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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).

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

Until recently, art education usually consisted of instruction for intuitive understanding, affective development, creative thinking, individual expression, and technical expertise (Efland, 1976; *Beyond Creating*, 1985). Such goals were considered outcomes of hands-on studio work, and it was believed that children's learning in art classes eluded most forms of evaluation and, certainly, could not be evaluated through traditional pencil-and-paper testing. Many of these assumptions and characteristics of art education are now in the process of changing.[1] Statements in current guidelines and proposals in art education suggest that instruction should deal with art as a discipline with its own unique knowledge base, that instrumental (extra-art) benefits of art study should be eschewed, and that art learning outcomes can be and should be evaluated through standardised or criterion-referenced tests (*Beyond Creating*, 1985; Davis, in press; Greer & Hoepfner, 1986; *Toward Civilization*, 1988). Although these assumptions and characteristics are common fare in other subject areas (usually denoted as "academic" subjects), they represent radical changes for art education. In this respect, the model characteristics of art education constitute a case study of processes by which a field acquires institutionally based legitimating characteristics and assumes a place within education on the basis of traditional and essentially conservative educational practices.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the developing and evolving actions of art education as they relate to institutionalized characteristics of academic subject areas within general education; this will be referred to as art education's movement toward core curriculum membership, hereafter referred to as CCM (an author originated acronym). To examine the process of legitimation as art education moves toward CCM, 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 illustrative of the movement

toward general education characteristics. 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 CCM status.

Current Trends in Art Education

The current movement toward CCM can be traced to, roughly the early and mid-1960s when art education researchers and theorists such as Barkan (1962; see also Mattil, 1966) suggested that art education should consist of the study of its ostensible parent disciplines and their professional role models, i.e. art criticism and art critics, art history and art historians, studio work and artists. This discipline-centered approach was designated as **aesthetic education**, and, although a great deal of discussion and research resulted in subsequent years, aesthetic education remained essentially theoretical in nature. For art education, the decades of the 1960s and 1970s were characterised by diverse proposals that had little overall impact on changing the emphasis on studio instruction in art classrooms. This lack of theory-practice alignment led Lanier (1975) to state that the more art education changed the more it stayed the same. Belief in the disciplinary nature of art study and, hence, its legitimate place in the core curriculum, however, remained a strongly promoted theme of research and theory development among many art educators.

In 1982, the J. Paul Getty Trust formed the Getty Center for Education in the Arts and began the search for a theory of art instruction that would eliminate perceived inadequacies of studio instruction, place art on par with other subjects, and gain support of major art education academicians (*Beyond Creating*, 1985; Greer, 1984). The characteristics of aesthetic education were selected by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts to form the criteria for initial surveys of the field conducted by the Rand Corporation and later for proposals for curriculum implementation (*Beyond Creating*, 1985). To summarise, the Getty Center for Education in the Arts proposed that art instruction should be firmly **based** (not merely centered) in art's disciplines

which would entail the study of art criticism, art history, studio production, and aesthetics.[2] Discipline-based art education (DBAE) content should be developed from professional behaviors within these four disciplines, and it should be sequenced between and among grades in a written curriculum implemented district-wide. It was stated that in such curricula learning outcomes could be and should be evaluated (Greer, 1984).

Discipline-based art education might be dismissed as just another dressed-up art education theory with some relative merits and no place to be implemented. However, a crucial factor for DBAE's possible wide-spread implementation and national acceptance is its relationships to the characteristics of general education and the way in which those characteristics have been adopted in the promotional and programmatic actions of DBAE proponents. Although CCM supported by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts certainly gives such a movement attention, clout, and monetary where-with-all, this is probably not the major reason for its popularity. Other previous theoretical constructs for change have also had financial and public relation organisational support by major institutions (Art Education and Americans Panel, 1977; *Toward Civilization*, 1988). A major difference now is that current change is presented as a way to fit in with essentially conservative characteristics of existing educational institutions.

Characteristics of General Education

The CCM construct has strong historical and theoretical antecedents. Art educators supportive of CCM are not striking out on their own; rather, they are moving into an existing institution with well-defined educational practices. Numerous researchers have examined and discussed the characteristics of general education in terms of modernist values, bureaucratic efficiency, economic decision-making, business and industry models, the replication of social structures, and the reproduction of social inequities, e.g., Apple (1982), Bowers (1984), Callahan (1962), Cuban (1988), Gouldner (1979), Lortie (1975), Popkewitz (1977), and Wexler (1987). Institutionalised modal characteristics of modern educational practices encompass the use of text-

books, standardised testing, denotative learning, expert-originated materials, and Euro-American subject content. Such curriculum content and practices support a consensual model of education based on accountability, simplification, abstract and expert-defined knowledge, prespecified outcomes, and predictability.

A pervasive assumption of universal applicability underlines much of modern education inasmuch as it is believed that one can identify enduring principles of knowledge and of action and that these can then be delineated, quantified, and delivered in an efficient manner (Bowers, 1984; Cuban, 1988; Lortie, 1975; Wexler, 1987). Proponents of standardisation operate within the assumption that there are particular bodies of knowledge comprising the disciplines, which, when mastered, will make one culturally literate (Bennett, 1987/1988; Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987; *Toward Civilization*, 1988). Accordingly, valuable educational experiences are seen as just a matter of plugging into the right system. Popkewitz (1977) describes core curriculum disciplines as singular, seemingly consensual systems which are presented to students in a simplified, taken-for-granted manner.

Relationships Between Art Education and General Education

This author proposes that entrance into an existing institution is made possible, or at the very least facilitated, if the assumed characteristics and processes of change are compatible with the institution, in this case, general education and its core curriculum of academic subjects. It is also helpful if the characteristics of the existing institution are themselves relatively precise and definable (unambiguous), amenable to systems analysis, provide authority to designated experts (individuals can become self-defined experts merely by being involved in the process of change), and are capable of being replicated in a variety of contexts, i.e. are relatively context-free and capable of being nationalised. Movement into the core curriculum of modern education via adoption of its characteristics of accountability and predictability provides a logical tidiness and certitude which, in turn, implies that implementation will be successful and

accompanied by professional prestige, recognition, stability, and economic payoffs.

Both the character and the processes of general education have been adopted in art education's programatic movement toward CCM. The institution of general education provides powerful metaphors of language and actions that are embedded in other institutions of modern society, thereby implying consensus, right thinking, and distinctive "American" values. For example, discipline-based publications contain language that emphasises **academics, rigor, discipline, authority, exemplars, accountability, critical thinking,** and **clarity of purpose** (Hamblen 1988). (It is not that easy to suggest that the converse of these might be educationally preferable: **Frills, chaos, kitsch,** and **fuzzy thinking**). The language of CCM proponents is a far-cry from the stereotyped anything-goes, anyone-can-succeed-in-art attitude of the 1950s and the current practices of many art teachers and existing programs. Discussions of uncertainty, problematic outcomes, and questionable success of actions have no place in the public promotion of an art program that will be on par with the well-established scientific and language disciplines. CCM proponents as agents of change appear certain in purpose and action; this certitude appears in promotional materials and in the organisation and content of curricula designated as discipline-based (McReynolds, 1990).[3]

To examine how the movement toward CCM is being accomplished, the following generalised processes and characteristics have been identified by the author; they will be discussed in relationship to proposals for standardised testing in art: (a) change promises to eliminate perceived, current inadequacies; (b) the appearance of consensus and inevitability is given to the proposed change; (c) success of implementation is exaggerated; (d) a noncritical stance is taken toward key aspects of change; (e) the proposed program for change ignores negative aspects; (f) change replicates the most established and conservative aspects of existing the institution; (g) controversial issues are simplified; (h) strict adherence to the characteristics of the existing institution result in overcompensation and distortions; and (i) support solicited from major educational organisations and agencies legitimates change. It should be noted that these cited

processes and characteristics consist of a blueprint for change in modern industrialised societies wherein economic and social power exists within bureaucratic institutions.

Testing as a Catalyst for Change

Current guidelines and proposals in art education suggest that more **rigorous** evaluation is needed if art learning is to be properly assessed and if art instruction is to become part of the core curriculum (Davis, in press). Michael Day (1985) stated that "the use of educational evaluation is perhaps the aspect that distinguishes most dramatically between what is traditional and what is contemporary in art education"(p.232).

Testing often acts as a major driving force for change and influences the very structure by which selected knowledge is given significance and meaning. For example, standardised testing has been described as an essential characteristic which is supported by and related to other traditional educational practices, e.g., teacher-proof curricula, standardised curricula, lecture methods of instruction, and teaching for minimum competencies (Haladyna, Nolen, & Haas, 1991; Paris, Lawton, Turner, & Roth, 1991; Smith, 1991). In this paper it is suggested that standardised testing provides a key to understanding the movement toward CCM, inasmuch as testing encompasses the means, rationales, and rewards for compliance to characteristics of a discipline-based program and, more broadly, for acquiring characteristics of the existing educational institution.

CCM Promises to Eliminate Perceived Inadequacies

Although Day (1985) cited a range of ways in which art learning can be evaluated, in many instances evaluation has come to be equated with standardised testing (Greer & Hoepfner, 1986). The apparent appeal for standardised testing and all it entails is that it appears "right." Standardised art testing would give art education the fit with the rest of education—and with

mainstream society—that it has always lacked. In this sense, standardisation is comforting;it eliminates the unfamiliar and provides a sense of recognition based on traditional educational practices.

Change is Presented as Inevitable

To give the movement toward CCM the patina of inevitability, art testing has been presented as a practice whose time has come, as being supported by a broad-base of important and powerful agencies, and as nearing implementation (Davis, in press; Finlayson, 1988; *Toward Civilization*, 1988). Moreover, through reference to aesthetic education theory, CCM proponents can draw upon tradition and fairly well-accepted ideas within art itself. The implications are that only wrong thinking and foolhardiness would lead anyone to raise serious objections (Eisner, 1988; Feinstein, 1989).

Endorsements for objective, standardised testing are found throughout the literature. The Council of Chief State School Officers (1985) stated that there is "a definite trend toward standardised testing in the arts" (Olson, 1986, p.11). According to a state education survey conducted by this council (1985), "Ten states currently employ standardised testing to assess achievement in the arts on a statewide basis" (p.5). In the December 1986 issue of the *NAEA News*, it was reported that 12 states have some form of art assessment. Proposals from major governmental, professional, and philanthropic organisations create the belief that testing is an accomplished fact—or imminent. Greer and Hoepfner (1986), as spokespersons for the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, opt for primarily objective, multiple-choice achievement testing in discipline-based art education programs. Various arts and general education administrators have also lent their weight of influence in the direction of testing. Honig (1985), as superintendent of education in California, stated that art programs "will have to be conceived, developed, and maintained just as other academic subject"(p.10). In *Towards Civilization* (1988), a national study of the arts commissioned by the U.S. Congress through the National Endow-

ment for the Arts, the trend toward standardised testing was given national direction and legitimation for all the arts.

Success is Exaggerated

From the rhetoric, one would not suspect that at this point standardised testing in art is still primarily promotional. In 1988, Finlayson found that of the 10 to 12 states supposedly employing standardised testing, only 3 states (Connecticut, Minnesota, and Utah) actually use such tests, and only 1 of those (Minnesota) had repeated its statewide testing assessment. Finlayson (1988), however, also found various states considering standardised testing or actually designing tests at the time of her research. More recent reviews substantiate this as a continuing trend (Davis, in press). In this sense, a Bandwagon effect appears to be in operation.

A Noncritical Stance is Taken; Dissent is Minimised

It appears that discipline-based instruction has not been systematically classroom tested against other instructional approaches, and evaluations of discipline-based learning outcomes are not available (Burton, Lederman, & London 1988). Published, promotional statements on testing minimise or more often ignore the downsides and controversial aspects of standardised testing (Davis, in press; Greer & Hoepfner, 1986), and negative aspects of testing implementation are not discussed or made explicit, or they are dismissed as essentially inconsequential or frivolous (Eisner, 1988). Conflict, debate, controversy, and the selective value base of program testing are not part of promotional literature or programmatic actions. Formalised criticisms of CCM has been cited and dismissed as merely instances of wrong thinking, nay-saying, or professional jealousies (Eisner, 1988; Feinstein, 1989), and anecdotal accounts suggest instances in which dissent has been formally quelled.

The relatively few specific published arguments against standardised art testing have not had the institutional support

of, for example, government agencies and philanthropic foundations (Hamblen, 1989). Articles on art education's movement into the core curriculum that have been published in nonart education publications primarily limit the discussion to official, promotional publications or to articles written by testing proponents (Jackson, 1987). The result has been a general failure to examine the many implications of testing and a failure to examine the value system from which testing proponents are proceeding.

Negative Aspects of Testing are Ignored

When art educators buy into standardised testing, they inherit all the testing rationales and statistical baggage with which educators in the core curriculum are all-too-familiar. However, the well-developed critiques of testing that are part of general education theory and research are not part of general education promotional materials (Bullough & Goldstein, 1984; Paris et al., 1991; Smith, 1991; Sternberg & Baron, 1985; Stiggins, 1985). When or if standardised art testing is widely implemented, art teachers will have to learn to deal with test anxiety, test item interference, gender and ethnic biases in testing, memory-response intervals, and so on. They will also have to learn to justify test scores to administrators and to the popular media (Paris et al., 1991; Smith, 1991). Since most art teachers lack an in-depth background in testing and measurement, they will have to rely on experts for test design and the interpretation of results. In such instances, testing experts become, in effect, the designers of curriculum content.

Established and Conservative Aspects are Adopted

Proponents of the movement toward CCM have ignored critiques of traditional academic educational practices and have minimised many of the difficulties continually experienced by other educators. The general education reform movement of the 1980s was itself an impetus for changes in art education; however, it is not the reform or, in Kuhn's (1970) terminology, the

revolutionary aspects of general education that are being promoted. Rather, art education, as presented in discipline-based literature, adheres to the more traditional or conservative aspects of **current** educational practices. Control, simplification, and elimination of debate appear in both the ways in which the art testing issue has been promoted in the United States and how knowledge itself is presented when standardised testing is in place.

If reform needed to come to art education, it did not have to be a conservative interpretation of a discipline-based approach to art instruction.[4] During the 1960s and 1970s, art educators were busily discussing the merits of art instruction for social responsibility, environmental design, visual/aesthetic literacy, and integrated arts instruction. More recently, we have had proposals for change over the last decades have done much to keep the field of art education on the periphery of the core curriculum (Lanier, 1975). This does not, however, mean that standardised curricula and testing are only alternatives or even that it is possible or desirable for art education to attain CCM status. It is, however, significant that in much of the literature, standardisation is presented as the logical, taken-for-granted course of action.

Controversial Issues are Simplified

Standardised testing promises to eliminate the messiness of qualitative evaluation procedures. Not surprisingly, state-developed testing in art, to-date, has focused primarily on factual information, formal qualities, basic design "principles," and on the identification and formal analysis of Western fine arts that are considered exemplars (*Arts Inventory*, 1985; Finlayson, 1988). These constitute knowledge and skills that can be quantified and are amenable to standardisation.[5] A tautology has developed in that what can be tested in an objective manner becomes what is considered to be fundamental art knowledge and skills.

In discussion of discipline-centered curricula in the social sciences, Popkewitz (1977) notes that content becomes over simplified to the point that it bears little resemblance to the life experiences of students or to how the discipline is debated and constructed by professionals in the field. Likewise, discipline-based designated curricula content in many instances no longer relates to the work of professionals or to how students experience art outside the school environment (McReynolds, 1990).[6]

Overcompensation and Distortions

In the attempt to be accepted as a core curriculum subject, art education appears to be adopting some of the most conservative and questioned aspects of traditional educational practices and institutions. One might consider this as a form of overcompensation to the point that some proposed art education practices are a parody of general education failures, e.g., testing simplified knowledge and using teacher-proof materials.

At the same time that many art educators are seeing standardised testing as a way of legitimating art's inclusion in the core curriculum, reformers in general education often see this type of assessment as a major cause and symptom of failures in the total educational system (Bob, 1986; Paris et al., 1991; Smith, 1991; Stiggins, 1985). In opting for standardised testing as the way to evaluate art learning, art educators are entering previously charted territory that many educators have found to be devoid of value beyond what it offers in the way of accountability and efficiency (Bullough & Goldstein, 1984; Finlayson, 1988).

Art tests and their related curricula concern themselves with topics and content that would appear to make little impact on the lives of students (*Art Inventory*, 1985). Such content will probably not elicit a great deal of attention, concern, and hence, criticism from administrators and political leaders. Much art education curriculum content in textbooks is ostensibly benign; however, by omission, its human authorship is obscured, meanings are distorted, and there is the negation of the possibility that content of substance will be examined (McReynolds, 1990).

Support is Solicited from Established Institutions

In our media saturated society of commercial product advertisements and ever-new and improved products, change is often presented with a flurry of publicity and promises of improved life experiences. The public relations component of change for CCM has consisted of a series of publications, conferences, and press releases. There has, therefore, been an appreciable amount of fanfare and publicity for discipline-based programs and CCM. However, when change involves movement into an existing institution, change must not actually disrupt the status quo of that institution if it is going to receive support and acceptance. Moreover, change must not be presented as professionally disruptive to those who will actually be carrying out and experiencing change. Proposed discipline-based changes for art education were initially seen by many classroom teachers as overwhelming in scope and as neglecting studio instruction (Dobbs, 1988; *Inheriting the Theory*, 1989). According to interpretations of original DBAE theory, studio instruction and creative experiences would have been appreciably reduced to allow for instruction in aesthetics, art history, and art criticism (*Beyond Creating*, 1985). Subsequently, however, DBAE has been presented as possibly working within a studio model of instruction (Dobbs, 1988), with the call for nonstudio instruction noticeably softened. Moreover, teacher institutes and inservice workshops offer the services and knowledge of experts to define curriculum and methods and to facilitate transition to CCM. As much as possible, movement into CCM is presented as nonproblematic, inevitable, and as offering an improvement—but not requiring a great deal of professional disruption. One might suggest from this that change in terms of acquiring membership in a well-established existing institution is rarely revolutionary or substantive in nature.

Not surprisingly, standardised testing in art is not a grassroots idea. Rather, standardisation is a top-down idea with endorsements from almost every major private and public art and educational organisation in the United States (*Beyond Creating*, 1985; Davis, in press; *Toward Civilization*, 1988). Such endorsements consolidate and increase existing power among curriculum, philanthropic, government, etc., experts.

Conclusion

Current trends and events in art education suggests that there could be major changes in how art will be taught, the attitudes that will be developed toward art, meanings attributed to art, potential for individual or collective creation of the aesthetic environment, and how art content is defined. More specifically, standardised testing could exert a major influence on determining whose aesthetic knowledge for cultural literacy will be taught.

The modernity characteristics of standardisation and efficiency, which testing embodies, obscure the fact that this model for art education is a matter of choice and that there are other, less conservative, possibilities for change at this time. The trend toward CCM and toward standardised testing is highly compatible with the power structure of institutional hierarchies and the value system of decision-makers who wish to maintain, consolidate, and expand their influence and control. This paper attempts to delineate many of the characteristics of change that threaten to become very much part of the taken-for-granted landscape of art education theory and practice. Considering the magnitude of current change in art education and how drastically it differs from previous ideas on art curriculum and instruction, it is essential that aspects of this change continue to be documented and analysed—and protested, when necessary. Many of the trends and changes described in this paper seem incompatible with basic tenets of art education and may not be to the advantage of educating thoughtful and responsible citizens who are able to recognise and resist repressive controls placed on their consciousness and behaviors.

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Endnotes

[1]Developments in art education will be described in this paper as changes rather than as reforms in order to include both change that is proposed for purposes of instructional improvement and change proposed for purposes of educational, institutional legitimation—with the acknowledgement that these two purposes are not mutually exclusive.

[2]For a discussion of disciplinary possibilities for art education other than the four designated by DBAE, see Burton, Lederman, and London (1988).

[3]This paper deals with the movement toward core curriculum membership. For a discussion of the extent to which CCM might actually be achieved in the 1990s and beyond see Arnstine (1990) and Hamblen (1990). As indicated in this paper, projected success by CCM proponents may be overly optimistic; however,

as in the case of testing, optimism itself, when coupled with institutional support, may become self-fulfilling.

⁴It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss other possible ways that a discipline-based approach to art instruction could be interpreted and implemented, i.e., not using general education characteristics as the model for evaluation and curriculum development.

⁵ DBAE is a theory of art instruction; it is not a curriculum per se. However, curricula that are designated as discipline-based tend to have the characteristics of general education curricula. To date, discipline-based designated curricula stress structure, sequence, and the organisation of content that is simplified, manageable, and noncontroversial (McReynolds, 1990).

⁶ ARTS PROPEL, supported by Harvard's Project Zero, The Rockefeller Commission, and the Pittsburgh Public Schools, is a qualitative, standardised evaluation program which assesses student learning through journals, portfolios, and student initiated long-term projects (Gitomer, Grosh, & Price, 1992). ARTS PROPEL is primarily implemented in selected Pittsburgh public schools and is limited to studio-based art learning; however, its use of qualitative forms of assessment have been seen as having implications for the use of more "authentic" forms of assessment in other subject areas (Gitomer et al., 1992).

Deep-Seated Culture: Understanding Sitting

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ABSTRACT

Similar to the way that our culture influences how we interpret the world, the way that we sit in a chair and the type of chair that we are in positions what we see and how we are seen.1 Environmental cues communicate information through which we establish context and define a situation (Rapoport, 1982, p. 56). In this paper I examined the ways in which chairs (defined as that which is underneath us when "sitting") and sitting (defined as the infinite ways that we sustain our bodies in a bent position ranging from squatting, kneeling, reclining, or the lotus position) reflect cultural values and influence what we learn, through disempowering or empowering us. Based on this examination, I collaborated with poet, Amy Klauke, to develop a multicultural and environmental art unit that promotes understanding of the diverse ways that people organize space, time, meaning, and communication. The art unit described in the second half of this paper could serve as a curriculum model in which other objects of material culture (i.e., entrances, eating paraphernalia, etc.) are experientially deconstructed to reveal culturally constructed meanings.