

WORKING TOPIC TRAINING OF TEACHERS/ PROFESSORS

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION : RACHEL MASON

My personal perspective is that of a visual arts educator from Europe, specifically England. I have had a strong interest in multicultural issues in arts education also for a long time. (By the latter I mean I believe that arts curricula must represent several cultures and teach children that the arts are culturally diverse).

My suggestions for discussion of the above topic during this conference are: (i) subject knowledge of prospective arts teachers; (ii) models of arts teacher education; (iii) evaluation and certification of beginner arts teachers; and (iv) research and arts teacher education.

SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE OF PROSPECTIVE ARTS TEACHERS

Some unresolved issues include the following:

1. The problem of school arts: how to close the gap between the professional arts world (or worlds) and arts in schools (there is also the question of how to close the gap between arts and home, in the community and arts in schools).
2. How to make the arts curricula more culturally diverse: it is widely agreed that arts curricula presently deal with a very limited range of art forms culturally and ethnically speaking.

Children all over the world are taught about Van Gogh, Picasso and Monet but what about all the other forms and styles of art ?

3. Responding to and making arts: there has been a global trend towards emphasis on the understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the arts in education as well as production, but the gap between policy and practice is very large in this respect. In my experience, arts teachers often lack training in the specific pedagogical strategies necessary to deliver this aspect of curricula effectively.
4. Tradition and creativity and the arts: justifying arts education as a means of developing creativity in students in general is fashionable at present. But not all the arts are creative in the sense that policy makers and arts educators are using

this term right now. The traditional way of teaching arts and crafts is through an apprenticeship mode which emphasizes imitation and copying of a master teacher. The concept of creativity being applied is culturally restricted in that it is a modernist fine art conception of what makes for good art and artistic behaviour which does not apply to all forms of arts teaching and learning.

MODELS OF TEACHING EDUCATION

This is a time of great change all over the world in which the 19th century European models of education that have dominated national systems for so long are being found inadequate in many ways. Likewise, some multicultural educational experts are arguing that the traditional model of initial teacher education that provides some knowledge of subject matter, teaching methods and, perhaps, a term of student teaching, is failing because it does not produce beginner teachers equipped to deal effectively with minority and disadvantaged youth.

They claim these traditional programmes are failing because newly qualified teachers are:

Not sufficiently self questioning

Not able to integrate minority languages and cultures into their programmes

Not responsive enough to individual student and community needs

Two possible conclusions in the new multicultural climate being strongly promoted in England at present (for better or worse!) could be that theory needs to be more integrated with experience in practice in teacher training and that relying on the resources of one higher education institution alone to train arts teachers is not enough. In other words, the theory about the arts and arts teaching needs to be tested, assimilated and adopted by student teachers on an individual basis during extended field experiences and there should be more involvement in initial teacher training of arts agencies, communities and schools.

EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATION OF NEW ARTS TEACHERS

There appears to be a global trend towards increased accountability of teachers for the arts learning of their students and this, in my view, is no bad thing. However, it is widely agreed among evaluation experts that practical learning in the arts is not

amenable to standardized modes of assessment based on the measurement of pre-determined outcomes or, on those that assess student progress only at fixed points in time. I think the same is, or should be, the case with assessment of learning in teacher education programmes and I agree with Elliot Eisner in this respect, that teacher education should be viewed as an art, not a science.

More specifically, if we want to produce teachers of the arts who can respond to the diversity of cultures and to individual differences between children, the following significant matters should be considered with regard to their evaluation and certification in initial training programmes:

1. The need to emphasize the assessment of exit rather than entrance competencies (it is too easy to exclude potential teachers from minority groups from teacher education programmes who, given encouragement and support, could reach the very children who are failing in schools).
2. The case for assessing theory and knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy through field experience and not separately.
3. Together with the case for:
 - Assessing the progress of student-teachers continuously rather than at fixed points in time.
 - Specifying the criteria or standards on which they are being assessed at the beginning of a programme.
 - Allowing for individual differences in prior knowledge and different rates of progression.
 - Involving student teachers in self-evaluation.
 - Involving schools, communities and arts organizations in student teacher assessment and certification.

RESEARCH AND TEACHER EDUCATION

I could say a lot about this but here I will just say that I consider planned programmes of research and curriculum development into arts education are needed in most countries.

From a cultural perspective for example, there is an urgent need to research:

1. Ways of delivering a broader social foundation of arts education in teacher training programmes;
2. Local arts and cultures and the effects of globalization on these arts and cultures.
3. Ways of dealing with the problem of consciousness of certified arts teachers (dispelling the prejudices and stereotypes that arts teachers have acquired in their initial training and that they bring with them from their personal lives into school context).