

THE ROLE OF ARTS EDUCATION RESEARCH

IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

A North American Perspective

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Presented at the 1992 Joint Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education and the New Zealand Association for Research in Education in Geelong, Australia

Arts Curricula in North America

The theme of this conference invites us to reflect on the role of research in determining future directions for curriculum planners in the Arts. As a Canadian, I feel that I can respond to this invitation best by describing and commenting on developments specific to North America. I will begin by presenting an overview of the nature of the arts in Canadian and American education. Then, I will discuss how researchers have tried to illuminate and affect arts education across the continent. In doing so, I will consider a number of barriers which have prevented research from playing a full role in educational change.

At the same time, I want to set these reflections against a background of the current movement toward a National Curriculum in the Arts in Australia. Although I am not familiar with any detailed proposals for such a curriculum, I understand that the trend is toward a discipline-based curriculum in the arts. What, specifically, does this mean?

Arthur Efland Arthur Efland, "Curricular Fictions and the Discipline Orientation in Art Education", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 1990, 24 (3) pp. 67 - 81. describes discipline orientation as an educational paradigm which had its origins in the work of Elliot Eisner and others in the 1960's and which was renewed in the early 1980's out of a concern for apparently declining standards of

excellence in American schools. Proponents of discipline orientation, including scholars supported by the J. Paul Getty

Trust, undertake to identify discrete areas of study. They then develop curricula which are intended to introduce students to these disciplines in a linear series of steps. Efland sees this movement as a reaction against an earlier paradigm centered on creative self-expression which flourished from the 1920's to the present decade.

To what extent has discipline orientation left its mark on arts curricula in North America? To answer this, we must first consider the validity of Efland's premise that our current arts curricula in North America have been shaped by the creative self-expression paradigm. Is it true, as Manuel Barkin observed (unsympathetically) in 1962, that our curricula are committed to the proposition that, "Art is free expression; everyone can learn to express; spontaneity is the key; art experiences are developmentally valuable; and finally, that the educational job is to teach the whole child rather than to try to make an artist out of him."? Manuel Barkin, "Transition in Art Education," *Art Education* 1962, 15 (7) pp. 12 - 18, cited by Efland.

When applied to the field of drama, this assertion would, at first glance, appear to carry a great deal of validity. The conventional label for educational drama in the United States is "Creative Dramatics", a descriptor which had its origin as the title of Winifred Ward's first handbook for teachers of drama, published in 1930. Winifred Ward, *Creative Dramatics*, New York: Appleton, 1930. Ward promulgated the view that improvised drama was a valuable means of enhancing the development of a child.

She wrote, in 1957, "The purpose of this informal drama when used in education is not the training of actors, not the production of plays for audiences, and not primarily the developing of appreciation for a great art." Winifred Ward, *Playmaking With Children*, Englewood Cliffs,

New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1957, pg. 3. Her objectives were, rather, "to

provide for a controlled emotional outlet", "to provide each child with an avenue of self expression in one of the arts", "to encourage and guide the child's creative imagination", and "to give young people opportunities to grow in social understanding and cooperation" Ibid, pp. 3 - 8.

Canadian educational drama emerged in the 1960's under the influence of contemporary British leaders. Particularly influential in the early years was Brian Way's approach to development through drama. Like his American counterparts, Way saw improvised drama as a method of promoting a child's growth in such diverse areas as the senses, imagination, physical self, speech, emotion and intellect. Brian Way, *Development Through Drama*, London: Longman, 1967. While recognizing that this development

would occur simultaneously in a number of domains, Way provided specific exercises to focus development in each area. Central to his view of drama in education was Way's conviction that theatre was an art form of interest to only a minority in society while drama is an educational process of value to all young people.

The influence of Way and his British contemporaries was felt in the United States as well as in Canada and, while the focus of their work varied considerably, these theorists all shared the view that drama in education should be centered in an experience of spontaneously created drama in which a pre-structured, discipline-based curriculum had no place.

A history like this, coupled with the clear and continuing influence of these origins in current practice, would seem to set North American educational drama firmly in the "creative self-expression" paradigm identified by Efland. However, to accept this placement without reservation would be to overlook the actual practice of drama teachers in Canada and the United States and also to ignore a considerable body of literature. I would argue that there has never been a time when a purely developmental approach has dominated drama in North American schools.

Even those writers who most forcefully articulated the developmental or creative aims of drama also made some provision for an introduction to the skills of theatrical production. Ward's own work was characterized by a commitment to the staging of stories before an audience and her method of arriving at a satisfactory theatrical product was set out in a series of methodical stages. Similarly, Way (himself a professional actor, playwright and director) allowed for the eventuality that his developmental exercises could be used to prepare young actors for conventional theatrical performances. The widespread commitment to improvisation was, itself, open to compromise. A researcher, studying the practice of Geraldine Brain Siks, was astonished at one session to find that this senior figure in the field of creative dramatics had decided to introduce a playscript to her young students. What might appear to others to be a betrayal of the basic principle of creative dramatics was, for this expert practitioner, merely an appropriate response to the developmental needs of her students. I report this from memory. The study does not appear to have been published.

In practice, North American drama educators have endeavoured to strike a balance between the creative potential of improvised drama and the theatre specialist's wish to introduce young minds to the significant history and the exacting practice of an important art form. Perhaps the best example of this balanced approach can be found in A Model Drama/Theatre Curriculum American Alliance for Theatre and Education, A Model Drama/Theatre Curriculum: Philosophy, Goals and Objectives, New

Orleans, Louisiana: Anchorage Press, 1987.

published by the American Alliance for Theatre and Education in 1987. The impetus for the National Theatre Education Project which produced this curriculum was not an interest in shifting paradigms to discipline-based education. It was, rather, a desire on the part of drama educators to "substantiate advocacy efforts and to facilitate the development of programs". It was intended to reflect and support the ongoing work of association members, not to revolutionize their practices.

In its aims, this document struck a consistent balance

between expressive experiences in spontaneous drama and a structured introduction to the discipline of theatre. Unlike apologists for the purely "creative self-expression" mode of drama, the authors of this document saw no discontinuity between creative and interpretive forms of drama. They argued that, "a comprehensive, process centered drama/theatre curriculum should help students to develop internal and external personal resources, create drama/theatre through artistic collaboration, relate drama/theatre to its social context, and form aesthetic judgements" Ibid, pg. 6..

The content of this curriculum was planned to "build a series of sequential learning experiences" Ibid pg. 7. for use in various academic and community settings. In the light of this and other similarly balanced curriculum guidelines as well as resource materials which reflect actual teaching practice I cannot accept the premise that North American drama in education is in the process of moving from an emphasis on creative self-expression to an emphasis on discipline orientation. The expressive potential of improvisation continues to occupy a central position in our philosophies and any perceived movement toward a sequential curriculum is more a reflection of well-established practice than the acceptance of a revolutionary theoretical stance.

Can this hypothetical shift in paradigms be identified in other art forms in North American education? I am now leaving drama which is my own area of specialization. Therefore, I must qualify my remarks by acknowledging my reliance on the views of others. In particular, I am grateful to my colleagues at Queen's University, Professors Peter Allen and Stephen Elliott (who bear no responsibility for any errors I have made).

In the field of music education, there can be no shift, at the present time, away from a creative self-expression paradigm because music in North American education has never committed itself to such a paradigm. It has always been discipline based. Perhaps this is because music teachers must, at least initially, be musicians who have themselves been subjected to a rigorous regime in which skills and knowledge have been sequentially acquired. Music in elementary education has been characterized by a vocal approach to basic musical literacy. Music in secondary education

has extended this vocal program and added a skill-based curriculum in instrumental music. While innovative teachers have introduced creative, spontaneous musical experiences to their students in exemplary, local programs, their influence on the mainstream of music education has been negligible.

Similarly, dance, when it can be found in schools at all, generally takes the form of technically acquired skills in specific genres such as folk dance or modern jazz. This is not to say that there is no interest among dance educators in adding an element of creative self-expression to their work. For example, Joyce Boorman

among others, has attempted to convince teachers to provide children with spontaneous dance experiences based on the work of Rudolf Laban. Boorman aims at helping children "to discover new depths of creativity within themselves. For each child," she writes, "the process of discovery will be different, and each will formulate his own 'dance' in the way that is right for him at that moment." Joyce Boorman, *Creative Dance in the First Three Grades*, Don Mills, Ontario: Longmans Canada Limited, 1969, pg.121. However, one of the most receptive audiences for this kind of thinking would appear to be found among teachers of drama who often include spontaneous experiences in other art forms among the games and exercises of an improvisational drama lesson.

In the end, we must look to the field of visual art to find a group of North American educators who are consciously moving toward a discipline oriented curriculum. Here, we find textbooks and teacher guidelines urging a shift from creative self-expression to sequential, subject-centered units of study. Here we discover a growing research literature devoted to illuminating and rationalizing such a shift.

That creative self expression once had currency in the field of visual art is evidenced by a considerable literature dating from the post-war years. For example, Elizabeth Harrison, in a 1960 publication called for a creative approach to teaching. She maintained that "art teaching in school . . . has as its prime objectives the encouragement in children of confidence in self-expression, and in an ability to think for themselves as unique creatures with an unmatched way of looking at the world." Elizabeth Harrison, *Self-expression through art* (second edition), Toronto: W.J. Gage Limited, 1960, pg. 2.

In the decade of the eighties, this view was superseded by theorists who asked the question, "but do our children possess the knowledge vital to understanding and responding to art?" The Getty Center for Education in the Arts, *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America's Schools*, Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1985, pg. 2. This quotation comes from a 1985 report by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, entitled, significantly, *Beyond Creating: The Place for Art in America's Schools*. The report argues for a

written, sequential, art curriculum which includes "content from the disciplines of art history, art production, art criticism, and aesthetics."Ibid, pg. 7.

It has been observed by one of my colleagues that, in actual practice, the visual art curriculum has never been as wholeheartedly committed to a creative approach as the literature might have suggested. And my own experience as a high school art student during the early 1960's would oblige me to concur. Through a period of four years of art instruction, I participated in a program of which the Getty Center might well approve. Studio work in a variety of media was balanced against an academic component which included art history, art criticism, museum and gallery tours and inspirational demonstrations by professional artists.

Nevertheless, the influence of the 1980's school of discipline orientation is unmistakable, not only at the theoretical level, but also at the implementation stage. For example, in the Canadian province of Ontario where I live, a brief and rather general guideline for teachers of art in the secondary schools was replaced in 1986 by an extensive document Ontario Ministry of Education, Curriculum Guideline: Visual

Arts, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1986. which outlined in detail a sequential curriculum requiring a balance of studio work, appreciation lessons and historical study. This book was supplemented four years later by a sequential resource guide to viewing art Ontario Ministry of Education, Viewing Art, Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1990..

It is clear that North American curriculum planners interested in visual art must come to terms with the current movement toward a discipline-based curriculum in their subject. It is equally clear that researchers in visual art education must devote some of their attention to examining the claims of this movement. However, the perspectives of educators working in drama, music and dance are significantly different in many ways from that of their colleagues in visual art. Efland was careful to limit his paradigms to the field of visual art education. However, other commentators have not been as meticulous. Those theorists and administrators who blithely group all arts together in their desire to make a statement general to all branches of the aesthetic world would do well to examine carefully the nature and objectives of each discipline before adding an "s" to the word "art".

Shared Concerns of Arts Educators

The status of the arts in North American education is characterized not by a unison shift toward a new paradigm, but, rather, by a dynamic and diverse reality. Arts curricula, even those influenced by discipline orientation, reflect the complexity

of a postmodern, or what Harold PearceHarold Pearce, "Beyond Paradigms: Art Education Theory and Practice in a Postparadigmatic World", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (4) pp. 244 - 252. has called a postparadigmatic world. Educators in each art form have identified needs and aspirations which are distinct to their subject and, within each form, there is variation in both philosophy and practice. However, this does not mean that there is no common ground among the arts. Conferences and joint projects addressing issues shared by arts educators have produced documents which identify a number of mutual concerns.

For example, in the United States, the national associations in drama, music and art recently published a National Arts Education AccordAmerican Alliance for Theatre and Education, National Art Education Association and Music Educators National Conference, National Arts Education Accord, 1991.. This document asserted that the arts should constitute a fundamental component of basic education, on an equal footing with language, mathematics, the nature sciences and the

social sciences. It was indicative of the insecure standing of the arts in American education that much of the accord should be devoted to demanding recognition of the arts as curricular subjects rather than as merely extracurricular activities, to insisting that adequate space, time and money be allotted to these subjects and to requiring that instruction in the arts be provided by highly trained specialist teachers.

Of particular relevance to our present discussion were the accord's joint goals for arts education. These objectives included a combination of diverse elements - creativity, arts literacy, social context, aesthetic judgement and personal commitment to the arts. The value of a strong arts program to the student is couched in largely developmental terms, ranging from the provision of aesthetic and creative experiences and the development of artistic talents through to the introduction of joy and beauty. The document includes a brief, highly generalized statement supporting research without specifying any issues requiring the attention of researchers.

This accord has demonstrated that arts educators in the United States feel a strong need to come together to advocate the acceptance of the arts in schools. A recent international conference held in Toronto showed that Canadian arts educators feel much the same way. Explaining the motivation behind this conference, Walter Pitman, one of the organizers, stated that it "came out of a sense that the arts disciplines were being driven to the wall in an effort to make the educational system serve the needs of a modern society which placed a greater emphasis on science and technology."Walter Pitman, "The Artswork Conference", *The Artspaper*,

1991-92, 2 (1) pg. 1.

One product of this event was an "Agenda for Action" outlining a number of recommendations directed to the Ontario Ministry of Education. These recommendations aimed to secure the place of the arts in Ontario school curricula and to ensure that teachers would be required to study the arts as part of their pre-service education. Of interest to researchers was the five-point agenda for research included among these recommendations. The Ministry of Education was exhorted to undertake research to:

- "- determine the quantity and quality of arts education through the province
- determine the characteristics of quality education in the arts
- assess the impact of education in the arts upon the learner
- develop means for evaluating arts programs and student achievement in arts education
- develop a comprehensive bibliography on the arts in education for broad dissemination."

Proceedings of "The Arts Work" conference, pg. 14.

Clearly, these are questions which have significance for the field and, indeed, all of them have been the subject of earlier study. The fact that they have appeared among the recommendations

of a conference committed to advocacy raises the question of how such research would enhance this endeavour. This, in turn requires us to look at the aims of research in our field, particularly as they apply to proposals for educational change.

Research Goals and Constraints

On those occasions when I have spoken about research to groups of teachers, I have noticed that the response of my audience tends to fall into two categories. One group of teachers expresses a genuine interest in the content of the research, particularly as it might apply to their own teaching. For example, they might become excited at the prospect of participating in an evaluation project to learn more about what goes on in their own classrooms and how their teaching styles affect the way their students learn. This group is clearly sympathetic to a pure motivation for research in which a study is undertaken for the purpose of enhancing our understanding of teaching and learning in the arts. Whether the results of the research indicate a need for educational change or not is an important but secondary consideration.

Another group of teachers expresses considerable enthusiasm for the possibility that research findings may be used to convince administrators that the arts can make a significant contribution to the school curriculum. These teachers are happy with their own practice and look to research not to illuminate it but merely to validate it.

I would suggest that these categories represent the two principal motivations for educational research in all subject areas. On the one hand, we want to add to knowledge in the field and on the other hand we want to influence policy and practice. The first objective often seems remote, even irrelevant to teachers and administrators who are content to continue curriculum practices with which they feel comfortable. The second objective can easily lead to biased studies which are intended as instruments of advocacy or financial policy rather than of learning.

The problem for researchers who wish to study educational phenomena in an unbiased way is the fact that funding agencies (which are often government departments) are susceptible to the same motivations as my second group of teachers. They often choose to spend their budgets on research which will demonstrate the advantages of a policy to which they are already committed. I don't know if the Australian government has tendered any contracts for research into discipline-based arts curricula, yet, but it would be following a time-honoured tradition if it had. A recent call for tenders from a federal agency in Canada to look into arts literacy would suggest that some bureaucrats in Ottawa have become interested in, and perhaps committed to a discipline-based curriculum. By the same token, I don't imagine that the J. Paul Getty Trust would look favourably at a proposal to fund a study into the learning which might occur in a creative, self-expression-oriented arts program. Nevertheless, there are funding sources in many of our jurisdictions who will seriously consider objective inquiry in the arts. And, sometimes, the priorities of funding

agencies coincide happily with those of an objective researcher. For example, anyone who is genuinely interested in examining the implications of a discipline oriented curriculum in visual art should have a reasonable chance of finding funds at the present time.

If funding agencies sometimes show bias toward a proposed change in educational practice and consequently support research designed to prove their point, I believe it is also true that such agencies often favour particular methods of research. At my university, one educational researcher who consistently wins major government contracts is a sociologist who specializes in surveys which produce statistical data on questions of broad general interest to the public such as how sexually active are teenagers in Canada and how much do they know about aids.

Clearly these are important issues which deserve to be studied extensively. And the statistics produced by this research are powerful tools which educators can use to develop and justify strategies for responding to life threatening problems. However, the predominance of one or two research methods in the minds of funding agents can bely the value of alternative methods which are equally valid in other contexts. In a world addicted to

statistics, a proposal to study how arts teachers interact with their students, using qualitative methods, may search in vain for support.

What I have been trying to describe is a gulf which I perceive between an ideal world in which unbiased researchers examine issues of interest to the arts education community and a reality in which civil servants and funding agents exploit the research community to serve predetermined ends. As scholars, we are morally bound to seek knowledge regardless of how popular this knowledge will make us with the powers that be. But, without funding we are in a poor position to seek knowledge at all.

In our quest to influence decision-makers in our regions and our nations, we have at least two options. On the one hand, we can give more attention to quantitative methods of research in the pursuit of the kind of statistics which seem to attract public interest. On the other hand, we can strive to educate our clients about the relative values of a wide range of research methods. In North America, researchers have been following both of these courses of action.

The Scope of Arts Education Research

I do not mean to imply that North American researchers have failed to produce a considerable volume of work using a variety of methods. Quite the contrary. Each of the arts has generated a number of studies which address issues of particular concern to practitioners in that form. For example, as one might expect, researchers in visual art education, have given considerable attention to questions associated with a discipline-based curriculum in their subject. A case in point is a study by Thomas

M. Brewer
Thomas M. Brewer, "An Examination of Two Approaches To Ceramic Instruction in Elementary Education", *Studies in Art Education*, 1991, 32 (4), pp. 196-206. which compared the effect of a discipline-based approach to ceramic instruction with that of a child-centered approach" *Ibid*, pg. 204. on the work of fifth grade students. While some of the literature addressing discipline orientation may be biased, this study is clearly objective, if somewhat inconclusive. Brewer found that the holistic aesthetic quality of ceramic pieces produced by both groups was judged to be equal. He concluded that, while the discipline-based approach did not appear to disrupt or intrude upon the child's natural development in art, neither did it seem to be any more or less effective than a child-centered approach.

However, studies of this kind by no means dominate the literature. Researchers in visual art education have been following a wide-ranging agenda. They have conducted case studies and other forms of qualitative inquiry into such issues as how student learning is affected by communication during art lessons
Karen M.

Kakas, "Classroom Communication During Fifth-Grade Students' Drawing Lessons: Student-Student and Student-Teacher Conversations, *Studies in Art Education*, 1991, 33 (1) pp. 21 - 35., why different art teachers choose their course content and teaching practices Anne L. Bullock and Lynn Galbraith, "Images of Art Teaching: Comparing the Beliefs and Practices of Two Secondary Art Teachers", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (2) pp. 86 - 97., and what happens when university students learn to use computer graphics software Kerry Freedman and Anju Relan, "Computer Graphics, Artistic Production and Social Processes", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (2) pp. 98 - 109.. They have undertaken historical research into such topics as the conflicting ideologies reflected by the Aesthetic Movement and the Arts and Crafts Movement, both of which were current at the turn of the twentieth century Mary Ann Stankiewicz, "From the Aesthetic Movement to the Arts and Crafts Movement", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (3) pp. 165 - 183.. They have also produced theoretical or philosophical works which examine such questions as the role of gender in how we understand art Elizabeth Garbner, "Feminism, Aesthetics and Art Education", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (4) pp. 210 - 225. and the future of the art curriculum in a post-modern world Harold Pearce, "Beyond Paradigms: Art Education Theory and Practice in a Postparadigmatic World", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (4) pp. 244 - 252..

The scope of research in the other arts is equally diverse. Drama researchers have studied a host of topics using a variety of research methods. Descriptive research has examined the numbers and kinds of Child Drama programs in American universities Tim Slaughter, "1987-88 Survey of Child Drama Programs in Colleges and Universities in the United States", *Youth Theatre Journal*, 1989, 4 (1) pp. 8 - 11., the types of educational drama research being undertaken in the United States Lou Furman, "Research in Child Drama 1982 83: Survey of Research Projects in the United States", *Children's Theatre Review*, 1984, 33 (2) pp. 31 - 33., and the status of drama in education in other countries Lawrence O'Farrell, "Creativity Centres: Dramatic Education in a Uniquely Dutch System", *Youth Theatre Journal*, 1988, 2 (4) pp. 3 - 5..

Historical research has traced the origins of creative dramatics in the United States James E. Popovich, "Development of Creative Dramatics in the United States", in *Children's Theatre and Creative Dramatics*, edited by Geraldine Brain Siks and Hazel Brain Dunnington, Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1961 pp. 115 - 123.. Theoretical or philosophical research has inquired into the way that learning occurs during dramatic improvisation Helene Rosenberg et al, "Developing an Imagery-Based Theory

for the Field of Creative Drama", *Children's Theatre Review*, 1982, 31 (2) pp. 16 - 21.. Qualitative research has undertaken to illuminate teaching and learning in drama by studying classroom practice Joe Norris, "Research on Co-authorship: The Collective Creation", a paper presented at the American Alliance for Theatre and Education Conference, 1989..

And quantitative research has endeavoured to provide conclusive evidence of the efficacy of specific teaching methods Robert S. Rosen and Stephen M. Koziol Jr., "The Relationship of Oral Reading, Dramatic Activities, and Theatrical Production to Student Communication Skills, Knowledge, Comprehension and Attitudes", *Youth Theatre Journal*, 1990, 4 (3) pp. 7 - 10..

Researchers in music education have shown an interest in studying many topics including auditory discrimination Robert A. Duke et al, "Performance of Perceived Beat in

Relation to Age and Music Training", *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 1991, 39 (1) pp. 35 - 45., the

variables which can contribute to student attitudes about general music Jacquelyn Boswell, "Comparisons of Attitudinal Assessments in Middle and Junior High School General Music", *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 1991, no. 108, pp. 49 - 57., and the attitudes and characteristics of adolescents who

like heavy metal music Jeffrey Arnett, "Adolescents and Heavy Metal Music: From the

Mouths of Metalheads", *Youth and Society*, 1991, 23 (1) pp. 76 - 98..

Although I have not been able to find an

extensive research literature in the field of dance education,

here, too, diversity appears to be the operative word with writers addressing issues ranging from the use of dances and games to teach

about other cultures Karen Hansen, "Dances and Games", *Learning*, 1991, 19 (6) pp.

35 - 37. to enhancing thinking abilities in children

through movement Leon Greene, "Enhancing Thinking Abilities in Children through Movement", a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (New Orleans, LA, March 28 - 31, 1990)..

The research agenda in arts education is extremely diverse and this diversity argues for a curriculum which responds to the multifaceted nature of each art form as it relates to an emerging concept of education. To insist at this time that all forms of education in the arts should be constrained by any one theory or paradigm is to ignore the reality of current practice and the insights provided by a broad spectrum of research.

I have already mentioned an article by Pearse who has suggested that we are rapidly moving into an era in which educational paradigms may become obsolete. From this perspective,

discipline-based art education can be seen, not as a new paradigm so much as a desperate, conservative effort to revive modernism -

clinging to outmoded modernist ideas including, for example, the cult of the artist as creative genius. Pearse maintains that "the art and culture of the local community, of 'the folk', of marginal and disenfranchised groups are, in the postmodern view, as valid subjects for study and emulation as the so-called 'masterworks' of Western art." Harold Pearse, "Beyond Paradigms: Art Education Theory and Practice in a Postparadigmatic World", *Studies in Art Education*, 1992, 33 (4) pg. 250. There is a real danger that in codifying the arts curricula in an effort to give them a superficial credibility, we might miss our mark and end, rather, by rendering them irrelevant.

One role research can play in educational change is a cautionary one. It can warn of the dangers of confining the arts curriculum to a narrow range of pre-ordained components. It can do so by illustrating the breadth of the field and the relative effectiveness of various teaching strategies. It can also do so by challenging assumptions made by proponents of curricular change. For example, discipline orientation relies on ideas about the processes of artistic creation which are open to question. A methodical, teacher directed, subject centered approach is favoured. However, this method has been contradicted by research into the practices of professional artists.

A study which I conducted to elicit a contribution from playwrights toward a playwriting curriculum demonstrated that most textbooks advocating a linear, formulaic approach to writing plays were based on principles of criticism rather than on practical experience. Professional playwrights described an ideal playwriting teacher as a benign facilitator of learning, one who would create a positive and non-judgemental atmosphere in the classroom and leave the students free to make their own choices. "In the playwriting course, enjoyment of the writing process was to take precedence over the completion of an approved project." Lawrence O'Farrell, "Involving Theatre Professionals in the Drama Curriculum: Playwrights on Playwriting", *Youth Theatre Journal*, 1990, 4 (4) pg. 6.

This is not the advice of naive teachers stuck in an out-of-date theoretical paradigm. It is the considered opinion of scores of professional playwrights who have reflected on their own writing experience and their personal development as playwrights.

Another role research can play is a visionary one - speaking to the depth and scope of arts experiences open to students and the variety of educational benefits which can be attained. Researchers can help decision-makers by observing and reflecting on current practices and by critically assessing the theories behind them. When the need for change emerges from research the context will often be a specific one although the lessons learned may apply to many other situations. However, monolithic changes of the kind governments like to introduce can probably never be fully justified by research because they must, by virtue of their monolithic nature, ignore a great deal of valid research.

I believe that this is not a time for consolidation. It is a time for discovery. Of course, we want our curriculum to provide a sense of balance. But the balance we can achieve right now is not an impression of standing with our feet firmly planted on the ground. It is the balance one can achieve on the deck of a sailing ship as it dips into the waves and leans perilously to one side. If we keep our eye fixed on the horizon, we can maintain an equilibrium. If we respond sensibly to changes in the wind, we may avoid capsizing.

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