Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education
ISSN: 2326-7070 (Print)
ISSN: 2326-7062 (Online)

Volume 6 | Issue 1 (1987) pps. 127-134

Identifying Teachers' Concepts and Subsequent Practices of Art History in Secondary School Art Programs

Mark Moilanen

Copyright © 1987 Working Papers in Art Education.

Recommended Citation
Moilanen, Mark (1987) "Identifying Teachers' Concepts and Subsequent Practices of Art History in Secondary School Art Programs," *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 26.
Available at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol6/iss1/26

Hosted by Iowa Research Online

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

IDENTIFYING TEACHERS' CONCEPTS AND SUBSEQUENT PRACTICES OF ART HISTORY IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ART PROGRAMS

Mark Moilanen

Introduction

In his writing tracing the theoretical antecedents of discipline-based art education, Ralph Smith (1987) concludes that the field of art education has done well by: (1) the philosophical and psychological aspects of art; (2) work on its sociological dimensions, and relevance of aesthetic principles and principles of art criticism. However, Smith cautions that an obvious lacuna exists with regard to the uses of art history, with much work needing to be done in this area (Smith, 1987). When art history has received attention it is often in curricular suggestions, without addressing the varying concepts of art history held by those who teach it. We simply cannot label all existing secondary programs as ignoring the incorporation of art history and aesthetics and art criticism in studio art oriented programs. Such descriptions reduce studio experience as narrow in purpose, consumptive of valuable classroom time, and blind to what its instruction can offer students. To suggest that the task of teaching will be easier "once we are rid of the millstone of encouraging self-expression and creativity" (Lanier, 1986) is to forfeit the gist of art experience. Instead of dismissing studio art experiences, we need to examine the type and extent to which the popular discipline-based art education conceptions (art criticism, aesthetics, art history) are met in studio art programs. This paper proposes a research methodology to investigate one dimension of this concern: the identification of teachers' concepts and subsequent practices of art history in secondary school art programs.

An assessment model identifying teachers' concepts and subsequent

http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol6/iss1/26

practices of art history in secondary school art programs will allow the following to be examined: (1) What conceptions of art history do secondary school art teachers possess? (2) What knowledge of and training in art history do art teachers bring to its instruction? (3) To what extent is art history a part of their art instruction? (4) How do art teachers incorporate art history into their teaching (methods)? and (5) What relationship exists among teachers' conceptions and practices of art history?

Background

My experiences as an art teacher suggest that conceptions of art history play a significant, yet undocumented, role in studio art oriented practices. The definition of art history held by one teacher would unlikely be generic to all teachers, yet curricular suggestions for art history have to address this concern.

Pilot studies conducted in three secondary school art programs reinforced the hypothesis that the manner in which art teachers viewed art history was a determinant in establishing its practice. The most notable example was the instruction of art history at a parochial high school where teaching strayed off the intended curriculum and into religious testimony associated with various artworks being studied. In addition, masterpiece works of the artist were replaced with obscure/unknown works which incorporated religious subject matter. Decisions — conscious or unconscious — were made by art teachers in the pilot studies in bringing personal concepts into group practice.

This information provided me with the impetus for conducting further research, particularly with respect to assessing art teachers' methods of relating art history to studio activities. Seemingly, the teachers in the pilot study worked within conceptions established from: (1) their own training in art history as part of their art education degree requirements; (2) personal interpretations (e.g., strict chronological, geographical, religious, sociological) of art

history, and its relationship to the curriculum; and (3) available means and resources (e.g., texts, 35mm slides, reproductions) for the incorporation of art history and their teaching.

Purpose of the Research

It is an hypothesis of this research that secondary school art teachers' concepts of art history affect the manner which art history is instructed and incorporated in art classrooms. Research to assess teachers' concepts of art history will be conducted through a test instrument which will indicate how teachers define art history.

Subjects Involved with the Research Tasks

In keeping with the research objectives, the study will be limited to art history instruction offered in schools, grade 9-12. The subject sample will be composed of secondary school art educators teaching programs generally thought of as being studio art oriented. Subjects will be drawn from among secondary school art teachers in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin with the intention of forming a sample representative of art education instruction. The experimenter's contacts with art teachers in this region hopefully will aid in carrying out the research tasks. The target number of art teachers volunteering as subjects is 100.

Assessment of Art History Concepts

The subjects will respond to a bipolar single-response measure (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This paper-and-pencil task will ask each subject to express the degree of agreement/disagreement with definitions of art history. By placing a check mark on a 7-point bipolar scale, the subject will be able to express extreme agreement (+3), considerable agreement (+2), slight agreement (+1), neutrality (0), slight disagreement (-1), considerable disagreement (-2), and extreme disagreement (-3) to each definition of art history listed on

http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol6/iss1/26

the paper presented them. This task, if not performed in person, can be done through the mail.

The experimenter will present subjects with (approximately 20) definitions which have been culled from: (a) on-line and off-line searches; (b) study with university art history faculty; and (c) other means associated with delineating possible conceptions of art history.

It is my intention to compile an amalgam of definitive variations associated with art history. Orientations such as socio-cultural, historical, stylistic, chronological, and value concepts will be recognized as categorical elements toward a matrix which defines art history. By charting literary statements, the experimenter will provide a spectrum of varying concepts of art history. By delineating this charting further, various "types" of art history concepts may be established by the experimenter, allowing for the desired construction of the test instrument. The degree to which each subject identifies (-3 to +3) with individual concepts of art history will be expressed in their answers to the test instrument presented them. A pilot study of this instrument will be enacted to refine its format, directions/intentions, and comprehensibility.

Treatment of the Bipolar Single-Response Measure Data

Statistical treatments (e.g., correlation, analysis of variance) will be applied (Minium & Clarke, 1982; Glass & Hopkins, 1984) to the collected responses, allowing for data analysis (e.g., mean, standard deviation) of the varying conceptions secondary school art teachers have of art history.

Research Inside the Larger Subject Sample: Interviews

With the approval of the subject's school administration, the experimenter will employ interview methods (Hyman, 1967; Warwick & Lininger, 1975; Benjamin, 1981; Borg & Gall, 1983) to further investigate the definitive concepts of art history.

Working with a smaller number (approximately 12) of art teachers from the original subject sample, selected interview procedures will examine how definitions of art history are carried into classroom art instruction. The size of the smaller sampling is determined by the amount of planning and time necessary to arrange the face-to-face interview methods described here: it would be logistically difficult to have all the larger subject sample (approximately 100 secondary school art teachers) included.

The 12 subjects for this portion of the research will be randomly selected (4 each from Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin) from those art teachers expressing their agreement to be involved with such procedures, as stated on their bipolar single-response measure sheets. As with all aspects of this research, subjects have been promised experimenter confidentialtiy of the responses provided. Experimenter and subject will agree upon a time to meet (outside of class time) at the teacher's school for conducting the research tasks. It is the intention of the experimenter that locating the interviews in the art educator's work place will provide a comfortable setting for the subject, in addition to presenting the students' learning environment for art history.

Purpose of the Interview Procedures

The experimenter interviews intend to search out the hypothesized variations in teachers' conceptions of art history as they correlate to actual classroom instruction. A related intention of the research is to examine the effect/extent that variations have on curricular matters, or indeed, whether these variations do even exist at all. The purpose of the interview procedure is to: (1) examine how art teachers profess they are using art history in their secondary school art programs; and (2) ask questions which indicate the reliability to the research measures undertaken by each subject.

http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol6/iss1/26

Interview Procedures

The art teachers participating in this portion of the research will have; (1) earlier completed the bipolar single-response measure task involving definitional aspects of art history; (2) completed structured interview tasks which ask students to answer (through check marks written on sheets provided subjects) a series of questions relative to the research objectives that can be answered yes or no, or by selecting one of a set of alternate choices; and (3) individually expressed (in a written statement and/or recorded conversation) the subject's impression of the effect (1) & (2) have on their instruction of art history to secondary school art students.

Each of the 12 teachers in the smaller sampling also will be asked to fill out a structured interview form which will provide information on their educational background in art (e.g., years of teaching; post-secondary degrees; the training in art history required by their art education certification program; current subscriptions/ readings of periodicals and related literature which address art history; and participation in conventions/seminars/symposiums/ in-service programs, and the like, which employ art history as a component of classroom instruction).

A last structured interview task will ask subjects to provide information on the educational resources in the classroom environment of the 12 subjects visited. Questioning of implemented curricula, texts, tests, resources (e.g., 35 mm slides, audio-visual equipment, reproductions), and school/community support (both emotional and financial) for the inclusion of art history into the art program will provide additional independent variables in the statistical treatment of interview data.

Treatment of the Interview Data

Treatments of the interview data will consist of both qualitative and quantitative methods. One qualitative treatment method is based

http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol6/iss1/26

upon the work of Thompson (1975), which examines how a curriculum practice works. Dorn (1984) expands upon Thompson's model with pertinent and direct considerations for art curricula. The subjects' written and/or spoken statements allow for qualitative analysis, regarding how the bipolar single-response measure and structured interview results are relative to each subject's practice of art history.

Quantitative methods (Minium & Clarke, 1982; Glass & Hopkins, 1984) include two- and three-way analysis of variance, in addition to correlation methods which examine subjects' definitions (i.e., bipolar single-response measure task) to how the concepts affect classroom practice (i.e., the interview data). The dependent variable (i.e., the subject's conception of art history) is able to be studied through statistical treatments with the independent variables (e.g., individual subject responses to the education data sheet and structured interview sheet). An assessment of levels of significance between the dependent variables (i.e., teacher concepts of art history) and independent variables (i.e., factors influencing the conception) hopefully will provide the experimenter with evaluative statements concerning the successful incorporation of art history into secondary school art programs.

Significance of the Study

The entire collection of data will be gathered to examine the questions: (1) Why is a knowledge of secondary school teachers' art history concepts important to education today? and (2) What is the importance of examining the relationship of concepts of art history to practice?

References

Benjamin, A. (1981). **The helping interview, 3rd Edition.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Borg, W. R. & Gall, M. D. (1983). **Educational research; an introduction, 4th Edition.** New York: Longman, Incorporated.

Dorn, C. M. (1984). Does eclecticism work in practice? **Art Education, 37 (3), 34-39.**

Fishbein, J. & Ajzen, I. (1975). **Belief, attitude, intention and** behavior; an introduction to theory and research. **Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.**

Glass, G. V. & Hopkins, K. D. (1984). **Statistical methods in education and psychology.** Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Incorporated.

Hyman, H. H. (1967). **Interviewing in social research.** Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lanier, V. (1986). The fourth domain: building a new art curriculum. **Studies in Art Education**, 28 (1), 5-10.

Minium, E. W. & Clarke, R. B. (1982). **Elements of statistical reasoning.** New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Smith, R. A. (1987). The changing image of art education: theoretical antecedents of discipline-based art education. **The Journal of Aesthetic Education**, 21 (2), 3-34.

Thompson, R. (1975). General criteria for curriculum analysis. **Peabody Journal of Education**, 52, 247-251.

Warwick, D. P. & Lininger, C. A. (1975). **The sample survey: theory and practice.** New York: McGraw-Hill, Incorporated.