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What Ever Happened to the Arts, and Is Education Next?

Marsha L. Heck

State of the Arts

Well respected educational theorists, art educators, and practitioners have spoken for the integration of the arts in education. Like children who grew to incorporate some of their parents' rules and advice and reject others, curriculum theory scholars and classroom instructional models do not give the arts the central position John Dewey proposed in such works as *Art and Experience* (1934), although they typically honor and incorporate the work of this founding father of contemporary education. More often, the arts are viewed as different, unknown, unpredictable, messy, and subordinate relative to mainstream education—for young children, or the particularly gifted. Maxine Greene describes how the arts challenge standardization: "Hannah Arendt's 'thoughtlessness,' Dewey's 'social pathology' must be overcome to allow significant encounters with the arts in education" (1995, p. 380).

Despite views such as those of the North Carolina Art Educator's Association whose bumper sticker reads "Arts are Basic," arts are among the first to go when budgets are tight or test scores are low. A recent search of the Web reveals an occasional article about how the arts are finally being recognized—no longer on the fringes (Alejandro, 1994) on one screen, and those advocating the need for greater inclusion of the arts or describing ways to slip it into the curricula, unknown to critics on the next (Coley, 1991; Dorn, 1993; Mittler, 1991; Stephens, 1994). A simple informal poll of educators confirms that the arts have not moved far from the margins of educational theory and practice, and/or shed their novel label. Even integration approaches reveal biased views of the relationship of the arts and learning (Bresler, 1995). Historically, arts were central to any complete education and an integral part of life (Van Loon, 1974, p. 545).

This essay challenges a paradigm which views the arts as education's overlooked and unappreciated sibling, with the voices of both historical and contemporary arts advocates. It will propose ways in which educators might again embrace a more holistic educational paradigm which allows the unknown, unpredictable, messy, and challenging processes and products visual arts actualize. Finally, in-progress research will suggest that educator-preparation programs must model arts-infused curricula and pedagogical practices not only for the reasons addressed in this text, but also to empower systemic transformation in K-higher education.

Historical Voices

Well respected educational theorists, art educators, and practitioners have spoken for the integration of the arts in education citing Dewey and other founding parents of educational theory and practice. Current emphases on creative thinking neglect many premises set forth by Hughes Mearns in *Creative Power* (1958). And, while Viktor Lowenfeld's *Creative and Mental Growth*, (1987) is considered by many as the fundamental work on children and the arts, arts educators discuss the edition published after his death which removed references to the emotional value of the arts for children and education; some say editors considered this beyond the realm of both education and the arts. Robert Henri (1932) would disagree, adding the spiritual to his discussion of the arts, life, and education.

M. C. Richards is another historic voice who discusses art, life, emotion, the soul, and sensual aspects of knowing as vital elements of human experience. Her classic work *Centering in Pottery, Poetry and the Person* (1964) presents a convincing view of education as the development of person. The kind of educational process she advocates is clearly unpredictable, responsive to the ebbs and tides of human experience and organic in form. She explains what no teacher must sin against:

The teacher handles the living and growing child with the same sense of immediacy and particularity and beauty that the artist experiences in relation to his materials and vision. The teacher works in a certain state of mind, with certain knowledge and aims, primarily listening to what the child is telling him through its [sic] body and its behavior and its fantasies and its play and speech. He does not try to apply to a situation a form conceived in advance, although patterns of growth have much in common and one can build up a knowledge of man and child which serves as a flexible method. This kind of seasoning occurs in every craft. The teacher tries to work in relation to the child's temperament, not against it. He tries to help the child toward his individuality. (p. 101)

Maxine Greene (1991, 1993, 1994, 1995), perhaps one of the most widely read advocates of the arts in education, draws on historical voices to make her case for the arts as a similarly unfolding and responsive process. In *Landscapes of Learning* (1978) she discusses Dewey's concept of the aesthetic experience. His view of the uniqueness of the

aesthetic experience reflects its "challenge to that systematic though called philosophy." Greene adds, "and I would choose to think of it as a challenge to many kinds of linear, positivist thinking, as well as to the taken-for-grantedness of much of what is taught." Explaining that Dewey considered the aesthetic experience to be paradigmatic, she notes the traditional use of the artistic-aesthetic by curriculum theorists "to incorporate notions of organic development, coherence, and consummations," and when, she continues, "they have wished to enrich their conceptions of cognition by pointing to what Dewey described as *felt* qualitiveness" (1978, p. 171).

Greene introduces also the importance of making things harder, of creating difficulties. Her thesis, which she supports with statements from Kierkegaard, Thoreau, and Schutz (ibid 161-163), is essentially that one must be uncomfortable with his or her situation in order to look at changes which might be necessary. Further, she makes a case that the arts readily serve this purpose when they make people uncomfortable. Greene again cites Dewey: The function of art, "he said, 'has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness'" (ibid 188). It seems then, that the crust, the routine, is comfortable, and breaking it is uncomfortable. The arts are not uniform, readily categorized or standardized, predictable, neat, or obliging. Without them, I propose, education is.

Contemporary Voices

In *Young Lives at Stake* (1972), Charity James contends that elementary educators are more likely to attend to the psychological, spiritual, and emotional needs and meaning-making processes of the child than are those who educate adolescents. She, like M. C. Richards, also considers the sensual domain of experience to be significant. James explains, "to me the artist in the school (specialist or primary teacher with an artist's bent) is first and foremost guardian of the senses" (1974, p. 108). From both theses, it can be said that, at least in the elementary school, the emotional aspects of art (which seem to some in the realm of therapy) involve broad dimensions of human experience.

Underwood provides the image of a braid as a means to wholeness of body, mind, and spirit in learning and life (1994, p. 17). And, Greene suggests one role of encounters with the arts is to "move us to want to restore some kind of order, to repair and to heal" (1995, p. 379). Art education may be the one remaining place in schools where such healing and attention to children's psychological needs is addressed. At the same time, children and their needs are often disempowered and disregarded. Teacher-centered standardization consumes time needed for student-centered inquiry and expression.

The editors of the *Harvard Educational Review* addressed the absence of the arts in education, particularly their own neglect, as recently as 1991 in their two-issue Symposium: Arts in Education. They explained that their prior omission of the role of the arts as education "may well reflect the lack of attention the arts receive in the larger educational community" (1991, p. 25), and offered a succinct summary of the arts as fundamental ways of knowing which can be forms of expression, communication, creativity, imagination, observation, perception, and thought:

They are integral to the development of cognitive skills such as listening, thinking, problem solving, matching form to function and decision making. They inspire discipline and dedication. This way of working deserves a more primary role in all levels of education as not only a metaphor and a model for achieving curricular goals and approaching learning but also as an active and experiential mode of engaging in meaningful reflection and discourse.

Each article in the two issues addresses various perspectives of the arts in education and their value as a central curricular and pedagogical consideration.

The multiple intelligences work of Howard Gardner (1993, 1994) and Eleanor Duckworth's advocacy of confusion and not knowing (1991, 1997) offer two additional contemporary voices for the process if not the product of the arts in education. And, Harvard Project Zero considers the processes and products of the arts (Davis, 1996; Davis & Gardner, 1992; Davis & Gardner, 1993). The discussion of Peter London (1989), art educator, artist, and art therapist, is more specific to the arts (the visual arts in particular) as is the work of Susan W. Stinson (1991) who writes about dance education and aesthetics in a collection of essays, not unlike those assembled for the *Harvard Educational Review's* symposium entitled, *Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry*. The editors, Willis and Schubert, think that the book "comes very close through the examples it provides to validating the belief that reflective inquiry in the arts is the central basis for reflective inquiry in education" (1991, p. 7). Similarly, John Gilmour (1994) advocates the development of imaginative thinkers as a central basis for art education. Reasons for the apparent disregard of such volumes by mainstream educational theory and practice seem beyond the traditional theory and practice schism because the arts are on the fringes of both.

Perspectives for a New Paradigm

The following are only several approaches to re-thinking, to re-imagining, an inclusive paradigm which embraces the arts as Dewey, Richards, Henri and others have advocated. D. M. Dooling's text, *A Way of Working* (1979),

offers a model for working which is grounded in the arts. Elliot Eisner offers other philosophical perspectives for thinking about education in much of his work, for example, his text *The Arts, Human Development and Education* (1997).

There are also specific programs which incorporate the arts as tools, ways of thinking, and/or metaphors in educational practice, for example. Harvard Project Zero's recent Project MUSE offers an entry-points approach to knowing and thinking about the arts which easily transfers to other curricular content (Davis, 1996; O'Neil, 1996). Arts integration models are common in both theoretical literature and how-to manuals. Regio Emilia, Waldorf, and Montessori programs intentionally integrate the arts within the context of their respective philosophies. Each offers a particular model for incorporating the arts in theory and practice. The NEA Curriculum and Instructional Resources for Education bibliography includes work such as Charles M. Dorn's *Thinking in Art: A Philosophical Approach to Art Education* (1994) which consider particular ways of teaching the arts.

Conclusions and Educator Preparation Considerations

Roger von Oech proposes four roles of the creative process (Explorer, Artist, Judge and Warrior) in his text *A Kick in the Seat of the Pants* (1986) and in the *Creative Whack Pack* (1992). Both describe what is involved in each of the four roles in the form of dynamic illustrations, engaging anecdotes, and motivational questions and suggestions. The first role is the Explorer—the role of searching for resources and finding what is available. I have suggested only a small portion of classic resources from which one can draw to develop an arts-inclusive educational paradigm. And, I have outlined ways in which these resources have been transformed into new ways of teaching and learning. Von Oech's Artist transforms resources into new ideas which the Judge then considers. Readers are invited to evaluate ideas suggested above for their classrooms; how might they be applied to curriculum and pedagogy?

Fourth, although individual Warriors might put these ideas into action in individual classrooms, conflicts between K-12 and academia not withstanding (Boostrom, 1993), and the need for collaborative (now called vertical) planning efforts acknowledged. I am convinced that teacher preparation must consider ways to integrate the arts not only in content and curricula but also in process and pedagogy. A recent article which discusses one five-year study of integrating teacher education methods course noted that it is science and mathematics which are most often integrated (Wright, Sorrels, & Granby, 1996); little is mentioned of the arts.

Higher education prepares teachers who eventually teach in K-12 classrooms. To borrow from the familiar poem "Children Learn What They Live," students teach how they have been taught. How well are teacher education graduates prepared to facilitate learning which integrates visual art when they have not experienced such learning? The October 19, 1994, issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* described the dismal situation of the arts in higher education (Hallam, 1994). A longitudinal study of a convenience sample of teacher preparation programs in 1992, 1996, and 1998 suggest that teacher preparation programs include limited arts curriculum or pedagogy, and that what is included is typically departmentalized and for students seeking elementary certification (Heck, 1998). The work of Karpati in Hungary describes a similar connection between change in the contents and methods of education and the training of art teachers (1995, pp. 11-17).

There is strong historical data which supports a central, rather than marginal place for the arts in education. Perhaps the lack of respect for this data is grounded in the challenge the arts present to an educational paradigm which is organized in a linear fashion, is predictable and neatly packaged, and which is uniform and simple. The complexity of the arts which empowers body, mind, and heart, which promotes individual expression, which is both convergent and divergent, which is active and reflective is not easily controlled by an educator who operates from a position of "power over" his or her students and prioritizes product over process.

If educators Pre-K through higher education collaboratively consider ways in which the arts might empower students and teachers alike in a dynamic meaning-making dialogue, both individual and social transformation seem likely. Clearly, educators would be called upon to answer James B. Macdonald's central questions, "What does it mean to be human and how shall we live together?" (1978, pp. 95-123) very differently than traditional respondents. Restoring the arts to the center of education might mean that being respected as an intelligent human being in the world of education could again be defined more broadly than the limits of logical-quantitative thinking, and that being together in a learning environment might include what I describe as hands-on, bodies-in experiences. Thus, those considering a transformational curriculum would allow for the arts as valid and meaningful expressions of human meaning making and learning.

This distinctive power of the arts to facilitate transformation is suggested by Greene's comment, "What is distinctive about the realm of the artistic-aesthetic, of course, is that—within that realm—the bringing together is achieved by means of expression in a particular medium: paint, language and the body-in-motion, musical sound, clay, film" (1978, p. 187). Learning is potentially taken beyond the

theoretical and philosophical reflections which have conventionally been the province of the mind, to the sensory and participatory experiences which join mind and body in an authentic meaning-making dialogue.

It is time for forward-thinking educators to ask: What ever happened to the arts? Why are they now marginalized or romanticized in much of K-12 and higher education? As educational paradigms have allowed less and less room for the dynamic integration or braiding of body, mind, and heart, and of action, perception and reflection which the arts provide, what has happened to education? Why are programs which engage students in aesthetic inquiry, in arts-based curricula and pedagogy, often viewed as threatening, alternative, or for gifted student only—but still periphery? For educational and social transformation to occur, we must listen to historical voices and consider contemporary perspectives on the arts in education and must return the arts to the center of human inquiry, learning and experience.

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