lining up with general education which values conformity above all, versus those who are modeling curriculum on the values of the "artworld" (Danto, 1987), which values originality. In valuing conformity general education has come to be dominated by Taylor's technocratic curriculum model (Bowers, 1987; Eisner, 1985). On the other hand, art education still favors open-ended, individually constructed and individually empowering

curricular models, rising from the romantic/liberal tradition, which (at least rhetorically) pays homage to the artistic/aesthetic model of creativity. It seems that, in particular, those opposed to content-centred curricula, rather than drawing primarily on the acquiescing values inherent in the larger educational system, draw equally (or more) on the values held within the traditions of the artworld: creativity, divergence, and open-ended non-measurable activity. But as in the larger society, within educational institutions it is not art's values which dominate. Thus the art educator, in holding these values, is marginalized.

The question then becomes, is it possible to serve two masters? If DBAE and other content-centered curriculum structures are viewed too narrowly, the answer is no. If teaching and learning the content of art are seen as intellectual activity only - as an end in itself - then content-based paradigms are excluding that open-ended, personal and social development that rises from making and criticizing art. Just as obviously on the other hand, if teaching art is seen only as embracing the drive for original studio production, the answer is also no. But if the content of art is seen as embracing not only the creative and divergent, but also skills and knowledge, then the significant values of both systems may be embraced.

Symbols never stand alone, never stand for themselves, but are always referential in some way. In spite of the extreme modernist tradition fostered by Bell (1981) and Fry (1960), and Andy Warhol's claims to non-referential surface (Glaser, 1989), or Francis Bacon's claims that there is no content beyond form in his work (Sylvester, 1987), it can be confidently claimed that art is communication of some sort, from one human being to another (Langer, 1960): and communication relies on context for meaning (Itleson, Proshansky, Rivlin, and Winkel, 1974). Symbols and symbol systems function (or are dysfunctional) as part of an artist's and perceiver's social embeddedness. They make sense in relation to what a person knows within the web of human relationships which is society. In my mind, then, the real goal of teaching the content of art using aesthetics, criticism, history, and studio art is not to understand art, but to understand oneself and one's society in relation to and through art. Through

education in art one seeks to reach a state of general critical appreciation (Anderson, 1990). This requires both the conforming behavior necessary to integrate skills and knowledge and the creative behavior to use those skills and knowledge for personal expression and individual development.

How does this relate to art's place in general education? Embracing divergent values and creative, individually expressive strategies of art within DBAE or another content-centered curriculum structure will continue to make those in general education suspicious of art. Outcomes such as creativity, critical thinking and the like are given lip service but are not valued as truly or deeply as conformity and "solid" vocational skills. So it may be too much to expect that content-centered curricula will carry art to the center of the educational curriculum. And this may not be inappropriate.

The educational system, like any system - biological, political, social, or religious — seeks its own correct balance, adjusting to internal and external pressures as necessary to continue to functionally exist. Educational institutions, like other social institutions, require acquiescence and majority support — the consensus of those who participate in that system — or they will face the disintegration which comes from lack of common goals and beliefs. As social institutions, then, educational systems are fundamentally conservative, changing only very slowly, always testing change with small steps to avoid the drowning plunge of breaking through untested ice.

Individual challenges, original ideas, and proposed alternatives to established ways of doing things are necessary to test the health, parameters, and validity of the dominant culture. These divergent activities are allowed within a healthy institution as *individual* leaps by *individuals* only. Thus individuals find the weak ice and plunge through while the larger group (society and the institutions that represent it) stay safely on more solid ground. In short, if everyone were leaping, the ice would be full of holes. Society itself would go down. Society, and social institutions such as educational systems, cannot maintain the requisite cohesiveness under conditions where idiosyncratic

and creative ideals and behaviors are the rule. Such ideals and behaviors must be, instead, the exception that tests the rule.

It has been argued here, that at the core of art education, maybe even defining that core, have been exactly those creative, idiosyncratic, open-ended, personally and individually oriented leaps which society allows as the test of the rule, but which will never become the rule itself. Thus, general education has found art education vaguely disturbing, a little threatening, or at least unsettling. The tendency toward creative divergence is the reason for the marginalization of art.

Sensing this marginalization, advocates of DBAE and other content-centered paradigms have developed curriculum structures which are more attuned to the school's culture. Narrowly defined, those curriculum structures would leave behind much that is valuable about art. Properly and broadly defined to include the creative impulse and divergent activity, content centered art education continues to pose a threat to the stability of the school's culture, and will continue to be a least somewhat peripheral. So, because there is a role for art in society that cannot be denied, general education will continue to invite art to the family table. But because art has the capacity to have unacceptable manners and make us uncomfortable by being the troublesome child, the piece of pie will continue to be a small one. But as an art person, I feel I must properly diverge in closing to say that one may choose not to focus at all on the size of the piece of pie, but rather to imagine how sweet it is, to taste it, to change its flavors, its texture, to roll it over the tongue while it changes from cherry to lemon meringue, to chocolate...

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Art Education's Movement Toward Core Curriculum Membership (CCM): Processes of Legitimation

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Abstract

Art education at this time provides a unique opportunity to observe and analyse how a field of study presents rationalisations and takes certain actions to acquire some of the more traditional characteristics of general education. The manner in which art testing has been proposed will serve as a specific example of how quantification, accountability, and predictability of learning outcomes are being used to legitimate art study as a discrete discipline with core curriculum status. To examine legitimating characteristics and processes, the following will be discussed: (a) current trends in art education, (b) characteristics of general education, (c) relationships between current trends in art education and characteristics of general education, and (d) the testing of art learning as a specific rationalization and action taken to acquire general education characteristics and core curriculum membership (CCM).