Art, Imagination, and Teaching:
Researching the High School Classroom

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Process/product-style research into effective teaching has ignored what it means to be a good art teacher. Imagination as a quality of good teaching has similarly been ignored. I argue for the essentially imaginative nature of artistic production and appreciation, and show how this influences the art teacher's role. As well, I develop a conceptualization of imaginative art teaching to guide the qualitative investigation of art teaching in six high school classrooms.

Les recherches sur les processus et les produits relatifs à un enseignement efficace font abstraction des qualités que doit avoir un bon enseignant d'arts plastiques. On oublie également l'importance de l'imagination dans un enseignement de qualité. L'auteur soutient que la production et l'appréciation artistiques sont essentiellement de nature imaginative et explique comment cela influe sur le rôle de l'enseignant d'art plastiques. Il élabore en outre une théorie de l'enseignement des arts plastiques axé sur l'imagination, théorie servant de guide pour l'évaluation qualitative de l'enseignement des arts plastiques dans six classes au secondaire.

> And if we deny our imagination, and have no imaginative life, we are poor worms who have never lived. — D.H.Lawrence (1929/1988)

What constitutes good teaching in any educational sphere is, in the end, both a philosophical and an empirical matter. It is the normative concept taken as a guide that enables observers to distinguish and make judgements about good teaching. Looking to the diversity of practice in individual classrooms gives rich contextual meaning to theory. On this account, the philosopher's skills can fruitfully mesh with those of the empirical researcher. The research project I describe here attempts such a convergence. In discussing the purposes, methodology, and conclusions of my qualitative study of high school art teaching in six different urban and suburban classrooms, I emphasize the conceptualization and investigation of *imaginative art teaching*.

BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS

There is surely something remiss about any conception of teaching in an educational context that fails to find a place for the exercise of the teacher's creative

imagination (Egan, 1992; Egan & Nadaner, 1988; Eisner, 1983, 1985). That, however, is precisely the case with some influential and long-standing empirical research into "effective teaching." The research in question is known as "process-product" research, and its main objective is to identify teacher behaviours that bring about improvements in student learning (Westbury, 1988). O'Neill (1988) reviews over 150 primary and secondary sources of teacher effectiveness research to list "the 20 most promising instructional research factors" (p. 164), citing, for example, such things as "teacher organization," "instructional mode," and "teacher clarity." Imagination is not mentioned in this survey, nor is art. Indeed, as O'Neill points out, "application [of the research] is limited, for the most part, to the teaching of basic skills in mathematics and reading at the primary and intermediate levels" (p. 177). Porter and Brophy (1988) review the recent work of the Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University and contribute a list similar to O'Neill's. Their accompanying diagrammatic model includes a box for the teacher's knowledge of content without any explanation of how this affects the quality or character of the teaching. Again, there is no mention of art or imagination, as the research focuses on the teaching of reading, mathematics, and science. This state of affairs is repeated in a lengthy review of the literature on effective teaching by Hawley, Rosenholtz, Goodstein, and Hasselbring (1984).

Art and imagination aside, it may be asked whether educators really need empirical research of the costly process-product variety to convince them that, for example, in the words of O'Neill, "the amount of time spent on a task powerfully predicts student achievement" (p. 173); that there is a "positive relationship between teacher clarity . . . and pupil achievement" (p. 170); or that "research findings clearly reveal that well-organized teachers are the most effective teachers" (p. 166). As Egan (1988) points out, the "findings" of educational researchers are all too often covertly conceptual rather than straightforwardly empirical; this seems to apply to the examples cited. That time spent affects student achievement is no surprise. "Achievement," in reference to both quantity and complexity of learning, *implies* persistence. That teacher clarity promotes student achievement is no surprise either, for to be clear *means* to be easily understood. So too, in the last example, being well-organized in matters of planning and presentation of subject-matter is, at the very least, a precondition of effectiveness, for order lies at the heart of understanding, and understanding is the principal aim of teaching. Despite the limited subject-matter focus of teacher effectiveness research, O'Neill encourages teachers to apply its conclusions to the teaching of art, music, and health, while trying, as he says, to "optimize as many factors as possible" (1988, p. 177).

But besides a few homilies about praising students for good work, about having worthy but realistic expectations, or about the value of supporting students' efforts (O'Neill, 1988), what use is this research to art teachers *per se*?

Unfortunately, it is of very little use, inasmuch as no consideration is given to the specific demands of teaching art. Westbury (1988) notes, for example, that although teacher education programs emphasizing process-product approaches have successfully increased student achievement in areas requiring rule-following or step-by-step skills (as in arithmetic, vocabulary, grammar, algebra, and science facts),

process-product paradigms have been least applicable to such ill-structured content areas as creative writing, problem solving, and the analysis and discussion common in literature and social studies classes. Teacher effectiveness training has limited value in teaching students to evaluate, to criticize, or to give creative or unique responses. (p. 149)

Westbury concludes that "research is needed in totally unrelated fields such as art, music, and creative writing" (p. 141); the question is, however, what sort of research is needed, and on what, principally, should it focus?

THE PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

In this research project, the pedagogical context is art education and art is characterized by indeterminacy. Although useful information can be given to students about an artist's theory when viewing artwork, for example, and although foreshortening strategies can be demonstrated to students attempting self-portraits, ultimately it is logically impossible to explain precisely how art may be created and understood. This is because each work of art, besides being part of the broader tradition, is also to some extent original and unique. Art that is aesthetically well formed, fresh, and expressive cannot be made to a formula, a point Kant made two centuries ago (1790/1952). Even an artist making a realistic painting of a living person, or painting a recognizable view of a landscape, requires imagination to produce an insightful and revealing perspective. Artists don't "copy" reality; they see what they can paint in their idiom, to paraphrase Gombrich (1969, p. 86). Artistic representation proceeds as artists invent and modify their visual concepts (ways of picturing things) to suit purpose and occasion. "Making comes before matching" (p. 116), says Gombrich, and "the matching process itself proceeds through the stages of 'schema and correction'" (p. 116). Faced with the sublime Australian landscape, artists Sydney Nolan and Fred Williams had to develop a new visual language to do it justice. In a piece of abstract art, Picasso made a pair of handle bars and a bicycle seat serve as a metaphor for a bull.

Understanding a work of art is also a matter of constructive interpretation. Imaginative perception is needed to configure a work's often ambiguous cues and qualities. A viewer's response to art is never simply a matter of decoding. Rather, it involves "a rhythm which presupposes constant activity on our part in making guesses and modifying them in the light of our experience" (Gombrich, 1969, pp. 271–272). Responding to art from the past involves, in addition,

overstepping "inadequacies of evidence and temporal and cultural distances by imaginatively reconstructing past meanings" (Richmond, 1992, p. 39).

Enabling students to produce and appreciate art is thus no easy matter. The teacher must establish a curriculum that imparts important artistic knowledge and skills yet inspires the student's own expression and understanding. This is complicated by the, in part, ungoverned character of artistic problems and by subjective differences among students and teachers working in diverse classroom circumstances. On a conceptual level, art teaching itself must engage imagination, as what is sought is the student's own artistic vision and for this there can be no precise pedagogic rule. Teachers have to think of possibilities and develop methods, usually by trial and error, to suit individual circumstances. Art teaching, in essence, has to respect the logic of art and thus involves a certain amount of "making and matching." It is not true that there are no rules for making and appreciating art. The rules include those of perspective, colour mixing, figure modelling, film editing, and knowledge of genres and conventions, for example, but they are bound to be inadequate. When existing principles are slavishly followed, the result is not art but cliché, for which there can be recipes and "tricks of the trade." Making art in the studio and responding to art with understanding and appreciation are widely recognized as central in art education (Eisner, undated; Richmond, 1991, 1992; Smith & Levi, 1991; Swanger, 1990). These components form the basis of the British Columbia provincial curriculum guide for art (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1983), as used by teachers in this study.

RESEARCHING THE TEACHING OF ART

To recognize the ineffable character of art is to grant art education a degree of metaphysical complexity. Describing her theory of moral judgement (which has many similarities with the aesthetic) as "a kind of inconclusive non-dogmatic naturalism," Iris Murdoch (1970, p. 44) provides an apt parallel for the study of art teaching. There is no formula for arriving at artistic (or moral) judgments, and there is no formula for understanding and writing about human situations. Observers must be knowledgeable about and sensitive to the complexity of particular, often ambiguous contexts. They must feel comfortable with imprecision, yet aim for justice and objectivity. They must be tentative in perception and description without lapsing into obscurantism. The creative demands of art teaching require research methods that respect the qualitative dimension, that is, methods employing informed judgement. Fact-gathering research is important because it can supply information about, for example, numbers of students taking art classes, teachers' art backgrounds, instructional content, specific teaching methods, and so on, all vitally needed to inform policy development. Of equal importance, however, is research focusing on aspects of intention and action that give meaning to good teaching in particular contexts.

In this project, six researchers each compiled an individual case study report based on classroom observations, field notes, and informal interviews. Specifically, we sought to gain an appreciation of the kinds of teacher attitudes, beliefs, intentions, approaches to teaching, teacher-pupil relationships, pupil activities and achievements, and other classroom conditions and qualities that contribute to good teaching in the visual arts. The research aimed better to understand what it means to be an imaginative art teacher, and to derive recommendations for teacher education in art.

On a formal level, the study follows the model of "deliberative" interpretive inquiry articulated by Erickson (1986). It is also influenced by Eisner's (1985, 1991) descriptions of "educational criticism," which incorporate his "connoisseurship" approach to qualitative classroom research. Erickson locates the nub of his approach to research into teaching in such questions as "What is happening . . . in this particular setting?" (p. 121), "What do these happenings mean to the actors involved in them at the moment the actions took place?" (p. 121), and "How does what is happening here compare with what happens in other places?" (p. 122). The research is "deliberative," in Erickson's sense, in that data collection is guided, though not limited, by six main research questions:

1. Under what circumstances (material, social, architectural) do teaching and learning take place?
2. What educational purposes, broad and specific, underlie the teaching? What ideals, beliefs, and feelings motivate the teacher?
3. What kinds of student artifacts, attitudes, skills, creative abilities, understandings, and appreciations of art are being developed?
4. What approaches to teaching typify the situation? What approaches are particularly effective and appropriate? What imaginative approaches to teaching are evident?
5. What other qualities of classroom life contribute to successful teaching and learning?
6. What implications for teacher education follow from the case studies?

Countering the view that such questions may limit a researcher's "openness to the uniqueness of experience in the setting" (p. 139), or that relevant questions will emerge by induction, Erickson (1986) points out that,

the toothbrush and hunting-knife school has a valid point in reminding us of the importance of induction, intuition, and intensive firsthand presence in the setting. Framing research questions explicitly and seeking relevant data deliberately [however] enable and empower intuition, rather than stifle it. (p. 140)

I began my research by focusing on the general setting, then moving to the main questions and other situational aspects that emerged as inquiry proceeded.

My intention was to identify relevant events and seek typicality and atypicality within each situation. I sought disconfirming data to offset hasty assertions. The research took place over five full school days (not consecutive in every case) and classrooms were observed for complete days. Writing of the case studies was guided by Erickson's recommendations, especially those concerning the importance of "analytic narrative vignettes." The analytic narrative, says Erickson, "is a vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life" (p. 149) that instantiates organizing concepts, assertions, and interpretations. Each cooperating teacher examined the relevant case study report to ensure that the researcher's perceptions accurately reflected the teacher's thoughts, feelings, and intentions during particular teaching moments.

Since the research was qualitative in nature, standards Smith (1987) suggested as a guide to journal editors assessing qualitative papers, that is, "the completeness, coherence, and internal consistency of the account; whether it penetrated and illuminated its subject; and the credibility of the author" (p. 179), provided informal criteria of validity.

IMAGINATIVE ART TEACHING

Imagination is a philosophically complex concept of mind that resists definition in strict behavioral terms. Sparshott (1991), for example, speaks of the concept's "elusiveness and polymorphousness" (p. 6). This is perhaps why it has been ignored by scientifically minded educational researchers. Imagination is not a skill or technique, nor is it, in any obvious sense, a simple cause-and-effect variable. But if, as I have argued, both art and art teaching would be untenable without it, then some way must be found to operationalize the concept for purposes of empirical investigation. The first step in doing this was to move from consideration of the noun *imagination,* a mental construct, to the adjectival form, *imaginative,* which suggests activities with public criteria. The important concept thus became *imaginative art teaching.*

In this study, *art teaching* refers to activities the teacher undertook to bring about learning in the making and critical appreciation of visual art (painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, crafts, and so forth). For Barrow (1990), the word "imaginative" means "to be inclined and able to conceive of the unusual and effective" (p. 108) in a particular field of endeavour. Imaginative art teaching, as it involves the devising of educational purposes and pupil activities, the presentation of content, the motivation of learning, and the development of a classroom atmosphere conducive to the open, experimental learning associated with art, would, in these terms, be generative of unusual and stimulating learning possibilities, as well as being effective in attaining purposes, or in overcoming difficulties. Sparshott (1991) expresses a similar thought by saying that to be imaginative is "to be able to come up with unexpected and fruitful solutions to problems" (p. 5). We value imaginative thinkers for their inventiveness, but also

for the workability of their ideas, plans, prescriptions, and actions, that is, for their power to achieve chosen ends well. Imaginative teaching is commendable inasmuch as it is directed to, and is effective at, realizing the development of appropriate learning experiences for particular pupils; it is not characterized by novelty alone or by the sheer number of suggestions put forward. Imaginative teaching draws upon and utilizes knowledge of art, students, curriculum, pedagogy, past experiences (of teacher and pupils), social circumstances, and educational beliefs; it cannot operate in a vacuum. Imaginative thought transforms knowledge of what is into insightful conceptions of what might be and is therefore a component of all forms of planning and design. Maxine Greene (1970) argues that imaginative activity is "formative" (p. 320), in that it "culminates in new patternings" (p. 325) which bring order to indeterminate situations. It is easy to see how imagination facilitates good teaching. The imaginative teacher envisions how certain directions, hints, questions, demonstrations, explanations, tasks, analogies, and examples might function to bring together or to focus, for example, a pupil's artistic skills, interest in a topic, sense of design, and creative insights, so that work on a painting moves forward without diluting the student's own artistic struggles and sense of achievement. It is imagination that helps teachers *construct* learning opportunities and helps them be flexible and adaptable in the face of the unique, changing, and, to some extent, unpredictable conditions of practice. Indeed, in the view of Egan (1992), "Imaginativeness is not a well-developed, distinct function of the mind but rather a particular flexibility that can invigorate all mental functions" (p. 36). Imaginative teaching is concerned with bringing immediacy and vitality to the study of art. It is effective in the personalizing of artistic understanding. Imaginative teaching in the artistic setting, or any educational setting for that matter, is good teaching. The teacher is a role model for young art students in that the form and content of teaching serve as an analogue of art as well as prompting the pupils' own imaginative designs.

In summary, imaginative art teaching, for purposes of this study, is teaching that:

1. generates unusual (unconventional, original) ideas and activities;
2. constructs learning opportunities that lead effectively to worthwhile artistic understanding for particular pupils;
3. utilizes the teacher's knowledge and judgement;
4. is flexible and adaptive in response to the unique demands of practice;
5. respects the exploratory, open-ended, and insightful nature of art; and
6. is vital and motivating, and is a model for the pupils' own imaginative efforts in art.

I do not suggest that these criteria will apply unequivocally and precisely in every situation. The concept represents an ideal and as such is meant to provide

guidelines for research, given shared understandings of participants operating under specialized professional circumstances. Observers are not measuring carefully structured discrete acts. Rather, they interpret events in the flow of life, make links, and grasp implications. In some situations, it may not be immediately clear, for example, what specific items of knowledge a teacher has used in making a motivating suggestion to a student. Judgements may sometimes have to be based on informed speculation rather than on fact.

It should also be remembered that teaching is imaginative by degree. We speak, for example, of particular actions or achievements as being highly imaginative or fairly imaginative, rather than as being or not being imaginative in some absolute sense. Despite such uncertainties, the point remains that to be deemed good, art teaching needs some imaginative elements over the long haul.

One last note: I was not attempting to discover empirically whether good art teaching is imaginative in practice. For that six cases would hardly be convincing. The point has already been made that imagination and art teaching are conceptually linked. My intention was to show the reality of the ideal, that is, to show its diversity in practical experience for purposes of greater understanding. In normative matters it is possible to learn from a small group of individuals, or even from a single excellent teacher.

NEGOTIATION OF ENTRY

I met with the six researchers, who were volunteer graduate students, teacher education graduates, art teachers, and art education students, to clarify purposes, concepts, and methods. Successful high school art teachers, identified by school district arts coordinators as being potentially willing participants, were approached informally and the six interested in the project were invited to a voluntary meeting where the research was explained in detail and without obligation. Procedures followed the ethical requirements of the university. Researchers were paired with teachers on the basis of geographical convenience.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

1. Under what circumstances (material, social, architectural) does teaching and learning take place?

In the broader metropolitan community the visual arts have a high profile through the various galleries, art and craft associations, community colleges, a college of art, and two universities. The six schools involved in the study are modern, urban and suburban. The school populations vary in composition from white and middle-class to multi-racial and working-class. Pupil numbers range from 1,000 to 1,800. In one school, students speak 22 different home languages. Classroom arrangements for art are predominantly single-use special facilities.

Both participating school districts employ arts coordinators who help develop programs, provide workshops for teachers, and give leadership and advocacy. Art from the high schools is frequently exhibited in the municipal galleries, community centres, shopping malls, and the schools themselves. The teachers belong to the British Columbia Art Teachers' Association, which puts out newsletters, hosts annual conferences, and has links with national and international art education organizations. Working conditions, by no means perfect, are favourable towards visual art, bearing in mind that in comparison with mathematics and language arts, for example, lack of high school graduation requirements for art, limited timetable space, lack of program continuity through the grade levels, and the absence of university entry status continue to ensure art's lower academic status.

2. *What educational purposes, broad and specific, underlie the teaching? What ideals, beliefs and feelings motivate the teacher?*

Every teacher in the study operates on the basis of strongly held beliefs about art, education, and student needs. Without exception, the teachers view art as a serious discipline, that is, as a form of creative aesthetic expression and understanding that develops the mind and enriches the quality of everyday life. The teachers enjoy their jobs and work hard for their pupils. Art teaching for these individuals is more a vocation than a means to a pay cheque. Although all the teachers concentrate mainly on teaching art, both child-centred and student-counsellor perspectives were identified. One teacher sees his role very much as that of unofficial mentor for students generally, and for those with special problems. This same teacher also takes a critical, philosophical approach to teaching artistic thinking and to explaining important concepts in art. Multicultural, teacher-as-facilitator-of-learning, and teacher-as-artist perspectives were also identified. In one case, a teacher specifically categorized her approach as a mixture of self-expression and discipline-based art education. The perspectives were not uniquely represented but were exhibited as emphases with considerable overlap.

3. *What kinds of student artifacts, attitudes, skills, creative abilities, understandings, and appreciations of art are being developed?*

Student work is mainly studio-oriented. Individual and group project work centres on drawing, painting, ceramics, graphic arts, and sculpture. Art history, criticism, and aesthetics are integrated with practical work as needed to provide background knowledge, rather than being treated systematically as distinct areas. The teachers periodically present slide talks to inspire and inform work in progress. Student work is firmly prescribed in the younger grades (8 and 9), becoming increasingly free and independent by Grades 11 and 12. In all classrooms emphasis is on the production of creative artistic work. There is an open

attitude toward a wide variety of genres, traditions, and cultures, which translates into students' freedom to include, and be informed by, a broad range of historical and contemporary images. In Grade 12, emphasis is squarely on artistic production that is personal, creative, and expressive. Some students are preparing portfolios for art college entrance and for the Harvard Advanced Placement evaluations. A key element in teaching and learning in the later grades is the striving for balance between personal expression and knowledge of rules and traditions.

4. What approaches to teaching typify the situation? What approaches are particularly effective and appropriate? What imaginative approaches to teaching are evident?

The teachers are well organized. The more individual and diverse the pupil work in art, the greater the risk of chaos. This, coupled with the need for accessible tools and materials, demand excellent organizational skills. Classrooms are well supplied with materials, pictures, books, art magazines, and so on. Teachers teach by means of short lectures, demonstrations, videos, student diaries, group discussions, student self-evaluations, research activities, sketch books, student art production, visiting artists, gallery visits, slide shows, assignment instructions, and individual consultations. In keeping a room full of (diverse) practical activities running smoothly, the teacher necessarily assumes the role of orchestrator. Students report that they appreciate their teachers' choice of projects, and the freedom they are given to choose and create for themselves. Students like having the freedom to change rules for assignments; their teachers' many suggestions for making art; their teachers' ability to solve constructive and aesthetic problems on the spot; and their teachers' open, relaxed attitudes, familiarity with contemporary culture, sense of humour, seriousness, and encouragement of experimentation. Much of the art teachers' work is planning; giving explanations, demonstrations, and instructions; and servicing students' constant practical needs. At the same time, however, teachers respond imaginatively to the evolving needs of their respective situations, as the following example shows. The extracts cited are from a single case study, to provide a contextual overview. Space prevents similar treatment of all the studies.

Case Study: Teacher as Artist

• Some rectangular pillars in the school courtyard are decorated with murals created in clay by past art students. These murals, wrapped around the pillars, must be 10 feet high and 6 feet around. They add a personal touch to an otherwise institutional-type building.

• The art room looks organized and personal. An chair that a student has painted orange hangs from the ceiling beside some bicycle wheels. The hood

over the fan has a mural painted on it. A second mural is painted on the wall in the corner. Three work tables have decorated legs.

• The teacher is an artist, a dynamic sculptor who works in clay and is well known in the art community. He is very direct in his comments and encourages the students "not to be boring and produce work that's like a TV dinner." Students in his Art 11 class are developing a drawing of a hand using a calligraphy pen and wash. The teacher tells students that the hand must metamorphose into something new, for example, the wing of a bird, and recommends that they read Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis.* One student has too strong a background in his drawing. The teacher advises this student to remove the figure, using a tear line as an interesting edge, glue this to another piece of paper, and try again.

• Students in the Art 12 class are to find a three-dimensional object at home or in a junk store, or to build something, and paint it so as to transform it into art. He shows them a $.50 table that he has painted in shades of blue. He has also glued handmade ceramic tiles onto the top surface.

• Two students from Art 12 are working on their own independent project. They are making an additional mural for a pillar in the courtyard. The teacher has built a horizontal frame that supports two sides of the mural so that the mural, while being completed, is lying on its side. The mural will have to be cut up to be fired. The two students start working immediately and really seem to know what they are doing. The mural will include the school name surrounded by swirling images of intertwined hands and faces. They have made plaster moulds of hands and faces that are arranged and attached to the clay base. They know how to handle clay and are very conscientious about keeping it moist and well wrapped. Each student must log 300 hours. They clearly love what they are doing. The mural is very expressive and thoughtful. The teacher lets them progress and checks in with them periodically. The students tell me he has given them freedom to develop their own imagery and helps out mostly with technical difficulties. These students seem very self-directed, often staying late in order to hold to a tight time schedule.

• Recently, the Ceramics and Sculpture 11 class went to the Sun Yat Sen Chinese gardens in Vancouver for a field trip. Now they are making leak windows from plaster. Some students are making Egyptian paste beads and are ready to take them out of the kiln. Quickly the teacher leaves the classroom with a few students and plops a bucket of sawdust over the beads on the ground outside. The students like making beads and many wear necklaces they have made in class.

• Another day in the same class, I see the results of a coil pot project. The students have made some really beautiful large pots that are evidently the product of an intense period of focused activity. Most pots have a strong shape and design, and are expertly executed for this grade level.

• The teacher pushes students to expand their notions of what is and is not art. He believes art is all around us in everyday objects and that we need to develop

our visual sensibilities to be able to understand the visual world. He keeps everything. He stores such everyday objects as packing material, boxes, steel rims off doors, and all kinds of items that some people would consider junk. He encourages students to view these materials as usable and exciting to work with. He is very interested in hearing students' ideas and pushes them to develop these ideas further. One student said that "the harder you work, the harder [this teacher] pushes."

• His authority as a teacher stems from his being an artist. He can be intimidating at times, but the students see him as a real person with a life of his own. He cares very much about what he does, about art in general, and about what the students do. One student said that "the class likes the fact that he is an artist," and that "he has lots of ideas and knows what he is doing."

• He is very knowledgeable about art history and is conscious of teaching the students about past and present artists, concepts, movements, and schools of thought. When the Art 12 students were presenting their chosen artist to the class, the teacher was able to expand on what they had reported and to focus on the most important contributions by each artist, while adding personal information about each artist. This was done spontaneously and with enthusiasm.

• Students in Art 12 are working on such objects as baskets, a coconut shell, a mirror frame, and a small table, and are researching using books in the room. The teacher advises the student working on the mirror frame to look in the *Art Nouveau* book. To another student, who is working on a basket, he points out possibilities for creating texture, that is, by applying different colours, then rubbing some off again. He shows her a book on papier-mâché and recommends that she visit "Paper Ya" on Granville Island for more ideas on texture. Yet another student expresses interest in her dreams and the imagery in them. The teacher tells her about the Surrealists. The teacher is very enthusiastic and the students gradually become more focused. Thus, the classroom is divergent but not chaotic. The teacher responds to totally different projects and ideas one after another. He is a non-rigid, non-linear thinker, and the activity in the class reflects this.

• He is absolutely unwilling to accept students who do not work, listen, think, or try, or who do not respect dates and so on. However, as long as they are working, he is not strict about the students' behaviour. He teases them, for example, asking one student where *his* donut is while she is obviously eating the only one there. The students chat and laugh amiably. Students visit from other classes. The students are free to be themselves. There is a unique quality to this classroom: at once emotionally charged and socially relaxed.

What comes through these descriptions is a strong sense of the energy this teacher generates. Art is taken seriously and students work hard on interesting and challenging projects. They are highly motivated and value the work being

done. The calibre of students' work attests to the teacher's effectiveness. The teacher is extremely knowledgeable and capable artistically, and responds inventively to students' questions and problems. He inspires students to do better through the strength of his own commitment, the quality of the program, and his own excitement. He is demanding of himself and of the students, but also gives the students room to be themselves and to think creatively. This teacher is imaginative, not in some remote, earth-shattering way, but in all manner of daily occurrences that form real-life teaching. His ideas for projects, his witty exchanges, his artistic and constructive suggestions to students, his own art work, and his sense of the dynamic quality of art show a constant attempt to overcome the prosaic.

5. *What other qualities of classroom life are conducive to successful teaching and learning?*

A relaxed studio atmosphere generally prevails in the art classrooms. Teacher/pupil relations are informal and teachers are supportive of experimentation and risk-taking. This is obviously no accident. The open-ended nature of art requires an unforced working situation. There is also a great deal of humour in all the classes. But there is a serious attitude as well. All the researchers commented on the influence of teacher personality on classroom atmosphere, teaching manner, and teacher/student relations. Teaching is a very personal endeavour. Role expectations and professional demands are filtered through a temperament. Gray and MacGregor (1987), in their study of 32 art teachers in three Western Canadian provinces, refer to art teaching as an "idiosyncratic activity" (p. 28).

6. *What implications for teacher education follow from the case studies?*

• Teachers need to be well-prepared in the subject of art as a discipline. The implementation of a high school curriculum presupposes artistic knowledge and skill.

• Teachers need planning strategies for program development and teaching. Art teaching that encourages individual creativity requires organizational competence.

• Good teachers operate on the basis of their own refined beliefs about the purposes and value of art and art education, and the developmental needs of their students. Pre-service art teachers should receive instruction in the philosophical foundations of art and education. The purpose of this work should not be to instill specific beliefs or to suggest that there is one received conception of art education, but to provide opportunity for discussion and informed critical reflection. It is here that student teachers are invited to enter into a conversation that will continue throughout their professional lives. There is no finite answer to questions concerning the value of art but it is possible to refine the difficulties and to suggest possibilities for consideration given prevailing circumstances.

• Good teachers see their jobs as filled with uncertain, diverse, particular, and unpredictable elements. This complexity should not be bemoaned as confounding instructional generalities; instead, it should be seen as a welcome sign of the individual, creative nature of art teaching. Teacher education programs should challenge students to extemporize, form their own judgements, and work through planning and teaching problems that are open-ended enough to provoke unique approaches. This work could be undertaken individually and in groups, on campus, to minimize fears of professional failure. For instance, student teachers at Simon Fraser University are asked to select a topic of local or broader social significance and interpret it expressively through the media of music, art, drama, and dance (Richmond, Scarr, & McLeod, 1993). In the process, the students use a double-entry journal to record their responses, as students, to the experience. For example, "What were the pluses and minuses of working collaboratively in the arts?" They also record their impressions from a teaching perspective, as they are asked to teach small segments of the project to their peers. Later, in debriefing sessions, students teachers and instructors supportively examine what went well, what went wrong, what could be improved, and so on. Importantly, however, students are required to make choices and to develop imaginative ways of planning and teaching.

CONCLUSION

Good art teaching is imaginative. This is not, perhaps, so very novel a proposition, but one needing to be justified and shown empirically, given the bias toward science, craving for generality, and absence of imagination in most research studies on teaching. Imaginative art teachers develop (make and match) unusual, motivating, and effective learning opportunities to suit their own circumstances, are artistically skilful and knowledgeable, have a strong sense of purpose, are flexible, and invite experimentation in an open, relaxed studio environment. They aim to strike a balance between the rules of art and the students' creative and interpretive freedom. In practice, the good art teacher is a model of art.

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