An Endangered Species: Art Specialists in Elementary Schools

A Possible Alternative: Trained Classroom Teachers in DBAE

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The subject of art in elementary schools is often taught by the general classroom teacher. Budget cuts in education, especially where art programs are already marginal, may lead to the elimination of art specialists at the elementary school level (Shanker, 1988; Broudy, 1987). Fortunately, the idea of teaching art remains desirable; in spite of the budget cuts, most states include some form of art education in their general programs (Kern, 1987).

An examination of the art education situation in Arizona, where a large number of school districts do not have art specialists at the elementary level, created the idea of establishing the Arizona Institute for Elementary Art Education. The Arizona Institute was funded in 1986 by The J. Paul Getty Trust, The Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona Humanities Council, and the Center for Excellence in Education at Northern Arizona University. The Arizona Institute was a replica of the Getty Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, a research and development center for staff development and curriculum implementation.

The first Summer Staff Development Program in the Arizona Institute included 51 classroom teachers, art specialists and principals from 12 school districts in Arizona. During the three week program, the participants were intensively involved with art and visited local museums.

They learned aesthetic scanning and the principles of Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE), which included the four major art disciplines, art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and art production. Faculty members and art education consultants from these four disciplines presented papers in their areas of expertise. Participants observed teachers using the DBAE approach, and practiced it themselves.

During the following school year, teachers who implemented the program were visited by Arizona Institute staff who helped them with any problems encountered in implementing the program. In these followup sessions with the teachers, the Institute members assisted in different activities such as the use of clay and finger painting, explained the use of curriculum materials and demonstrated aesthetic scanning. Finally, delivery of DBAE components in the schools was evaluated as a measure of the success of the Arizona Institute Staff Development and Curriculum Implementation Program.

The findings of the two Institute evaluators who made site visits were compiled in this study. A comparison of data from each evaluator gave a measure of interrater reliability in assessing how DBAE lessons were implemented during the first year by classroom teachers who had taken part in the 1986 Summer Staff Development Program.

Results

This paper will relate the results and analysis of the similarities and differences to Levels of Use from Hord et al's study (1987).

Differences Between this Study and Hord et al. (1987) Data

In this study, the data collected by means of classroom observations and teacher interviews were examined according to the Level of Use (LoU). The assessment was made according to each individual teacher's response. The purpose was to find the level at which each teacher was implementing the innovation.

Levels of Use of the Innovation

The 'Levels of Use' scale is a diagnostic tool developed as part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model to assess the degree to which the teacher is implementing the innovation at the time of the evaluation.(Hord et al., 1987).

The Levels of Use are as follows: Level 0 - Non-use; Level I - Orientation; Level II - Preparation; Level III - Mechanical Use; Level IVA - Routine; Level IVB - Refinement; Level V - Integration; and Level VI - Renewal.

...The level of implementation found will point out how the teacher is handling the innovation and will give the evaluator information about the direction that the teacher is taking with the innovation (pp. 54-56).

The results of the evaluations are compiled in Table 1, comparing them with the Hord et al., 1987 results:

Table 1. Comparison of the Percentage of Teachers
Implementing an Innovation in the First Year

Results from informal interviews with teachers (Hord et al., 1987)		Results of combined data of DBAE implementation by the two evaluators
LoU 0 Non use	5	0
LoU I Orientation	0	0
LoU II Preparation	5	0
LoU III Mechanical use	65	53
LoU IVA Routine	20	30
LoU IVB Refinement	5	17
LoU V Integration	0	0
LoU VI Renewal	0	0

Discussion and Conclusions

We can conclude that the first year of implementation of discipline-based art instruction by classroom teachers was extremely successful. The level of implementation found from the data supplied by the two evaluators was very similar to the level found in research of implementation of an innovation (Hord et al., 1987).

Application of DBAE to Teacher's Experience

DBAE theory has the specificity and practical refinement that enables it to be an effective directive mechanism, providing the essential background to rational educational practice (DiBlasio, 1987). DBAE defines components of content as well as practice. This makes it possible for teachers with different backgrounds to comprehend content with ease. It is also possible for independent evaluators to assess the content delivery and its effectiveness using different instruments (Appendices A & B).

Discipline-based instruction is based on educational methods used by classroom teachers in other disciplines: questions, comparisons, verbal reasoning, analysis, and culture. The teachers found themselves comfortable with the systematic approach of DBAE. The objectives in each unit were clearly stated and the way to apply them clearly given. The teaching of art did not depend on improvisations or following a "recipe" worked in other circumstances. The teachers could see the rationale behind each activity taught in their classes. From the methodological aspect, the adoption of DBAE was not a completely new or revolutionary educational experience for classroom teachers. The only novelty was the content, and therefore the innovation was easily adopted. Showers et al. (1987) mention that the basic level of skill or knowledge in a new approach is necessary before teachers can adopt and use an innovation and this content was built into the Summer Staff Development and into the curriculum.

Since we know that teachers are required to put a considerable amount of time into classroom preparation, we might expect them to have reservations about continuing a program that demands extra preparation time such as DBAE. From the observations made by teachers interviewed by both evaluators at different times during the school year, there was no mention of any disappointment with the program or complaint about the extra preparation needed to implement it. No teacher stated that the program would not be continued in future years. We also conclude that the teachers found the effort involved in implementing the program worthwhile because of its value and the benefits gained from it by the students.

If it is correctly assumed that the Arizona Institute participants who were the subjects of this study were a representative group of classroom teachers, the implications are that the program can expand to include additional teachers and participating districts without fear of its being rejected. The reactions elicited from the participating classroom teachers suggested that previous methods of teaching art were not as successful as discipline-based art education. They felt that as teachers without a formal art background, they needed a structured systematic approach in order to feel comfortable teaching art. They claimed that Institute preparation was what was needed, and this was evident from the enthusiastic response of children in their classes, their parents, and the school principals.

Teachers who attended the Summer Staff Development Program, and subsequently implemented DBAE in their classes described their views

on the program and its implementation during a renewal week at the Institute June 10 through 12, 1987 (Rush, 1987).

My students this year received art instruction instead of crafts.

Their language development, curiosity, visual awareness, and excitement motivated me as a teacher to increase my knowledge and awareness.

The parents and public have made positive statements about how much the quality has improved in just one year with the usage of DBAE.

DBAE develops higher order of thinking skills through critiquing and analyzing pieces of art. It shows learning in an area other than the 3R's.

It (the Institute) has provided (me) knowledge, awareness, methodology, appreciation, and enthusiasm for the teaching of fine arts. It definitely should be continued and expanded.

In my opinion, DBAE gives teachers a guide to develop a sound art program for their students. It does work with students; it does provide an exciting approach to art for both teachers and students. It will have a lasting effect on the child's life now and as an adult (ch. 7, b 3).

Effectiveness of The Arizona Institute Summer Staff

Development Program

When it comes to teaching art, frequently teachers have had little college preparation, and the amount of art instruction they received as

children is insufficient to give them the necessary confidence in their ability to adequately teach art. The general attitude is that one needs to be an artist in order to teach art. In other subjects such as arithmetic or language arts, teachers do not believe that they need to be mathematicians to teach arithmetic or poets to teach language arts.

One of the aims of The Arizona Institute Summer Staff Development Program is to change this reluctance to teach art. Participants received an intensive three-week introduction to art.

The classroom teachers' preparation not only involved practical application, but also elements used associatively and interpretively by the teachers (Broudy, 1987). If we say that DBAE produces adults who are knowledgeable about art (Greer, 1984), it is even more important to produce teachers who can transfer this notion to their students.

We can conclude that the implementation of discipline-based art education by classroom teachers in Arizona was very successful. Until art specialists become a regular part of the school staff for every grade in every school (in view of current budget constraints, a distant goal), the model presented in this study can provide the alternative. Teachers who become proficient in implementing DBAE provide a coherent, effective art education program at the elementary level.

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