

Introduction

Cultural Histories of a School Subject

International comparisons of education are useful on several levels. They can help us to understand our location in the world as part of a professional community and provide a vehicle for examining what we have in common across national borders. They can illustrate the vital differences of culture that have been a basis for distinctions between nation states and the formation of national identities. Comparative studies can reflect educational conditions at the macro level, such as the influence of "modernization" and centralization on policy, and at the micro level of regional and local practice (Altbach, Arnove, & Kelly, 1982).

In the past, the idea of separating macro and micro levels of investigation has been an important underlying influence in the shaping of comparative educational research. Recently, however, researchers in the field of international education have called for a marriage of these levels of study for an analysis of how structural factors, such as social class relations or the degree of centralization of political authority and control of the state over education, and international factors, such as importation of textbooks and curricula, affect who learns what from whom with what effects (Altbach et al., 1982).

These structural factors shape education and are dependent upon conditions of culture. The international factors are also influenced by culture, not only in their formation, but in their transferal and implementation because when curriculum is moved from one location to another, it is

rites and rituals, products and artifacts, and mentalities. The new perspective of cultural history includes a critical interpretation of texts written in and about the past involving an examination of social contradictions and discontinuities. For example, the application of feminist theory to American history illustrates the dynamics of exclusion in a democracy (Burke, 1991; Foner, 1990). To critique the past from the present has its dangers because what is possible to see at present may not have been within the horizon of vision in the past. As a result, the new history is controversial and the appropriateness of its topics, methods, and analyses are in debate.

A common concern of scholars writing the new history is the shift in focus from the surface behaviors of people to deeper linguistic constructs. For example, Foucault (1970) focuses attention away from the idea that social change is a natural process and a generalizable condition toward the transformation of a particular, cultural and historical context that maintains its structure, but shifts certain aspects of social life. Although discourse maintains structure, promoting constancy, power arrangements shift and new social patterns emerge through discursive conflicts. Groups are excluded or included through discourse and those with little power are given new legitimacy by adopting legitimate language.

Because cultural historians ask different questions than other types of historians and are interested in new topics, such as cultural identity, what constitutes data is often redefined. Important documents are no longer only those that are public or private. That is, information is not only thought of as located in published documents or the personal papers of "important" people. Rather, the most useful documents may be located in the space in between, created and used by relatively small groups of people or people traditionally written out of history. For example, in the case of education, documents such as those produced and used by public school teachers with students could be essential.

Understanding the educational past in the context of national culture requires an external view of history. An internal history of education is one that focuses on the workings of a discipline from the inside; that is, it is about influences of change and stability that appear to be initiated by forces within the professional community. In contrast, an external history attends to larger social and cultural influences on the ways in which teaching and learning are conceptualized. The methods used to write external history involve sources that, at first sight, may have little to do with education. However, education is a notoriously public enterprise that is discussed and enacted in a public forum. The way people think about education is dependent upon a wide range of social knowledge.

Such a history of education also depends on a particular view of time and space. Instead of being imagined as linear, the past is represented as

a conceptual space in which things occur in an interactive manner, referring back to earlier times. A conceptual space is helpful in thinking about history in part, because various histories exist concurrently in the same past; for example, different cultures have histories that do not "fit" on one timeline. Also, in a sense, the past continues to exist in the present. Time and place make up a structural space in which only some things are possible and certain consciousness can exist as a result of directions taken in the past (Braudel, 1980). When the history is relatively short (as it is with much educational history), and the structure is the same for both the content and creation of history, critique becomes most important because the perspectival distance afforded by long views of the past are not possible and conflicts that may in the distant future be resolved or forgotten because they are inconsequential in the long run, have not yet been laid to rest.

Different problems are chosen by new historians than those by traditional historians. The linguistic focus of their analysis has influenced the character of research questions in educational history, and opened up new possibilities for research in art education. For example, educational motives and shifts in the meaning of discourse that are relied upon to justify educational practice require further study. The focus of problems may be different even when considering the same historical event. Consider the example of the Owatonna Project in Minnesota. This project has been written about by several historians of art education, including one of the editors of this volume. It was a project that was to bring art into the daily lives of the residents of Owatonna, Minnesota, a town about sixty miles south of Minneapolis. The project was the brainchild of the dean of the University of Minnesota School of Education at the time and funded by the Carnegie philanthropic foundations. Often the Owatonna Project has been studied as an example of a successful art education program. Studied from a critical perspective, it can also be looked at as an example of the ways in which funding by philanthropic organizations control educational experiences and values (Freedman, 1989b).

Although the new history might be defined as being on the fringe of the discipline of history, and bridging history with sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, such definitions may defeat its purpose. Many critical perspectives fall under the rubric of critical theory in education, the roots of which include neo-Marxism, French semiotic and poststructural analysis, as well as feminist and cultural theory. Perhaps the greatest common ground among critical theorists of education is their skepticism about historical positivism and progressivism. However, to marginalize critical perspectives gives the appearance that other perspectives are central and, therefore, more authoritative representations of the past. Good history is inherently critical in that it addresses underlying assumptions, interests,

and effects, as well as surface behaviors. In a sense, critical perspectives are now located at the center of the discipline of history, and push outward to influence the field.

The discussion of methodology links together some new directions in art history (e.g., Preziosi, 1989; Rees & Borzello, 1986), educational history, and history of art education. For example, the new cultural history includes an interest in information connected to forms of production other than written text, such as painting, architecture, and film (e.g., Frisch, 1993; Starn, 1989). Certainly, pictures have long been used as a source of historical information. However, alternative sources and interpretations are necessary for writing history of art education. For example, an analysis of the art made by Franz Cizek's Austrian students in the 1910s and 1920s has provided valuable insights into educational practices of the past. For decades, the discourse about these practices has led educators to represent Cizek as a vital influence in the international shift in art education toward the promotion of free self-expression in children. Since the turn of the century, Cizek's efforts to eliminate adult influences from his student's work have been documented. However, when the words are compared to the pictures, an incongruity is apparent. The student work is highly stylized, technically proficient, and remarkably similar. Although Cizek apparently did not teach by showing students adult examples of art in class, the children's work closely resembles a popular adult style of the period, which they reproduced in class and which was praised by their teacher (Duncum, 1982).

The incongruity between pictures and words in the case of Cizek's students' work and the discourse about it illustrates several important aspects of understanding international curriculum history. For example, the meanings of words change over time and as they are used in new places. What was conceptualized as free self-expression in Europe in the 1910s and 1920s is not the same as the notion of free self-expression that has permeated art education in post-Abstract Expressionist America. The work of Cizek's students was, in fact, a great step away from the previous common art education practice of copying adult drawings to learn drafting and rendering techniques. The drawings, paintings, and prints by Cizek's students are seductive in their beauty and joyfulness, which is one reason why educators who saw them displayed in the great art museums of England, the United States, and Canada, wanted their students to be able to achieve a similar visual competency and apparent freedom. However, the historical and cultural analysis illustrates psychological and sociological aspects of the relationship of child art to a range of adult imagery, the importance of context to educational practice, and the dynamics of the construction of educational discourse.

Problems of Content

The chapters in this book reflect historical debates that continue to influence the field. Curriculum development in general typically reflects the agreed-upon knowledge of a particular culture. Rarely do educators construct curriculum deliberately focusing on knowledge that is fundamentally conflicting and rooted in disagreement (Graff, 1987). Yet, all the chapters here illustrate underlying differences of opinion about what knowledge is most important for students, the ways in which knowledge should be presented to students, and what is to be gained by students as a result of educational experience.

The development of art in public schooling is a common thread throughout the studies. In each country, public schooling has played a hegemonic role in the political and cultural life of the nation through the mass education of large populations. At the same time, several of the countries have political agendas that involve interpretations of education as a means of promoting individualism and difference. Public school art education has often been given this particular role and been influenced by the vital contradictions the role suggests.

In each of the chapters, historical periods are laid out. The structure of history organized in terms of periods sometimes constrains ideas about the past and may suggest that things are radically different outside any given period. However, the periods reflect continuities of stasis as well as disjunctions of change, and as a result, help us to understand relationships between stories about art education in different places at the same time.

Although the focus of historical writing is often on what Foucault calls sites of contestation, which signify points of change, the case studies illustrate ways in which the new becomes institutionalized, such as in the case of girls' art education to prepare for marriage and motherhood and the long-standing focus on industrial drawing at the expense of other art activities. Once institutionalized, these practices resisted change and seemed to provide continuity, often at the same time that new ideas were providing problems and possibilities.

As well as historical periods shaping the case studies, topical structures are at work. Each of the chapters has a particular emphasis, such as influences of multiculturalism, the notion of self-expression, or conceptions of artistic development. These topics are revisited throughout the book, but contextualized differently in each case. The analysis of the field in relation to these example themes demonstrates that art education has a relationship with power; it is not neutral or innocent. Sociopolitical conflicts and national and international ideological struggles have helped to shape the field.

At least three general topics have directed research in public school art education. First, the field has focused on the developmental aspects of learning art knowledge. Research in this area has ranged from studies of children's artistic production (e.g., Lowenfeld 1947, 1957; Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1964; Wilson & Wilson, 1977) to those concerning an understanding of visual art based on viewing behaviors and cognition (e.g., Gardner, Winner, & Kircher, 1975; Parsons, 1987). Most of the work concerning artistic production has been based on a psychological approach to development. However some, such as the work of Brent and Marjorie Wilson, have understood development as heavily influenced by sociological conditions.

The second topic of research in art education has focused on curriculum theory and design, including definitions of purpose for art education, the selection of appropriate information for students, and the organization of that information. This theme includes the creation of curriculum materials and the representation of art knowledge in curriculum. Debates concerning the relative influence of professional fine art disciplines are important to this theme.

Third, practices of teaching art have been investigated. This research has focused on instructional aspects of art education, such as teaching methods, student assessment, classroom management, and program implementation and evaluation (e.g., Boughton, Eisner, & Ligtvoet, 1996; Eisner, 1985). These studies have included debates about professionalism in practice, such as whether art educators should embrace the notion of accountability as based on student testing.

In the United States, the study of these topics in relation to sociopolitics of art education is increasingly becoming a part of mainstream art education. These studies make debatable what is deeply embedded and taken for granted, such as the institutional aspects of public schooling (e.g., May, 1994), influences of national and local politics on educational reform (e.g., Blandy, 1987; Freedman, 1987b; Stuhr, 1994), and social issues, such as the relationship of gender to art education (e.g., Collins, 1987; Collins & Sandell, 1984; Freedman, 1994). Debates about the relationship between art and education are included, for example, concerning economic and cultural elitism in fine art and the democratizing vision of some school communities.

These topics characterize common interests in the professional field and are reflected in the following chapters. However, the ways in which the topics are played out in different national contexts reveal important cultural distinctions. In the United States, for example, the topics are conceptualized as somewhat discrete, and sociocultural perspectives are often considered a separate topic or other "level" of investigation. In South America, such boundaries tend to be more blurred. Also, the varied uses of primary and secondary sources in the chapters illustrates that more work has

been previously done in some areas than others. The stylistic differences in writing reflect cultural differences in the ways in which scholarship is reported. Of course, we would have liked to include more country chapters in this book, and in fact, not all of the invited scholars were able to contribute work; however, the collection as it is introduces a broad range of school issues.

The similarities and differences between art educational theories and practices in different countries can be seen in three major influences on the field: (a) state regulation, (b) professionalization, and (c) cultural ideals. These influences are enmeshed and interact in ways that are illustrated in each of the chapters. They are conceptualized as different themes here in the sense that they involve somewhat different social collectivities, such as institutions, organizations, and communities. It is the study of these collectivities that can aid our understanding of the relationship between agency and social structure (Giddens, 1987) and can help us to understand what about our work is reproductive and how and what we may produce that is new.

The final chapter of the book is an analysis of international aspects of cultural knowledge translation in curriculum and includes theorizing about the messages that can be learned from the example of art education. It contains a comparative, sociological framework for curriculum based on issues discussed throughout the text. It includes a discussion of the importance of historical context in understanding the relationship of curriculum to culture. Few large-scale cultural analyses of any type have been written about art education, or any other school subject. This book contributes to such an analysis of curriculum.