Revisiting Curriculum Conceptions: A Thematic Perspective

Elizabeth Manley-Delacruz
University of Illinois

Abstract
The following paper reviews curriculum frameworks developed by Eisner and Vallance (1974) and Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981) as a context for reconsidering conflicting notions about the nature and purposes of art teaching. Recommendations regarding art education curricula proposed by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, and the ensuing debates over discipline-based art education, are then discussed in relation to these frameworks. This review suggests that the controversy over curricula in the visual arts is motivated by a movement in education at large toward critical social theory, and concludes that the academic debates that characterize our field may be seen as healthy, as such dialogue encourages us to identify and examine changing assumptions about teaching and learning that underlie curriculum endeavors.

Curriculum theories in art education reflect changing ideas about schooling evident in education at large, as educators react to cultural forces. In an effort to clarify their mission, art educators address complex issues regarding teaching, learning, and the nature and purpose of art education programs. This paper examines varying notions about the teaching of art, first by revisiting curriculum conceptions identified by Eisner and Vallance (1974) and Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981), and next by discussing the discipline-based approach in art education, as developed by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, in relation to these conceptions. Academic debates concerning the DBAE model illustrate the current paths of theorizing that characterize the field of curriculum today. Conflicts about curricula within the field of art education are seen as integral to the process of curriculum development and refinement.

Curriculum Frameworks
Both the Eisner-Vallance framework and the Giroux, Penna, and Pinar characterization identify competing views of the curriculum, based on different conceptions about children, knowledge, education, and the needs of society. Although these orientations are shown as distinct schools of thought, Eisner has pointed out that in actuality they occur together, overlapping each other in the complex school setting.

Eisner and Vallance: Curriculum Orientations
Eisner and Vallance (1974) have classified five curriculum orientations: curriculum as technology, academic rationalism, development of cognitive processes, self-actualization, and social reconstruction. This characterization organizes varying views of the curriculum into conceptually distinct categories, each sharing similar ideologies and instrumental goals.

The technological view of curriculum is a means-end, efficiency-centered approach to the organization and construction of school subjects, manifested in such forms as the behavioral objectives model, competency-based instruction, and the accountability movement. It relies on assumptions about the "power and precision of scientific methods of management and control" (Eisner, 1985).

Academic rationalism focuses on curriculum content. It emphasizes the importance of fostering intellectual growth through study of the most worthy or "basic" subjects. These subjects constitute "the major concepts, issues, and problems that humans face in the course of their lifetime" and illustrate and exercise important human rational abilities (Eisner, 1985, p. 66). The ultimate goal
here is discriminating choice which permits both active participation in a profession and meaningful involvement with important societal issues.

The development of students' intellectual abilities is also the focus of the cognitive processes orientation. "Cognitivism" embraces selected subject areas, or disciplines, that are particularly suited for the development of the intellect. It differs from academic rationalism in its emphasis on the mental faculties of the learners rather than curriculum content. Its advocates maintain that the student's ability to solve problems is not strengthened simply by storing bits of knowledge, but rather by developing intellectual faculties that can later be used to deal with problems.

Proponents for personal relevancy or self-actualization view schooling as a "means of personal fulfillment, a context in which individuals can discover their particular talents and identities" (Unruh & Unruh, 1984, p. 102). These curricularists claim that the school is responsible for developing more relevant programs to be offered as an alternative to traditional practices. They argue for subjective, student-centered, and activity-oriented instruction. These assertions are based on a strong belief in "the primacy of personal meaning," a belief that "individuals develop not so much from the outside in as they do from the inside out" (Eisner, 1985, p. 70).

Social adaptation and social reconstruction are central to a fifth orientation. Embracing a view of schools as "mechanisms for meeting what is regarded as critical needs within society," proponents advocate a radical social perspective that aims at "developing critical consciousness among children and youth so that they will become aware of the kinds of ills the society has and become motivated to learn how to alleviate them" (Eisner, pp. 75–76).

Giroux, Penna, and Pinar: Historical Perspectives

Giroux, Penna, and Pinar have also distinguished between curriculum conceptions, identifying three perspectives according to broad socio-historical themes: traditionalism, conceptual-empiricism, and reconceptualism (1981). This orientation differs from the Eisner and Vallance framework in its emphasis on ideology and the political dimension of educational endeavors.

Traditional curriculum notions were formed with the inception of curriculum as a distinct field in the 1920s. They have been shaped by the dominant intellectual paradigms of that period: a technological rationality that embraced the tenets of an "emerging scientism and the bureaucratic model" (Pinar, 1981, p. 88). While themes of the traditional approach are diverse, what unites this territory is an interest in the operation of the schools and the "efficient transmission of functional knowledge" (Giroux et al., 1981, p. 14).

While traditionalists, or technological rationalists, came from within the field of education, many of them from classroom teaching, the curriculum-reform movement of the 1960s brought in influential scholars from other disciplines, including psychology, mathematics, and the sciences. Their work generated an interest on the part of curricularists in building a set of theories about education in an unambiguous language that described, classified, and generalized the processes in curriculum and instruction (Beauchamp, 1971; Johnson, 1967; Schwab, 1962). Conceptual-empiricists are characterized by this interest in value-free investigations and models of logic based on the physical sciences (Johnson, 1967); a view of schooling as systems within which policy decisions are made about curricular aims (Walker, 1973); and an allegiance to specific instructional and implementation strategies aimed at efficient learning (Gagne, 1976).
Reconceptualists share an interest in mainstream social science with the conceptual-empiricists. They differ in their aims and methods, however, in their search for meaning and intent embedded in the schools, viewing them "as part of a wider societal process" (Giroux, 1981, p. 103). Reconceptualists question traditional and positivist paradigms that "objectify facts, divorce knowledge from human meaning, and claim a false neutrality with respect to politics" (Apple, 1979, p. 116). They criticize the behaviorist language and narrowly instrumental function of traditional curriculum writing, basing their views on trends in hermeneutics, literary criticism, philosophical inquiry, and historical analysis (Giroux et al., 1981). For reconceptualists, knowledge and meaning are context and value bound.

Curriculum Orientations: Comparison and Summary

As noted by Smith (1987), practices in education are motivated by favored conceptions of knowledge and values. Academic rationalists maintain that the essence of human knowledge is stored in its cultural and literary achievements and assert that the role of education in society is to bring its citizenry to an informed appreciation of those achievements. Cognitivists believe that knowledge exists as mental or conceptual abilities and dispositions, and claim that schools should foster mental development. Both groups hold a traditional and technocratic view of schooling (Hamblen, 1988). Self-actualizationists maintain that in order to be meaningful, the content of instruction must relate to the students' own life experiences, and that affective development is as important as cognitive development. Reconceptualists believe that knowledge and values are embedded in a complex of ideological, political, and cultural paradigms, a complex that requires intensive review. They argue for a school system that motivates individuals to understand and attempt to control the underlying forces in their lives, and to build a better society (Huebner, 1981). Both question the relevance of traditional and technocratic practices to diverse cultural groups.

In considering distinctions between curriculum approaches, ranges of views can be represented on two continua. These continua describe schools of thought that guide action, from traditional to radical educational programs, and levels at which curricular goals are focused, from the individual level of the child to the larger, society-centered level. Figure 1 represents these intersecting orientations.

The horizontal axis deals with dominant modes of thinking about the goals of schools, based on epistemological orientations that range from an empirico-analytic position to one of critical self-reflection (Aoki, 1978). The traditional orientation is found on one end of this continuum, representing what has been described as a technological approach, concerned with prediction, control, management, and efficiency. The other end houses a more radical approach, one that views knowledge as culturally embedded or "situational," meaning as intersubjective and interpretive, and value as political. Schools are seen here as the means by which individuals acquire the disposition to search for value and meaning in their own life-worlds as they relate to the human/social world (Aoki, 1978).

The vertical axis illustrates the level at which educational processes are aimed, from the personal or individualistic to the broad societal level. Although cognitivists and self-actualizationists differ on the functions of schooling, both focus on the dispositions and abilities of individual students. Academic rationalists and reconceptualists emphasize broader cultural and historical perspectives but differ in their views about knowledge and the role of education in society. Academic rationalists are concerned with the efficient transmission of knowledge to future generations. They adhere to cultural tradi-
Conflicting notions of curricula in the visual arts dominate the literature. Proponents of child-centered forms of schooling challenge the movement toward content-centered curricula. Those holding a socio-political view of schooling call attention to the limitations of the "disciplinary approach" advocated so heavily in the 1980s. Conversely, charges that conceptual-empirical structures are displacing the personal relevancy of schooling are met with countercharges that the self-actualization approach has resulted in an "anything-goes" attitude toward visual arts education, an erosion of support for school arts programs, and a denial of standards of excellence. Not always apparent in these debates are the underlying philosophical assumptions about schooling.

Curriculum Forces in Art Education

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Influences on the Discipline-Based Approach to Teaching Art: Barkan, Bruner, and Broudy

The 1980s may be characterized as the DBAE decade, and, as with other reform efforts in the field, much debate has ensued around this program. In order to better understand the DBAE approach, it is important to reconsider early influences. It is generally known that Manuel Barkan (1966) was among the first to call for written, sequenced, prescriptive curricula and the inclusion of content in the historical and critical domains in visual arts education. Barkan believed that art curricula lacked a foundation or structure, partly caused by the absence of a unified, viable accepted theory. He viewed this skepticism toward theory as irrational and dogmatic. To remedy this, Barkan proposed a "concept of structure in the context of a discipline and its meaning for education," as brought into prominence by Jerome Bruner (1966, p. 244). 1 Calling his approach "discipline-centered," Barkan felt that art, too, had a structure, and based this structure on the ... modes of inquiry exemplified in the fields of art. Implicated is a content component membership which includes studio

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production, criticism and history. The professional schools in the arts — the artists, the critics, the historians — would be the models for inquiry, because the kind of human meaning questions they ask about art and life, and their particular ways of conveying and acting on these questions are the kinds of questions and ways of acting that art instruction would be seeking to teach students to ask and act upon. (p. 246)

Like Barkan, many advocates of discipline-based art education have either directly or indirectly built their conceptions of art education around Bruner's ideas (Clark, Day, & Greer, 1987). In Bruner's (1961) model for education, learning is made most efficient and effective by concentrating on the general structure of subject matter. This includes the most basic ideas of a field, a grasp of its principles, regularities, and patterns, which in turn provide a structural framework for further learning. Bruner summarized,

... the curriculum of a subject should be determined by the most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the underlying principles that give structure to that subject. ... Knowledge one has acquired without sufficient structure to tie it together is knowledge that is likely to be forgotten. ... The task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things. (pp. 31–32)

Barkan and Bruner contributed to the present view of the professional disciplines in the visual arts as organized bodies of knowledge that form the basis of art instruction in the schools. It was Harry Broudy (1979), however, who articulated with unequalled eloquence the goals and justifications of aesthetic education that have become the philosophical impetus for the discipline-based art education movement. Broudy called for a recognition of the importance of the relation between image making and image perceiving, that is, imagination, to language, thought, and feeling. For Broudy, the study of art provides an imagic framework, or allusionary base, that acts as a lens through which experience is interpreted and comprehended (1987). He based these assertions about the value of art education in an argument for the cultivation of aesthetic experience and the refinement of aesthetic sensibility through the study and understanding of imagery. In short, Broudy provided art education advocates with an argument that aesthetic experience is as pervasive as cognitive and practical activity, and that there are skills of aesthetic impression that can, if cultivated under tuition, change the quality of that experience, just as the study of mathematics or history changes the quality of their respective modes of untutored experience (1979).

Greer, following the ideas developed by Broudy, has formulated these learning outcomes within a discipline-based framework.

The sought-after results of disciplined study are those tacit structures-in-thought that Broudy contends remain long after specific study is ended (Broudy, n.d.). These structures, which Broudy describes as lenses acquired from the various disciplines, enable the educated person to fully understand and appreciate their experiences within the various value domains. (1984, p. 214)

For Greer, knowledge of the subject matter of art includes those concepts, generalizations, and procedures that mark the disciplines, as defined and practiced by competent professionals (1984). This view has been consistently maintained in the literature advocating discipline-based art education.

The Getty Influence: A Climate for Change and Conflict

The structure-of-the-disciplines approach was a response to socio-political forces in the 1960s: a technological race for military superiority and a focus on education as the means by which the U.S. would assert its position as a world
power. Math and science education became the target of intense reform efforts. However, no area of the curriculum escaped scrutiny (Cherryholmes, 1987). Urgent national reports during the 1980s reestablished a climate for reform. These reports focused on the relationships between student achievement and our economic security. They highlighted the failures of public schooling to meet the demands of society in its efforts to regain its position on the world market, questioning both “traditional” and “progressive” practices in school programs, and calling for more vigorous academic approaches.

The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, spurred by this renewed interest in the quality of American public education, similarly surmised that art classes across the country lacked the essentials of quality art education programming, that is, substantive content and intellectual rigor. At risk here was not our militaristic or economic status, but our cultural heritage. The Center commissioned the Rand Corporation to investigate model programs throughout the United States that exhibited what Getty identified as the essential elements of quality, namely discipline-based art education. The focus of this research was upon the larger policy issues and critical factors necessary for change.

The Rand study concluded that art programs generally lacked balance in the art disciplines specified by Getty, that they lacked sequencing of learning activities and/or written prescriptive curricula, and that no ideal program exists or probably can be developed that would achieve the goals of a discipline-based art education in all district environments. They recommended that attention be focused on several areas before significant change could take place. These recommendations include: creating networks to overcome the present trend of teachers working in isolation; retraining at all levels of the system, including post-secondary education; and developing consensus-like information about the theoretical and long-range goals of art education programs across the nation. The Rand researchers also concluded that the two most important factors in the success of good art programs were the presence of strong central figures with the expertise and political ability to maintain these programs and the availability of considerable outside resources.

The Getty DBAE Model: Its Place in Curriculum Theory

The Getty Center has demonstrated the feasibility of implementing a model similar in many ways to that proposed by Barkan in 1966. As noted by Hamblen (1988), advocates of this approach adhere to an academic rationalist tradition in curriculum theory in that the content of the DBAE program focuses on the greatest cultural and artistic achievements of humankind, what, for example, experts call the exemplars.

Landmark works of various kinds including those that mark major movements or those that stand as major exemplars of a style, should be recognized as worthy of attention and study (Greer, 1984, p. 215).

According to Clark, Day, and Greer (1987) students will develop an understanding and appreciation of valuable and vital human meanings, processes, and historical interrelationships “through the study of ‘significant’ subject matter from art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art production” (p. 164).

Defining discipline-based art education in terms of the educational end-in-view, that is, knowledgeable adults who have developed “avenues of thought, understanding, and expression that reflect the structures of art as a discipline,” the Getty model effects a shift in how we view the student learner (Greer, 1984, p. 217). This approach, according to Greer, provides a much needed change in how art education programs are defined and positioned in the context of the general school curriculum.
When justifications for art education are made in terms of increasing competency rather than enjoyment, school people and parents look at art as a legitimate subject of instruction. (p. 217)

This position is consistently maintained in the DBAE literature.

Discipline-based art instruction emphasizes sequential activities that enable students gradually to become more sophisticated in making art, in examining art, and in reading and talking about art. The body of knowledge available in the literature and practice of art, which is the basis for instruction, is the same whether studied by adults or children. Concepts taught to children therefore correspond to those used by adults in the arts profession. (Rush, Greer, & Feinstein, 1986, p. 88)

Battin (1988) suggests that the DBAE rationale has been developed out of a reverence for the subject matter itself. Erickson adds, “DBAE in essence views the individual (the child, the student, the adult) as a ‘carrier of tradition.’ This is the underlying rationale, and it leads us to think in a slightly different way about the needs of its curriculum” (1988, p. 57). These emphases have emerged from what has been identified as traditional and conceptual-empirical views of the school curriculum (Giroux et al., 1981). (See Figure 1.)

The DBAE model is based as well on a cognitive-structural model of learning as influenced by selected developmental psychologists such as Piaget, Bruner, and D. H. Feldman. According to Rush, Greer, and Feinstein,

the discipline-based approach to art education, by virtue of its attempt to illuminate the internal structure of artistic behavior, lends itself to examination by empirical study. (1986, p. 88)

Eisner applies this concept of structure to curriculum design, which in his view refers to some set of coherent relationships among components including “plans, activities, and materials intended to influence the learner’s experience” (1987, p. 14). This translates into a series of art lessons that are (a) “organized sequentially for cumulative learning and articulated across grade levels to provide continuity for students as they progress from grade to grade,” and (b) that acknowledge and accommodate (students’) respective levels of cognitive, social, and physical maturity (Clark et al., 1987, p. 165). Eisner claims that although there is no structural orthodoxy to which everyone must subscribe, “the critical issue is to achieve the educational aims to which discipline-based art education is committed” (1987, p. 15).

**DBAE: Opposition and Criticism**

Many concerns have been voiced by critics of the Getty DBAE proposal. These concerns pervade the literature and the conference halls as advocates and critics come to terms with difficult issues regarding the nature of knowledge in the visual arts, the nature of teaching, and the nature of children. Critics question the feasibility of implementing the kind of curriculum advocated in the DBAE literature. Some maintain that extensive in-service sessions for teachers working in the classrooms requires much more financial support than school districts are willing to pay. Others question the assertion that “anyone” can teach art to elementary children given the proper guidance, feeling that bringing classroom teachers to in-service workshops does not necessarily provide a quality visual arts program, one that exemplifies rigor and substance (Wilson, 1988). Forrest (1986) charges that a blanket imposition of the quartered art curriculum (perception, making, history, and criticism) is inappropriate, impossible, and stifling to teacher initiative.

Although most art educators agree on the importance of teaching art history and art criticism, and there is a general consensus that a sequential curriculum will enhance learning, many do not want to shift the emphasis of curricula away from the studio domain, believing that
studio concepts and skills occupy a special area in learning (Dorn, 1984). Critics question the appropriateness of bookish art history instruction for children, arguing that these courses often become so bogged down in historical and factual information that they lose the immediacy of experience of art. They challenge the DBAE emphasis on the verbal conceptual constructs embedded in the art as communication rationale (Lanier, 1986b). Others believe that students should encounter the world through active involvement with it (Reimer, 1989), and compare the Getty DBAE model to the rigidly repressive, textbook-oriented, adult-centered practices of traditional education (Lansing, 1986). Hamblen echoes this comparison, arguing that making art more like traditional school subjects does not make it better (1987). She cites national reports on education that draw attention to falling test scores and the graduation of illiterates to illustrate the failure of the academic subjects to adequately teach students.

The discipline-based orientation promotes a radical departure from the child-centered approach, and marks a direction that some art educators cannot support. Bersson (1986) charges that a discipline-centered approach de-emphasizes art’s individual and social dimension, and confines art to a formalistic, Western conception. Similarly, Hamblen (1987) argues that the Getty DBAE model limits conceptions of art to those selected by the “experts,” and values efficiency and behavioralistic, predetermined outcomes. She also maintains that the cognitive-developmental orientation adopted in the DBAE model focuses on the integrity of content and not the individual differences (personality, perceptual skills, idiosyncratic learning propensities) of students. Chalmers (1987), like Hamblen and Bersson, maintains that the Getty DBAE model has yet to incorporate socio-cultural perspectives into its program, and is incomplete until it does.

Competing Curriculum Conceptions in Art Education: Examining the Issues

Many aspects of the debates between approaches in art need study. This includes: (a) an examination of the internal consistency of particular theories, (b) an investigation of the relationships between the historical/contextual underpinnings of advocated approaches, (c) consideration of the effect of emotionally charged lamentations about the attempt to formalize visual arts education around a body of work, which has, for the most part, already been agreed upon, and (d) consideration of the direction of future inquiry.

Ideas about Teaching, Then and Now

Looking back at earlier conceptions, we see a different conception of teaching and learning than is now generally held. For example, we now recognize that Bruner’s recommendation that public school curricula be constructed well enough that ordinary teachers may teach a discipline has the potential to lead to the development of teacher-proof curricula (Eisner, 1985, 1987) and to a reliance on minimally trained instructors to transmit the essence of human artistic achievement to future generations (Wilson, 1988). Yet Greer, recognizing the fact that instruction in most school subjects in the elementary grades is given by the classroom teacher, claims that “the art program that presents art as a discipline with a regular sequence of instruction can be managed along with the rest of the subjects” (1984, p. 217). Greer maintains that written sequential art curricula complete enough for teachers to use without undue effort, along with sufficient staff development, provide the necessary ingredients for a solid education in art. For some Getty DBAE advocates the role of the art specialist in the elementary schools changes in the DBAE model, from that of teaching art to children to that of counseling teachers (Clark and McLaughlin, 1987, p. 72). Day, respond-
ing to concerns that schools that adopt DBAE will no longer feel that they need art specialists, concludes:

Usually those schools didn’t have art teachers to being with. But it is often the case that a classroom teacher who handles several subjects is better able to integrate art into the general process of learning. (1987, p. 79)

Reactions to the initiatives undertaken by Getty DBAE proponents include a serious and far reaching concern on this matter, considering Getty’s extensive efforts and resources.

The unwritten message that school board members are receiving is that DBAE can be taught quite adequately by the classroom teacher, and therefore, the art teacher is not needed. (Comment excerpted from letters received at the Getty Center after the Los Angeles conference, 1987, p. 115).

D. H. Feldman’s conception of the young learner as a budding craftsman implies a different view of the teacher than that suggested in the DBAE literature.

Deep engagement is unlikely to occur in a completely open or unstructured school situation, since engagement occurs only when continuous, sustained, supervised participation in a field is available. . . . As the child reaches the elementary school years channeling of effort into fewer activities pursued with more intensity would seem to be a sensible educational strategy. Presumably at this time the child will begin to seek greater skill and depth in instruction within a field, and teachers cannot be experts at everything. This in turn leads to the possibility that expert practitioners be available as mentors for providing needed sophistication in instruction. (1985, p. 171)

The kind of teacher who could provide sophisticated, in-depth instruction, even with the advice (or mentorship) of a specialist, would need a knowledge base substantially beyond the kind of understanding that comes with post-service staff development. Sustained mentorship of young learners, as suggested in Feldman’s recommendations, demands the kind of expertise and understanding that comes with subject specialization.

It is also noteworthy that Bruner later characterized the structure-of-the-disciplines approach to curriculum as inadequate, and reoriented his structural approach toward humanistic cultural values. In The Process of Education Revisited (1971) and The Relevance of Education (1973), Bruner called for more emphasis in curricula on important social issues such as racism, sexism, social inequity, and the relationships between schooling and society — themes that have re-emerged in many fields in the 1990s (Cherryholmes, 1987).

Contextual Considerations

Appreciation of the Getty DBAE program must include an awareness of the contextual factors that influenced its development. The program instituted by the Getty Center in southern California was a response to political and economic conditions as they impinged upon educational policies. The Getty DBAE staff development model was, in essence, a practical and strategic program. On the other hand, the Getty DBAE model is an emerging approach. The Center has promoted a number of promising approaches to establishing programs in the schools. Individual forms of this approach may be tailored to specific districts and geographic areas (Duke, 1988).

As similar programs develop in other parts of the country they will reflect regional differences. These differences will, hopefully, be aimed more in the direction of putting more professional art teachers in contact with children, rather than assigning another responsibility to the already overworked elementary teacher.

Critiquing the Critics

Most of the criticisms of the Getty DBAE model appearing in the literature are motivated by competing conceptions of the curriculum, however, and not on the prob-
lem of who should be doing the teaching. These criticisms focus on the philosophical and political underpinnings of the DBAE movement. Such criticisms should be as closely scrutinized as the DBAE approach itself. Charges levied against the academic rationalism of the DBAE approach mirror the kinds of things re-conceptualists in the field of curriculum say about traditional and conceptual-empirical frameworks. According to Cherryholmes, a structural view of curriculum defines and systematizes knowledge hierarchically, taking linguistics analysis as a model and disciplines and professions as content. This view is certainly evident in the DBAE model proposed by Clark, Day, and Greer (1987). A post-structural analysis puts the content and structure of curricula into a cultural or contextual perspective, adopting strategies that direct attention to the hidden social structures by which topics in the foreground are legitimated. Post-structuralists “deconstruct” the dominant ideologies and values that guide curricular decisions by identifying the political and historical antecedents and influences on curriculum theory and practice. They ask who the “experts” are, who is excluded from a position of authority regarding curricular issues, and whose interests are being served. For these critics, the experts comprise an established community of academics who reflect and reproduce the dominant paradigms of the groups in power, and devalue or dismiss the views of marginalized cultural groups. Critics often offer alternative interpretations of what students should have an opportunity to learn, based on sociological concerns (Cherryholmes, 1987). This view of curriculum theory and practice is inherently political, and many of the arguments offered are highly compelling but endlessly debatable.

Questions that deal with the power, ideology, class conflict, individual and cultural differences, and the intersubjective basis of establishing meaning and knowledge are raised in an attempt to focus attention on the deficiencies of rationalistic, empiricist-based curricula (Giroux, Penna, & Pinar, 1984). These kinds of questions are set forth in many of the attacks on the Getty DBAE model. Critics of the DBAE program question the “excellence” argument, asserting that the experts are white, male Westerners who exclude the interests and achievements of minorities. Critics argue for art programs that are personally relevant, that recognize the individuality of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These demands are difficult to deny. Calls for a certain focus — the inclusion of certain content — is always at the expense of another focus and involves the either stated or unstated exclusion of other content within the contingencies of school arts programs. This leaves us with the same questions: “who decides, and on what basis?” Will fashionable deconstructionist viewpoints become the dominant paradigms against which other reactionary positions will have to be posed at some future date?

Founders and proponents of the DBAE orientation have made an easy target of their positions by articulating the epistemological and metaphysical underpinnings of this approach, and by delineating in great detail the structure and content of visual arts curricula. In the process they have demystified cherished notions such as artistic imagination, creativity, spontaneity, self-expression, and academic freedom. We need our myths.

Future Inquiry

Any movement in the direction of Beyond Creating has implications that warrant examination, in addition to questions about adequacy of the general classroom teacher model. This includes research into the efficacy of various content delivery systems. The Rand researchers surmised that in order to become accepted as an important area of the curriculum, art will have to become more like the other school subjects. And while the Rand researchers called for written sequential
curricula in the domains of art identified by Getty advisers, they did not recommend a specific document. Rather, they presented parts of those curricula they felt to be examples of proper art programming, with warnings that reductionist, scientific approaches draw attention away from expressive qualities in art. Studies into the nature, function, and outcomes of programs and resources identified as "discipline-based" are needed. Implementation and dissemination problems in an era of budget deficits remain as serious obstacles to put teachers specialized in visual arts education and adequate curriculum resources into the schools. Strategies for the success of discipline-based programs, beyond the infusion of Getty dollars, need to be worked out.

These movements, implications, and concerns from the basis of future inquiry. Smith (1987) notes that inevitably there are many "varieties of discipline-based art education identified by different labels" (p. 26) and recommends that lengthy consideration be given to the ways in which discipline-based curricula are formed and implemented. This includes moving beyond philosophical and political arguments and toward research specifically aimed at the assessment of student learning, and at the evaluation of discipline-based programs. Wilson concludes, "if it is a broadened, disciplined art education that we desire, then we must all become owners of the idea. We must see it as our own" (1988, p. 144). Clearly, this is not the case, as evidenced in the literature. And unfortunately, as Marantz (1989) notes, Smith's call for professional cordiality has not always been followed in efforts to refine, modify, or defend the DBAE theory.

Curriculum Dynamics: Final Comments and Recommendations

Cherryholmes (1987) notes that the field of education is currently involved in a shifting ideological foundation for curriculum theory. He concludes that heated exchanges over the goals and objectives of general school curricula, while often based on misconceptions of curriculum and its dynamics, are normal and necessary. They are normal because conflict and disagreement are part of the process of curriculum "construction followed by deconstruction followed by construction . . . of what students have an opportunity to learn." They are necessary because they bring increased understanding and power to "create our own societies and schools instead of having it the other way around" (p. 314).

Traditions and Innovations: The Dynamics of Knowledge, and Its Relevance to Art Education

The controversy over curriculum in the field of art education may be seen as the result of competing ideas, old and new, and about learning, schooling, the values of society, and, most importantly, the nature of art. Wilson, like Cherryholmes, observes that central philosophical notions about art are changing as we move from modernist aesthetic theories to an emerging post-modern era (1988). Margolis connects the radical changes in conceptual orientations in aesthetics to changes in beliefs regarding the very nature of human culture.

. . . at least since the French Revolution, the major theoretical puzzles of the entire terrestrial community of understanding have been focussed on the significance of history, the loss of conviction that the world is cognitively transparent, and the dawning realization that, whatever we make of the human condition, man cannot be assigned an essential nature sufficiently determined that universally compelling characterizations of knowledge, communication, interpretation, interest, norms, desires, objectives, or the like can be fixed or approximated by easy reference to its aptitudes. (1987, p. vii)

Perhaps Barkan's characterization of our lack of consensus regarding matters of art and art teaching as irrational was an
observation of the inherent nature of knowledge in all fields, from an historicist's or a deconstructionist's point of view. As D. H. Feldman, among many others, notes, the idea of any discipline as static is insupportable.

The excellence, or essentialist, rationale in art education provides provisional stability for a field that is in a state of flux. A contextualist rationale recognizes this state, and makes the field less static. These ideas and observations are not new, rather they echo familiar notions in art education (Efland, 1987). It is crucial to recognize that nothing in discipline-based art education per se denies contextualism, pluralism, or possibility, unless one makes the common mistake of dichotomizing ideas or endeavors. This is easy to do in discourse. It is also important to recognize that post-modernism replays recurring themes, as often occurs at the end of periods of great artistic or intellectual achievements. These themes tend to be mannered, reactionary, and/or eclectic in nature. DBAE, itself a post-modern theory of art education, brings forward from past efforts some of the best knowledge about teaching art that we have to offer. Post-structuralist reactionaries help constrain our tendency toward "reductionism;" they force us to recognize the politics of content selection, and counterpose teaching and nurturing. However, as long as the disciplines in the arts are complex, polyvocal, and dynamic, educational programs based in the disciplines have no choice but to reflect this complexity as innovations complement traditions and knowledge in the fields of sociology becomes increasingly more relevant to all fields of human interest. Again, as Eisner (1985) has suggested, varying notions about the means and ends of education occur together in the schools, and both mainstream and nonmainstream conceptions make their way into the curriculum. The struggle is primarily over emphasis.

What Do We Really Want?

The problem with art education is that we are viewed as irrational or whimsical by our counterparts in other fields of education, partly because of our shifting ideologies and partly because of our interest in the affective nature of human experience, which tends to defy empirical explication. We enjoy our claims to uniqueness as a subject area and resist efforts to make us more like the other school subjects. This contributes to our peripheral status in the school curriculum. Do we really think we can occupy a more substantial or centralized position in the schools without the accommodations that come with centrality (accountability, standardization, and that dreaded but guaranteed aspect of being a core subject, "testing"). Or do we want to preserve our "special" but precarious place in American public education? How different from other school subjects do we want to be? How may we retain our uniqueness and still become more mainstream?

Recommendations

Giroux, Penna, and Pinar have observed that curricularists display a noticeable intolerance for competing views. They recommended a synthesis: "a series of perspective on curriculum that are at once empirical, interpretive, critical and emancipatory" (1981, p. 95). The Unruhs have pointed out that culture itself is complex, consisting of many related modes. It is constantly undergoing reconstruction. "Thus, when curriculum development draws from the total culture and recognizes both ends and means, the process becomes more responsive and creates new culture" (1984, p. 105).

The task at hand, then, for curriculum planners and for those who implement curricula, is to design, with regard to varying conceptions, learning experiences that perpetuate an understanding of the wide diversity of reasons why
people make art. The Unruhs recommend that curriculum developers plan with reference to diverse and competing spheres of influences by maintaining open communication, that they investigate the ideologies and conceptual issues at hand, and that they consider the implications of proposed policies and plans. This underscores the need for clarity and a respect for the historical and ideological underpinnings of reformist proposals. The Unruhs also recommend that curriculum developers use a wide range of assessment instruments and evaluation models and attend to long-range outcomes as well as short-term demands. University-level art educators play a crucial role in this process. They have an obligation to explicate conceptual and ideological issues, to provide philosophical and historical justifications of curriculum proposals, to develop and test creative and appropriate models and assessments, to prepare future art teachers for the conflicted arena they face, and to provide support to public school educators in their efforts to meet the demands of the latest policies and plans.

Conceptions of the curriculum should be based on an awareness of the interactions of the elements that comprise the total curriculum so that teachers can make curriculum decisions based on a widely informed view, and so we don’t repeat past mistakes in our enthusiasm over the latest trend. These elements include, first and foremost, clearly articulated and broadly focused sets of beliefs about the nature of knowledge, the nature of students, the role of schooling in culture, and, for art educators, an awareness of and an appreciation for the diversity of ideas about the nature, function, and value of art. From there the process of curriculum construction and reconstruction may proceed in a reasonable public forum in which teachers, the most important participants, make the difference based on what they themselves believe about teaching, learning, and art.

Author Note

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Notes

1. According to Efland (1987) the overwhelming success of Bruner’s proposals was, in part, attributable to the ease with which he treated such problems as content selection and sequence . . . “an ease that eluded conventional curriculum theorists of the period” (p. 62). Efland noted that Bruner’s influence, stemming primarily from important insights in cognitive psychology, effected a shift from traditional curriculum conceptions that treated subject matter as facts and techniques created for schooling to “forms of representation” modeled after the disciplines, that is professional fields of intellectual and professional inquiry.

2. Noteworthy among national reports that lamented the quality of American public schooling were the National Commission on Excellence Report, A Nation at Risk (1983), which concluded that educational mediocrity has imperiled our country, and Ernest Boyer’s (1983) study for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America, which characterized American education as a numbing hodgepodge of vague and wide-ranging mandates that trivialize the mission of public education.

3. For a discussion of recent efforts to refine and clarify the DBAE rationale, readers are advised to review the proceedings of the May 21–24, 1987, Getty invitational seminar held in Cincinnati, Ohio. These proceedings are interesting not only because they examined conflicts over DBAE notions but also because they explored competing conceptions of discipline-based art education within the DBAE camp regarding the future development and evolution of the theory.

4. These comparisons and conclusions are denied by Greer, who maintains that the literature on DBAE does not adhere to an art as communication rationale as suggested by Lanier (1986b). Greer also challenges the legitimacy of the comparison of DBAE to the repressive practices of the traditional era, as suggested by Lansing (1986).
5. Clark, Day, and Greer recommended that the content for study in a DBAE program be derived from "a broad range of the visual arts including folk, applied, and fine arts from Western and non-Western cultures and from ancient to contemporary times (1987, p. 163).

6. Two important surveys relating to developments in the recent past that have contributed to the discipline-based art education movement appeared in the summer 1987 issue of the Journal of Aesthetic Education. Sponsored by the Getty Center, these surveys identified and described some of the theoretical and curriculum antecedents to discipline-based art education. Smith’s "The Changing Image of Art Education" described various developments in the area of aesthetics education, and the influences of cognitive psychology, educational theory, and aesthetics on curriculum conceptions in the 1960s and 1970s. Efland’s "Curriculum Antecedents of Discipline-based Art Education" described a number of art education curriculum conferences, projects, and products inspired by the curriculum reform movement of the 1960s. Important instructional packages, textbook series, and guidelines for art education from the past 25 years were reviewed here with attention to both their main missions and pitfalls.

References


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Elizabeth Manley-Delacruz
143 Art and Design
School of Art and Design
University of Illinois
408 East Peabody Dr.
Champaign, IL 61820