

Canadian Arts Education: A Critical Analysis of Selected Elementary Curricula

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This article presents a critical analysis of recent elementary arts curricula from Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Ontario in terms of Miller and Seller's (1990) discussion of transmission, transaction, and transformation curriculum positions, and Grenier's (1990) description of three conceptions of the nature of art—"conceptualized art," "art as cultural product," and "art as a symbolic system." The analysis identifies the curriculum perspectives and views of art in the curriculum documents, and then the assumptions about arts literacy, exposing problematic issues regarding expectations of arts education and its delivery in the schools.

Dans cet article, l'auteure présente une analyse critique des programmes récents d'arts plastiques au primaire au Québec, en Saskatchewan, en Colombie-Britannique et en Ontario. Pour ce faire, elle a recours aux concepts de transmission, de transaction et de transformation utilisés par Miller et Seller (1990) et à la description des trois conceptions de l'art établies par Grenier (1990), à savoir l'"art conceptualisé," l'"art comme produit culturel" et l'"art comme système symbolique." Dans son analyse, l'auteure identifie les diverses perceptions de l'art dans le matériel pédagogique des programmes d'arts plastiques et les postulats qu'ils supposent pour ce qui a trait à la connaissance de l'art, et met en relief les problèmes qui en dérivent du point de vue des attentes des enseignants d'arts plastiques et de la prestation des cours dans les écoles.

In this article I critically analyze the most recent elementary arts curricula from Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia.¹ Although I acknowledge the gap between planning and implementation of curriculum documents (Stake, Bresler, & Mabry, 1991), my analysis rests on the assumption that such documents have a significant impact on arts education and should not be neglected as researchers become more involved in examining classroom practice. The importance of curriculum is highlighted in the definition used for this study. Curriculum is "an explicitly and implicitly intentional set of interactions designed to facilitate learning and development and to impose meaning on experience" (Miller & Seller, 1990, p. 3). Two frameworks were selected to bound and structure this analysis because they provide both a Canadian perspective and a breadth of vision. These frameworks are Miller and Seller's (1990) three orientations to curriculum, and Grenier's (1990) description of three conceptions of the nature of music (applied to the arts for this study). Two questions are investigated in the curriculum analysis: (1) What curriculum perspectives are evident in the selected arts curricula? (2) What views of art are implied?

THE FRAMEWORKS

A Curriculum Framework

In *Curriculum Perspectives and Practice*, Miller and Seller (1990) provide a framework for examining the philosophical, psychological, social, and economic assumptions of three prevalent orientations to curriculum.

The transmission orientation is atomistic and behaviouristic. Schools emphasize the transmission of a fixed body of knowledge, skills, and proper social norms. The mastery of traditional disciplines is directed by teachers, who are the source of authority and knowledge. Students are passive recipients of a truth immutable and fixed.

The transaction orientation emphasizes learning and individuals' cognitive growth as they interact with the environment. Knowledge is not fixed; it is constructed by the learner. The philosophical premises are pragmatic, and the psychological premises those of cognitive developmental psychology. Emphasis is placed on problem solving, critical thinking, and the formation of democratic citizens.

In the transformation orientation the focus is on the learner. Personal discovery, interconnectedness, and social awareness and change form the basis of educational aims. The learning environment is positive, to enhance the learner's self-concept. Learning is a holistic process integrating physical, cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. The feeling aspect of art is valued over intellectual understanding. The paradigm is humanistic, sometimes transpersonal.

These three orientations provide a useful framework for examining curriculum documents. A study of arts curricula, however, should also address the view of art contained in the documents, particularly since there has been a political and public shift in interest to the social context and relevance of the arts.³

The Social Nature of the Arts

In an absorbing article, Line Grenier (1990) sets out to provide a "definition of music as a *fully-fledged social phenomenon*" (p. 27) while at the same time accounting for its specificity. She describes three ways of conceptualizing music: hierarchic, differential, and generic. Although she applies her keen analysis to music, her issues, arguments, and evidence transcend any one art form.

The first view, the traditional Western view, conceptualizes artwork as an object with properties describable according to universal criteria based on natural laws. The position is hierarchic and absolutist because "this view not only possesses analytical and descriptive values: it combines normative and evaluative functions as well" (Grenier, 1990, p. 30).

Where the first view moved from "description to prescription," the second moves from "diversity to difference"; it challenges the assumptions of the first. In the differential view, art is a cultural product determined by artistic practices

in a particular social context. Since art is viewed as a humanly organized activity, there are no universally valid criteria for greatness. Instead, criteria for excellence are relative to particular cultures. There is a close relationship among art, culture, and cultural identity.

A third view has emerged over the past 30 years and consequently is less well developed than the other two. It represents a synthesis of the hierarchic and differential views in that it explores the relationship between object and context. In this view, all knowledge is socially constructed, and the arts are seen as symbolic systems mediating socially constructed reality in unique ways. Human beings not only reproduce social reality in their art; they also contribute to its production. They shape and are shaped by the culture they produce. Grenier (1990) hypothesizes a generic definition of art that “infers the general properties that would belong to the logical comprehension of music as a genre” (p. 42). Although this definition accounts for the social construction of art, it does not help account for the different styles of art within a genre. Here, Grenier suggests that symbolic systems with culturally developed structures and conventions explain the specificity to be found across time and across cultures. She proposes a view of the arts as a form of knowledge, a view supported by Eisner (1985) and Gardner (1983, 1993), who speak of the arts as ways of knowing.

Although Grenier did not intend to examine the pedagogical implications of her conceptualization, other writers have obliged. Much arts education has centred on the hierarchic view in which aesthetic (arts) objects are experienced largely through the medium of the classics—the masterpieces. This view has predominated but is currently being challenged by such writers as Elliott (1989), Duncum (1989), and Walker (1990), who insist on the social nature of the arts and on the need to provide an inclusive curriculum. The third view also has its exponents in arts education. Researchers from Project Zero (Gardner, 1983, 1993; Gardner & Perkins, 1988) have based an extensive body of theoretical and practical initiatives on a general theory of symbols (Goodman, 1988). Gardner (1983) explains:

Symbols and symbol systems gain their greatest utility as they enter into the fashioning of full-fledged symbolic products . . . all manner of symbolic entities that individuals create in order to convey a set of meanings, and that other individuals imbued in the culture are able to understand, interpret, appreciate, criticize, or transform. (p. 301)

THE CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

In addition to examining their curriculum frameworks, I analyze the elementary arts curriculum documents from Quebec, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Ontario to determine whether the underlying assumptions are hierarchic, differential, or symbolic. To make the task manageable, I selected the curriculum document over the curriculum guide when both were available. I have not attempted

to critique the documents for completeness or adequacy as curriculum documents. It is their assumptions and values that are of interest.

Quebec

The 1981 *Programmes d'études: Primaire—Art* issued by Quebec's ministry of education (Gouvernement du Québec, 1981), with an English version produced in 1985, has an organizational structure applied to the four arts—drama, dance, visual arts, and music.⁴ The document includes rationales, objectives, a discussion of pedagogical and discipline-related concerns, and evaluation strategies for each art. Each art is organized under three processes: perceiving, doing, and reacting (in visual arts—seeing, meaning, arts history). The greatest emphasis is on doing, as seen in the number of objectives devoted to this aspect of the curriculum. The inclusion of dance and the presentation of four arts in a single volume was a “first” in Canadian curriculum documents. In the document, the arts are declared to be for all children; at least three of the four arts are to be provided in every school.

The transformation orientation is most evident across this curriculum document. There are, however, important differences in the way each art is presented in the context of formal education, with drama at one end of a process/creativity—skills/knowledge continuum (p. 20), moving through dance, to visual arts, and finally to music at the skills/knowledge end. The conception of children evident in the document is best classified as “progressive,” as described by Abbs in *Living Powers* (1987): the child is “an active agent, a participator in the act of understanding” (pp. 38–39). Freedom and expression are valued at the expense of skills and tradition.⁵

Music is the only art portrayed as discipline-based in its organization (p. 118), that is, structured around music concepts. Dance, however, although mainly creative, includes an element of knowing about dance, and visual arts incorporate skills, elements, and principles of design.

The document's predominant perspective is that all the arts are to foster greater sensitivity to and awareness of self and the world (p. 13). Personal discovery is a central theme, especially in drama. The curriculum is child-centred (pp. 12, 20, 23, 45). Problem solving, a transactional strategy, is mentioned overtly only in visual arts and referred to indirectly in drama.

Even though self-actualization is a major thrust, individual development is balanced with social awareness. This social awareness is not the promotion of social change more characteristic of the transformation position; rather, the arts help socialize (p. 21) because they provide opportunities to interact with others, and to develop respect for peers and artists (pp. 25, 48, 70). The arts are important ways of achieving personal and social integration (p. 9). The arts are ways of knowing the world (pp. 9, 117), but this knowledge is intuitive and personal.

Cognition tends to be equated with intellectual learning (learning about the arts [pp. 77, 83, 119]). The arts testify to traditional cultural and social values (p. 9) but also contribute to a vibrant, living culture. The need to construct “notre propre culture” [our own culture] (p. 70) can readily be understood in view of the people of Quebec’s concern with preserving their culture and accounts for the blend of transmission with transformation views on this issue.

Of greatest interest is what was not evident. Although the program claims to be holistic, it is so in a narrower sense than might be anticipated in today’s social climate. The integration is among domains, that is, among the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. There is no mention of integration across even the arts included in the document.

As to modes of behaviour described in the curriculum document, perception appears to operate at two of the levels described in Arts PROPEL⁶ (Gardner, 1993): “awareness of sensuous aspects of experience” and “awareness of physical properties and qualities of materials” (p. 151). The “capacity to make fine discriminations about works in the domain” is absent and even, in the visual arts, said to be beyond the capacity of children (p. 45). Reacting or responding does not generally encourage reflection except in drama (p. 23).

Other cultures are not mentioned except in dance, where folk dances (e.g., Greek, Chinese) and primitive dances (e.g., African, Australian, Asian, Oriental) are listed in a way that might suggest cultural stereotyping. There is also no specific reference to gender equity or other social issues one might expect to find in a document with a transformation orientation.

It is difficult to determine which of Grenier’s conceptualizations of the nature of art best matches this curriculum document. Drama avoids the issue totally by remaining experiential and having no theatre content. For the other arts, although much is made of the social importance of the arts and the value of experiencing art, the way these ideas are expressed and the emphasis on aesthetic qualities along with the neglect of world art suggest a hierarchic conceptualization of the arts.

Saskatchewan

In 1991, approximately 10 years after a call for renewal in arts education, Saskatchewan Education issued a separate arts curriculum document for each elementary grade 1 through 5. *Art Education: A Curriculum Guide for Grade 5*, representative of those documents, consists of an introduction and curriculum for dance, drama, music, and visual arts, and an interrelated unit connecting all the arts under a common theme.

Arts education is identified as one of seven areas of study in the elementary school curriculum, with 200 minutes allotted per week for the arts and all four arts required for all children. Along with maintaining the benefits of creative,

historical, and purely academic approaches, the curriculum claims to focus on aesthetic benefits of the arts, by which is meant the unique value of the arts as ways of “knowing about the world and human experience” (p. 5). Students “should gain a lasting appreciation of arts forms experienced as an audience” (p. 147).

The intention is further to preserve the integrity of each art while showing commonalities (p. 4). The commonalities are demonstrated particularly at the unit level, where such themes as “Ideas and Inspirations,” “Making Sense of Things,” and “Learning to Perceive/See/Hear” help facilitate the connection making for students. Modelled on Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE; Swerhone, 1991, p. 29), an approach introduced by the J. Paul Getty Center for Education in the Arts in the United States, the program interweaves three components—the creative/productive, the cultural/historical, and the critical/responsive—with each given equal emphasis in the pie-shaped models illustrating the focus for each art.

The Saskatchewan curriculum reveals a strong transaction orientation. Problem solving is emphasized in every section (pp. 35, 59), with procedures for helping students described. In creative dance, for example, the teacher guides students through the following process:

1. Begin by defining the problem to be solved. . . .
2. Explore all possible solutions to the problem.
3. Choose the solution most appropriate to the situation.
4. Try the solution.
5. Reflect on the solution. Ask questions. . . .
6. Repeat steps one to five if necessary. Begin by redefining the problem. (p. 61)

Not only is problem solving mentioned as a strategy, the teacher is given assistance in implementing a perhaps unfamiliar approach. A similar process in seven steps is described for responding to art forms. These are preparation, first impressions, description, analysis, interpretation, background information, and informed judgment (pp. 317-319). Responding to art is seen as an interactive process (p. 7); the consumer is to be prepared to make informed choices (pp. 306, 315). Students are involved in a resource-based program (p. 29) in which they sometimes research topics (p. 313) on their way to being independent, lifelong learners. True to the transactional de-emphasis of the affective, although this aspect of experience is not denied, the overall approach is cognitive.⁷

Student assessment is extensive, with sample collection instruments provided. Evaluation also involves critical thinking and reflection on the students’ part (pp. 6, 304) and an opportunity to demonstrate “their understanding of the important concepts in the unit and how these concepts are related to each other and previous learning” (p. 19). The curriculum is said to be designed for either generalist or specialist classroom teachers (p. 4).

Culture is incorporated as a lived experience. Thus, the arts’ relevance to daily living is stressed; the arts include “fine arts, popular arts, traditional arts, craft,

commercial arts and functional arts” (p. 5). Throughout, students are encouraged to move beyond a quick judgment to a more informed one. There is particular emphasis on contemporary art, Canadian art, and the Indian, Métis, and Inuit arts of Saskatchewan. The art of other cultures is seen to provide “a way of examining people’s values and beliefs” (p. 71).

Since differences among cultures are emphasized, even though the objective qualities of art are explored, Grenier’s differential view is most applicable. There is an indication of movement toward a generic view in the statement that the arts are ways of knowing. The relationship between the art object and the cultural context, however, is not really explored.

British Columbia

The British Columbia Ministry of Education has identified four strands in the revised curriculum which has continued to develop since the 1988 *Sullivan Report* (Province of British Columbia, 1988). The Fine Arts (dance, drama, music, and visual arts), are designated as one of these strands. The preface to the 1992 draft of the *Curriculum/Assessment Framework*⁸ for each art indicates that “this is a new type of document that must be examined in the context of *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning* (BCME, 1989)⁹ and the Primary, Intermediate, and Graduation Foundations, as well as other materials” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992a, p. 5). This is indeed the case. My analysis relies on pertinent sections in the documents listed above but only on those aspects dealing with grades 1 through 7, the traditional elementary panel in British Columbia.¹⁰ Many intended documents are in draft form or in planning stages. The final outcome is yet unknown.

The aesthetic and artistic development goals in the Intermediate foundations are to enable students to discover and respond to creative and imaginative expression, create, experience a sense of wonder, explore and express their human spirit, value the expressions of cultures, and be aware of and appreciate design (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 35). These goals apply to all strands in the curriculum, and the arts are also responsible for developing students in the other goal areas (e.g., intellectual and emotional development).

Although the school’s primary function is to provide for intellectual development and an appreciation of learning, the school shares with the family and community responsibility for developing “an appreciation of the fine arts and an understanding of cultural heritage” (BCME, 1991, p. 11). This search for links is even more clear in the *Framework* documents, designed to “facilitate discussion by partners in education” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992a, p. 5).

A key principle of the curriculum is the attempt to provide students with an integrated experience and indeed a “global educational focus” (BCME, 1991, p. 21). Furthermore, “all program goals are seen as interdependent and interrelated” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 28). Responding to this general intention, the drama

Framework addresses “integrating knowledge and experience” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992b, p. 11). Integration too often degenerates into surface and meaningless juxtaposition of content or ideas, so it is reassuring to find that in each art except drama there are suggestions for connection making which will also preserve the integrity of the art.¹¹

Education is a process seen to be continuous, flexible, sequential, and experiential (BCME, 1991, p. 142; BCME/MRMHR, 1992a, p. 5; BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 55). The expected outcome is an educated citizen who is a lifelong learner. Critical and creative thinking are promoted (BCME, 1991, p. 143; BCME/MRMHR, 1992b, p. 20). Such goals are fostered in an environment where the learner is encouraged to wonder and be curious in an accepting and tolerant atmosphere. The *Framework* documents claim to “allow students and teachers to more readily explore the ‘interconnectedness’ of the subject areas” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992a, p. 6). Both student and teacher are considered to be learners. The *Framework* documents are addressed to “non-specialist” as well as specialist teachers.

Evaluation is seen to be a crucial part of the learning process. The Primary foundation document (BCME, 1991) states that the purpose of evaluation is to enable the learner. Assessment focuses on the child, describes what the child can do, facilitates continuous learning, provides authentic evidence, employs varied strategies and multiple observations, is based on the curriculum, and encompasses all five goals (p. 21). The Intermediate document (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e) adds that assessment should promote risk taking, allow for individual styles, be free of gender and race bias, be collaborative, and allow for student self-evaluation (p. 71).

It is difficult to present a coherent picture of arts education when all the documents are included—as they must be—because the structures continue to evolve. This consequence is perhaps likely in a context in which curriculum is a participatory process. There is, however, a consistency in the emphasis on process, if not a consistency of approach across the curriculum documents. The curriculum orientation is clearly transformational.

What of the social nature of the arts? The general orientation is Grenier’s second view, differential. Valuing cultural identity and diversity are identified as a social responsibility (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 29). Culture is described as “lived, recorded, or selective” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 37). All three ways of conceptualizing culture are considered important at appropriate times and each “offers rich opportunities to learn about the world and its people” (BCME/MRMHR, 1992e, p. 37). The diversity aspect is reinforced in the *Framework* documents in dance (BCME/MRMHR, 1992a, p. 11), drama (BCME/MRMHR, 1992b, p. 11) and visual arts (BCME/MRMHR, 1992d, p. 17). The visual arts, however, also explore Grenier’s generic view where the arts are described as ways of knowing (BCME/MRMHR, 1992d, p. 7). In the second curriculum in-

tention for visual arts, the learning opportunities (e.g., “Explore meanings in images and their social and cultural determinants” [BCME/MRMHR, 1992d, p. 18]) suggest an exploration of images which could well be the beginning of the meta-approach seeking “common underlying properties of the symbolic processes which provides [sic] them with their respective qualities . . . and practices” (Grenier, 1990, p. 42).

Ontario

The working document *The Common Curriculum: Grades 1-9*, dated February 1993, provides the basis for the following discussion. In 97 pages, the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training provides direction on curriculum development for nine years of schooling. The schools, it is said, “must constantly strive to respond to new developments in order to meet the needs of their communities and those of society at large” (p. 1). And again, schools are responsive to changing needs (p. 7). The curriculum is divided into four broad, interrelated program areas in which traditional subject boundaries are purposely broken down: Language; the Arts; Self and Society; and Mathematics, Science, and Technology. No explanation for this particular configuration appears in this rather Spartan document. In addition, there are 10 cross-curricular learning outcomes which it is every teacher’s responsibility to foster in all areas.

Teachers are to motivate students to set high expectations for themselves and are to challenge students to achieve their best (p. 5) in an emotionally supportive environment. Using a variety of methods, teachers engage students in active inquiry and connection making. Evaluation is ongoing and continuous, quantitative and qualitative, and applied to all learning outcomes.

Students need to develop “a positive sense of self and respect and concern for others” (p. 4). They are to learn to reflect on the process of learning so they can assume responsibility for their own learning and become responsible citizens who fully participate in society (p. 10). Knowledge is actively constructed by the students; activities are inquiry-oriented (pp. 5, 7). Learning involves effort and self-discipline (p. 5). It is holistic because we live in a complex, interdependent world (pp. 4, 5, 63).

The socializing role of schooling is reinforced in several places (pp. 1, 4, 10). The responsibilities of members of a democratic society are stressed along with their rights. It is nevertheless imperative that schools adapt to the changing times (pp. 2-3), and accommodate all students, regardless of needs, abilities, interests, race, cultural background, or gender.

The arts develop the mind and “nurture and reflect our spiritual aspirations” (p. 18). An important goal is to develop literacy in the arts, that is, “to develop an understanding and appreciation of the creative process and of the principles and techniques that serve the creative purpose in individual disciplines” (p. 18).

The arts include dance, drama, music, and visual arts, but these are only named once in the document despite the earlier reference to “individual disciplines.” There are four broad topics in the arts: (1) understanding form; (2) exploring meaning; (3) understanding function; and (4) communicating through the arts.

The 15 outcomes for the arts designating what students will be able to do by the end of grades 3, 6, and 9 apply to all the arts. In addition, considerable emphasis is placed on responding to the arts, with a number of outcomes related specifically to this consumer-developing role. As might be anticipated given the holistic approach to curriculum development, a number of learning outcomes provide organizing principles for integrated arts. For example, by the end of Grade 6 students will “identify examples of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in art works” (p. 64).

Unlike the curriculum documents of Quebec and Saskatchewan, those of both British Columbia and Ontario require going beyond the arts curriculum to an examination of the larger curriculum. Of the four, the Ontario document is the most difficult to classify because it appears to have roots in all three orientations. Accountability is an issue more likely to be defended by the behaviourist stream of the transmission view. There is no mention of play and very little of creativity in *The Common Curriculum*. In one important area, the emphasis on interconnectedness — important because it is a persistent theme throughout the document — the view appears to be transformational. The blurring of traditional disciplines is the most visible testament to this view. On the other hand, the view of the learner, learning, the teacher’s role, the aims of education, and the process of learning are all compatible with the transaction orientation. The latter view predominates despite the attempt to seek connections because there is little discussion of personal discovery, of self-awareness, or of the individual bringing about change. Instead, schools prepare students to adapt to change.

The arts are influenced by and illuminate the cultural and social mores of the times in which they were created. “Different styles in the arts are products of different social and cultural milieus” (p. 63). Studying the arts helps students “appreciate the universality of human experience” (p. 63). The aesthetic qualities of artworks are to be perceived, but there is no mention of the artworks’ source other than that students should “demonstrate a knowledge of Native, folk, and contemporary art in Canada” (p. 64) and that stereotyping should be identified. Grenier’s differential position is once again evident. There are also intriguing hints, however, of a nascent generic view in the search for relationships among symbols, materials, and styles in the arts (p. 66).

Summary of Analyses

Table 1 summarizes the results of the analyses according to Miller and Seller’s curriculum orientations and Grenier’s conceptualization of the nature of the arts.

TABLE 1

Summary of the Analysis of Elementary Arts Curricula

	<i>Curriculum Orientation</i>	<i>Nature of the Arts</i>
Quebec	transformation ^a	hierarchic
Saskatchewan	transaction	differential [generic] ^b
British Columbia	transformation	differential [generic]
Ontario	transaction*	differential [generic]

^aThe asterisk (*) indicates a mixed position.

^bSquare brackets indicate some evidence of a movement toward a position.

Although Quebec and British Columbia share a similar orientation, the two curriculum documents differ substantially. Quebec's document qualifies as transformational mostly because of its emphasis on self-actualization and on the child; British Columbia's qualifies because its overall approach stresses process and integration and emphasizes the learner. Similarly, although both Saskatchewan and Ontario have transactional orientations, Saskatchewan's curriculum is a purer model of transactional thinking because each art is maintained as a discipline, problem-solving and critical thinking are central, and evaluation reflects the process. Ontario, as was mentioned earlier, juggles contradictory ideas by featuring accountability and standards alongside an interconnected program design. Collaboration and a sharing of roles among arts educators, artists, and the public gain momentum with the documents' recency.

There are three further points. First, recent documents demonstrate a growing understanding that the arts are cognitive pursuits: "they are seen as occasions for mental activities" (Gardner, 1993, p. 136). On the other hand, other disciplines are also considered to have aesthetic objectives. Second, the sequential nature of especially the traditional music curriculum, which has featured such discrete learning objectives as rhythmic figures and tonal configurations (e.g., sol-mi), does not figure heavily in these curricula, although there is sequence in the sense of revisiting learning outcomes or goals. Third, assessment of student learning is becoming an integral part of arts curricula, contrasting with earlier beliefs of many teachers and the public that "the arts were primarily a realm of emotion, mystery, magic, or intuition" (Gardner, 1993, p. 136), with authentic assessment assuming greater prominence.

All but Quebec's document share a similar understanding of the social nature of art—a developing generic view; Quebec's is mostly hierarchic. Beyond ac-

knowledging the arts' responsiveness to world events and ideas, the Ontario curriculum document seems more preoccupied with integration of the art disciplines and with racism than with the nature of the arts. The views expressed by Saskatchewan and British Columbia seem to fit comfortably into the modified multicultural curriculum described by Elliott (1989) in that a basically aesthetic orientation is assumed, but the scope of the content has broadened to encompass the arts of many cultures. In answer to Gardner's question "Is there a privileged canon of Western art, or does the art of our civilization merely take its place among many other equally meritorious traditions?" (1993, p. 135), the trend is to reply "the latter."

Broad acceptance of the differential view is not surprising in a country officially espousing multicultural ideals. Many people no longer accept that there is one best kind of art or one best set of criteria for determining excellence. Educators are still left, however, with the problem of how to deal with these many cultures in school; for instance, should they emphasize differences or similarities among the artistic practices and conceptions of various cultures?

As Grenier suggests, the differential view is more accepting of other cultures than is the absolutist hierarchical view, which attempts to impose an 18th-century view of art on world art, but neither gets at what the arts contribute as "ways of knowing." That is, neither considers sufficiently the arts' symbolic nature at a generic level of meaning. The phrase "arts as ways of knowing" has appealed to many arts educators as a way of justifying arts programs at a critical time. Nevertheless, although many arts education advocates have welcomed Gardner's theory of "Multiple Intelligences" for its strong support of the arts, they have not always considered the theory's educational implications, including, for example, the non-transferability of such capacities as critical thinking from one domain to another: "Each domain exhibits its own particular *logic of implications*," writes Gardner (1993, p. 44). The result of this selective thinking by some educators has been an acceptance of integration without regard for the problems of transfer. The analysis revealed differing conceptualizations of arts education with minimal recognition of fundamental implementation obstacles.

DISCUSSION

Expectations of Arts Education—A Confused Vision

At the rhetorical level, it is easy to find areas of consensus among the various participants in the rebirth of the national arts education movement. (Gardner, 1993, p. 134)

Over the past decades, elementary arts curricula have customarily been experiential, with the focus being either the process, in the case of progressive approaches (Abbs, 1987), or the product, in the case of performance- or studio-based approaches. The former has too often degenerated into a lack of standards

and unstructured, purposeless activity, especially in the hands of generalists, and has too often contributed to the belief that the arts are frivolous. The latter approach, that of arts specialists,¹² has too often resulted in the exclusive view of the arts and contributed to the belief that only the “talented” should study the arts. It has been a number of years since the development of audiences or consumers has been a major or even minor consideration in arts education. Smith (1992), commenting on the possible goals of arts education, suggests a direction seemingly adopted by recent curriculum writers:

To be sure, a number of theorists and practitioners continue to stress competence in creative and performing activities as the cornerstone of arts education. I, too, think such competence is important, but I view it as but one of several components of aesthetic learning that contribute to the development of aesthetic percipience. (p. 52)

There is a growing trend towards accepting this aesthetic percipience, a trend especially noticeable in the development of aesthetic objectives that cross disciplines.

What is arts education in Canada supposed to accomplish? In 1991, the Canada Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, interested in the contributions of the arts to culture and the Canadian identity, funded a state-of-the-art review of arts literacy in Canada (McIntosh, Hanley, Van Gyn, & Verriour, 1993). At issue was the description of the arts-literate Canadian.¹³ Researchers questions included: What is arts literacy? What are the criteria for identifying an arts-literate person? What level (if any) of expertise should be required? What is the role of education? Should the emphasis be on the development of artistry or of response to the arts? Or both?

A working definition of arts literacy was proposed by the research team: “The arts literate person demonstrates a level of awareness, understanding, and valuing in one or more of the arts” (p. 103). More specifically,

the arts literate person seeks out and attends to experiences in one or more of the arts, perceives and responds to the qualities of art works where this is an appropriate cultural response, is knowledgeable about the specific code of one or more art forms (tradition, history, canon, vocabulary), has experience with the creative (doing) process in one or more of the arts, and exercises discernment (makes informed choices) in selecting arts experiences. (p. 103)

The selected curricula address most of these criteria. Each document implies a provincial model of the arts-literate person. With the exception of Quebec, the curriculum developers have acknowledged that production alone is insufficient. Ontario and Saskatchewan are most supportive of the importance of refining students’ responses to the arts. Gardner (1993) notes that there is a “call for an arts education that encompasses some discussion and analysis of artworks them-

selves and some appreciation of the cultural contexts in which the artworks are fashioned" (p. 141).

Artists and their support communities who think the schools should develop adults to support the arts (meaning, of course, the kind of art they do) have exacerbated the difficulty in resolving the issues around goals in arts education. Artists have criticized arts education: "Artistic values are disappearing from our schools," says the Task Force on Professional Training for the Cultural Sector in Canada (1991, p. 4). "Artists are discouraged. . . . artists no longer know whether anyone is listening to them; in short, whether they have an audience" (p. 8).

Furthermore, a well-intentioned, large segment of the public has either accepted the self-expression view of the arts (everything goes), believes that only the talented can engage in the arts (so the arts have no place in the public schools), or evaluate arts programs on the basis of the shows.

We do not have a shared vision of arts education among educators, artists, and the community. Indeed, the three groups often seem to be working at cross-purposes.¹⁴ The difficulties should at least be acknowledged.

Who Should Teach the Arts?

Each document I examined includes statements that the arts curriculum could be implemented by either generalist classroom teachers or specialists. In the past, many arts curricula were designed by specialists for teachers with specialist knowledge but for implementation by classroom teachers.¹⁵ Failure in implementation was too easily attributed to a lack of talent, a convenient excuse for neglecting a subject. The recent curricula are somewhat different in that the objectives are less technical and demanding of specialist knowledge by the teacher. The emerging view of arts education emphasizes broader concepts such as pattern, unity, and variety that are more accessible to the novice.¹⁶ A greater number of objectives fall into the category of appreciation rather than skills development, although some skills are expected. That is, recent documents make a greater attempt to convince classroom teachers that they can teach the arts.¹⁷

Unfortunately (for egalitarians), some research suggests that students do not learn as much when classroom teachers are responsible for the delivery (Harris, 1991; Wiebe, 1986).¹⁸ Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991) in their ground-breaking qualitative study of arts education in eight schools found that teachers in the study expressed four underlying views about the nature of art:

(a) art is the exclusive domain of emotions (in contrast to cognition); (b) works of art are seen as direct manifestations of artists' emotions; (c) artist and audience emotions are interchangeable; (d) art is subjective, personal, and individual (in contrast to inter-subjective and cultural). (pp. 315–316)

These views run counter to a number of contemporary curriculum approaches including cognitive-oriented ones such as Saskatchewan's. Evidently, there are strong prevailing attitudes among teachers that will need to be modified if classroom teachers are ever to be successful in delivering the curricula examined here.

Some writers ask why the classroom teacher should not be able to teach art. Broudy (1991), writing in defense of Discipline-Based Arts Education (DBAE), suggests that the answer lies in "how much of an artist the classroom teacher is expected to become and how teachable the 'language' of art can be made" (p. 72). The fault, it appears, resides not in the teacher but in what is expected of the teacher. Teacher educators have tried to prepare teachers, but usually in ways honouring traditional assumptions about arts education and the need to develop traditional skills and knowledge.

Still, the question must be asked: For whom is the curriculum—the teacher, the students, or both? Are the learning outcomes to be determined by what students can accomplish or by the coping level of teachers? Should a curriculum also be a learning experience for teachers, if needed? One solution (favoured by artists and government) to the shortage of qualified arts teachers is to invite artists to fill the gap. This temporary measure helps keep artists employed and provides an important link between students, the schools, and practising artists, but may also camouflage the true state of arts education in the school by providing the appearance of a program where none exists.

Proponents of Arts PROPEL, an alternative to DBAE, insist that "art curricula need to be presented by teachers and other individuals with a deep knowledge of how to 'think' in an artistic medium" (Gardner, 1993, p. 142). The notion that arts education is too important to be left to arts educators may have validity, but the need for cooperation does not negate the need for a concerted effort in the area of teacher education in the arts, especially at, but not limited to, the elementary level.

Teacher Education—The Key

Concurrently, a widespread dialogue about the nature of art is underway. Should student teachers be steeped in the 18th-century hierarchical view of art as has been traditionally the practice? In the differential view, in which cultural contexts would be emphasized? In the generic view, which could link cultures in an engagement with art by emphasizing its symbolic nature?

Evidently, if these questions are to be answered, teacher education must undergo close scrutiny to determine the underlying assumptions of programs offered to both generalist and specialist teachers, and to assess their relevance to classroom practice and life-long learning. What is the purpose of current methods courses for generalists? For specialists? Are these courses successful? In what ways? Do they produce arts-literate teachers? Should they? Perhaps it is time to develop a new set of expectations for generalists in arts education. Perhaps it is

time to give generalists a real but realistic role in arts education. This role could be based on meeting outcomes dealing with aesthetic awareness across the curriculum and with a valuing of the arts as a vital part of human existence while leaving the more technical/artistic aspects to specialists.

Gardner (1993) raises the further issue of whether students should dabble in all the arts or receive more in-depth exposure to one art form. He argues for the latter. The same question could be asked of teacher educators. Is it better for pre-service teachers to get a taste of all the arts, or should in-depth engagement in one be the expectation, with concomitant collaboration among teachers with differing expertise to provide students with experiences in all the arts?

Clarifying the role of the generalist and specialist teacher will reinforce the need for specialists in elementary schools, specialists who work, when possible, in partnership with educationally informed artists. Perhaps it is time to expand the role of specialists to include not only teaching children but collaborating with other teachers and the community in a way that will eventually lead to a truly arts-literate Canadian populace.

NOTES

- ¹ As of August 1993.
- ² Such an influence is already evident. The video *Failing Grades* (Freedman & Holmes, 1993), initiated by a medical doctor, Joe Freedman, and funded largely by banks and business, along with the studies such as *International Comparisons in Education: Curriculum, Values and Lessons*, a 1991 report by the Alberta Chamber of Resources and Alberta Education, are but two examples.
- ³ See for example Laurie Hicks' (1989) discussion of Cultural Literacy Art Education (CLAE) and David Elliott's (1989) argument for a social understanding of music to replace the 18th-century aesthetic view.
- ⁴ This document is currently under review.
- ⁵ Abbs (1987) makes a scathing critique of progressivism and modernism. In *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, Gardner (1993) provides a contrasting viewpoint, commenting that progressive education is "a form of education that is nowadays much maligned but, when well practiced, is most consistent with societal values of pluralism, individualism, and cooperation for the greater good of all" (p. 75).
- ⁶ Arts PROPEL is a collaborative venture between Harvard Project Zero, the Pittsburg public schools, and Educational Testing Services, undertaken to design assessment instruments for the arts.
- ⁷ A distinction should be made between cognitive and intellectual objectives and strategies for learning.
- ⁸ Hereafter, I refer to these as the *Framework* documents.
- ⁹ Since the writing of this article, the Year 2000 curriculum has suffered political banishment. The *Framework* documents, however, are still in use as draft documents.
- ¹⁰ The curriculum in British Columbia is currently divided into the Primary years 1 to 4 (Kindergarten to grade 3), the Intermediate years 1 to 7 (grades 4 to 10), and the Graduation years 1 and 2 (grades 11 and 12).

- ¹¹ The music statement (BCME/MRMHR, 1992c, pp. 27–29) is disappointing in that its implementation would result in the use of music as decoration rather than allow for connection making.
- ¹² Art specialists are traditionally the product of a conservatory (studio) approach to education, where the major concern is developing artistry. Drama teachers (not to be confused with theatre teachers) are the exception; their focus is on the process of drama, rather than theatrical production.
- ¹³ See Hanley (1994) for a discussion of the timing of the research project.
- ¹⁴ Refer also to McIntosh et al. (1993), pp. 58–59.
- ¹⁵ The problem has been compounded by the inclusion of drama and dance in the curriculum.
- ¹⁶ This approach is more likely to encourage those who have remained aloof because they felt unable to cope with more technical knowledge.
- ¹⁷ This trend may be another example of the egalitarianism which in its extreme form has resulted in the Lake Wobegon effect — everyone is above average.
- ¹⁸ This research assumes the need for sequential arts programs.

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