

ENCULTURATION AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN ART

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There are many ways to address how we prepare art and elementary teachers to teach art. We can wait for the Getty study results which look at the topical content of selected art education programs throughout the country. Or, we can be on the alert for the completion of the comprehensive survey funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Education, conducted by the Council of Chief State School Officers to determine, from the standpoint of each State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the status of arts education in each state. This survey will cover curricula, certification requirements, budgets, educational personnel, graduation requirements, and other areas (Hodsoll, 1985). Or, we can look at the results of the National Art Assessments conducted in 1974-75 and again in 1978-79 on the art performance of nine, thirteen and seventeen year old students throughout the country. Or, we can do a truly grass roots survey among the NAEA members to, at least, determine similarities and differences in required courses in undergraduate art education programs. Each of these sources could provide valuable information directly or indirectly related to art teacher education practices.

For the sake of expediency, I will look at the National Art Assessments (1981) as a point of departure, since it is the most comprehensive measurement on the status of art in the schools ever conducted. Four areas on art learning were assessed: (a) Valuing Art, (b) Knowledge about Art History, (c) Responding to Art: Perceiving, Describing, Analyzing, and Judging, and (d) Design and Drawing Skills.

Results Indicate That:

Students who have taken many art courses (1) do somewhat better than others on valuing exercises, (2) but are no better in responding to works of art in ways that deepen understanding and appreciation (p.4).

Most students do not know how to perceive and respond to works of art well enough to apprehend either their sensory qualities or their structures. Even those with the most art instruction are not much better than the rest. Also most students seem unable to go beyond the look of a painting's subject matter in order to make judgements about the merit of a work (p.4-5).

In the area of knowledge about art, seldom did as many as half the students recognize famous works or know when, where, or by whom they were created. Questions about art styles elicited almost random response patterns with a high percentage of students who simply did not know the answers (p.5).

Those students who had taken 4 to 6 art classes performed considerably higher than other students on the drawing exercises that called for design. The range of performance suggests that design skill improves slightly more with age than drawing skills. However, the ranges show that the majority of students do not appear to draw or to design particularly well (p.78).

Wilson, Chapman, and Silverman (NAEP, 1981) concluded in their analysis of the data from the 2nd National Art Assessment that: Romantic notions about the child and child art need to be replaced by the realization that to be art educated implies possessing (a) an understanding of a body of subject matter -

contemporary and historical aesthetic objects, theories and facts to be comprehended - and (b) a repertoire of skills for expressing oneself aesthetically in visual form (p.16).

The findings of the National Art Assessment reflect the general practice of art in the schools. Although six and a half years have passed since the second study, the focus of art instruction at the elementary level still tends to be on the exploration of materials, self-expression, and the making of objects for self and parents. Instruction is usually devoid of art concepts, sequence, and continuity, and art is usually taught by the classroom teacher (Lovano-Kerr, 1985). This situation is not surprising to art educators since elementary teacher preparation includes only one or two courses in art: an art appreciation course and/or an art methods course which consists of some theory and a number of "hands in projects."

At the junior high or middle school level, art instruction, which is generally provided by an art specialist, most often consists of drawing, painting, sculpture, and crafts. Instruction is relatively more broad and more structured than at the elementary level. In high school, emphasis is primarily on studio art production and on design skills. At all levels, very little art history or art criticism is taught - either as individual courses or units or integrated with studio art (NAEP, 1981).

For the most part, current instruction in art continues to be media / technique and project oriented, lagging behind theory found in the literature for the past twenty-one years dating back to Barkan's delineation of this model at the 1965 Penn State Conference which, as we know, recommends that art programs consist of an integration of art history, art studio, and art criticism. More recently, aesthetics has

been added to these three disciplines. There are several socially-defined factors involved in perpetuating the media / technique approach to art education. One of the major factors is teacher education.

Most teacher education programs in art require very few courses in art history as compared with art studio; and usually no courses in aesthetics or art criticism are required. Part of this problem is the availability of such courses; another part of the problem is tradition. The most recent NAEA Guidelines for Teacher Preparation Programs in Art (Wygant, 1979), which serves as a standard for the field, suggests thirty-nine hours of studio and twelve hours to be divided between art history, aesthetics, and art criticism. Assuming three credit courses, this might consist of 2 courses in art history, 1 in aesthetics, and 1 in art criticism. These standards perpetuate the focus on art production since the standards are generally looked upon as the ideal to strive toward.

With such limited exposure to art history, art criticism, and aesthetics, it can be surmised that Western art is the primary focus of these studies. Also, with such a limited exposure, it is not possible for many art teachers and elementary classroom teachers to be knowledgeable about the cultural bases of most of the world of art. Since art is fundamentally a way of seeing, these teachers have limited perceptions. Art is an essential human process that vividly depicts human diversity. If our experience and knowledge are limited in the understanding of human diversity, our capacity to understand art is also limited.

To comprehend this diversity, and to truly see and to understand art, we must be knowledgeable about the contexts from which art works come. The history, the values, the rituals and tradition of the culture, and the social forces within the

culture at the time, provide the context for the work of art.

Another related dimension perpetuating the production focus is discussed by Patricia Clahassey in the March, 1986 issue of Art Education. Clahassey draws an interesting parallel between modernism, post-modernism, and art education practices. She defines modernism as including expressionism, formalism, and technology and science. Clahassey believes that art education embraced expressionism in the 1930's and continued in this vein until 1970. The term "self-expression" permeated the literature during this time, with an emphasis on creativity. New materials, new techniques, and the latest technology were continually sought. About 1970, instruction in the formal elements re-emerged in the literature and in the classrooms. Clahassey observes that "As formalism began to pervade the curriculum of both elementary and secondary levels those programs ran the risk of making art less meaningful for students" (1986, p.47).

Currently, postmodernism is on the art scene. Clahassey (1986) sees this movement as an expression of social concerns and the rediscovery of content, image, symbol, and metaphor. Contemporary artists, she asserts, are returning to art history for ideas and images.

Art education, likewise, is moving in the same direction through the Discipline - Based Art Education (DBAE) movement. DBAE consists of four disciplines: art history, art studio, art criticism, and aesthetics. Art programs based on this model are beginning to move away from the heavy or singular emphasis on self-expression and formalism - and moving toward including art history and art criticism (aesthetic scanning) as early as kindergarten, and, in some instances, at the pre-school level. Teachers are finding that there are basic skills, concepts, and knowledge derived from the four

content disciplines of art that can be taught sequentially, from simple to complex, continuously from pre-school through twelfth grade, with scope that encompasses the world of art in all its diversity. Works of art are studied within their cultural context; questions on the nature of art are discussed; aesthetic perception and response is developed through viewing and responding to works of art. This approach provides a series of sequential, continuing experiences which develop a depth of understanding and appreciation of art not possible in previous modes of practice.

The content of the four disciplines of art, together, should yield a diversity of cultural / social contexts inclusive of cultural values, traditions, rituals and basic philosophical thought not possible in other, more limited approaches to art education. Cultural changes and intercultural transformations are more evident and better understood when viewed historically and in perspective. Cultural similarities and differences also become more evident.

The process of change, in particular, educational change, is slow. Although Clahassey discussed the movement in art education theory and practice as three discrete, consecutive stages (from self-expression, to formalism, to social expression), practice tends to lag well behind theory. A survey of art education programs at the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels would probably reveal that each of the three movements is alive and well throughout the country.

More and more teacher preparation programs are beginning to respond to needed changes in theory and in practice. The Penn State Seminar on Research and Curriculum in Art Education in 1965, and the literature derived from the Seminar, have influenced programs to some extent. Some programs added courses

in art history as a requirement. Some developed courses in art criticism within the art education program. Many programs developed the three part model for art curricula - art studio, art history, and art criticism - suggested by Manuel Barkan. More recently, with the assistance and encouragement of the Getty Trust, the concept and structure of the DBAE model (Greer, 1984) has been widely disseminated in the field. The DBAE model is certain to bring even more changes at the higher education level.

The model calls for more balance and integration of the content between the four disciplines; it calls for scope and sequence in designing the program, continuous learning, content organized from simple to complex, implementation of inquiry modes specific to each discipline, and written curricula.

Instructional strategies at the higher education level would need to change to accommodate and to facilitate the discipline - based approach. The studio instructional model, so evident in the self - expression and formalistic approaches to art education is no longer sufficient. Instructional modes from art history, aesthetics, and art criticism need to be incorporated and adapted to specific populations. These instructional strategy changes are also needed for preparing elementary classroom teachers to teach art. We

can no longer expect classroom teachers (or for that matter, art teachers with bachelor's degrees only) to design their own art programs. It is not possible to master the content of art with so few courses. Instead, a thorough understanding of the structure and premises of discipline - based art teaching, and the kinds of content, processes, skills, and modes of inquiry of the four disciplines would replace the current emphasis on developing a sampling of studio art techniques and skills. Developing skills for critical teachability in a real - world setting through field experiences could better prepare preservice elementary teachers for teaching art. Using discipline - based art textbooks that meet specific criteria indicating excellence in quality would insure much better art programs at the elementary level than has been traditionally provided. Classroom teachers are simply not prepared to teach art well with only three art and art methods courses.

I am very optimistic about the future of art education. This optimism is based on the premise that the field will embrace the DBAE approach; that DBAE will change the way in which we prepare the teachers to teach art; and that the schools will welcome and expand the art program because of its relevance, its quality, and its status as a discipline.

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