

2021

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Recommended Citation

Ross, Jerrold (2021) "The National Arts Education Research Center at New York University: Challenging Tradition," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 16 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/vrme/vol16/iss1/6>



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Source: Ross, J. (1990, Spring). The national arts education research center at New York University: Challenging tradition. *The Quarterly*, 1(1-2), pp. 17-21. (Reprinted with permission in *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 16(1), Summer, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/>

It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

The National Arts Education Research Center at New York University: Challenging Tradition

By Jerrold Ross

New York University

The original proposal for an arts-education research center based at New York University was grounded in the belief that research in the field had been primarily based on issues that had little direct connection to the most pressing national problems of our schools. Whether those schools were located in urban, suburban, or rural settings, each faced growing anxieties about maintaining academic standards, keeping youngsters in school, creating programs to reflect changing demographics, and finding ways to organize subject content so as to create curricula based on sequential and developmental learning. Decades of research literature in art, music, dance, and theater provided few clues to the amelioration of these concerns. While music educators pondered over whether a better tone is produced on the clarinet if the mouthpiece is shifted a millimeter to the left or right; as art educators struggled with a definition of aesthetics and whether the term “interdisciplinary”, “multidisciplinary”, or “transdisciplinary” was most appropriate to their discussion; and while theater people wrestled with the difference between the definitions of “drama” and “theater” in education; the research community at large, beginning to grapple with the real crises in education, passed the arts by.

This is an oversimplification, to be sure, but the fact remains that very few studies on critical problems found their way into the professional arts education journals. Moreover, research had been the province of college and university people, many of whom were no longer active in elementary or secondary school classrooms.

Many philosophical statements came from scholars in higher education, but I submit that the rhetoric did little to lend power to teachers faced with everyday problems. And, even if research generated in colleges and universities sought to address these major problems, the research methodology employed was too often a weak copy of quantitative approaches better suited to disciplines other than the arts.

“Need we be reminded that the arts in education have not enjoyed the same credibility as our sister disciplines among administrators and other policymakers, nor even among other educators?”

So the proposal to create a new vehicle for arts education research sought to touch upon each of these concerns and to capture the interest and attention of many different people deeply committed to the arts.

Established in 1987 with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the United States Department of Education, the National Arts Education Research Center consists of groups of members including university faculty, representatives of cultural institutions, aestheticians, critics, scholars from other organizations, professional artists, and—most important—teachers. Each of these constituencies has something important to say about the delivery of the arts to our elementary and secondary schools. Gifted persons from these groups were responsive to the

notion that practice in the classroom should not only be the object of study by researchers, but that shifting the research emphasis to such practice could revitalize educational theory.

The history of the arts demonstrates over and over that theory is derived from practice (there was no common practice period in music theory until the Mannheim School and later composers created their music); so educational theory must be derived from the practice of exemplary teachers in their classrooms.

For the past two years, therefore, teachers from more than 20 states, representative of large cities from New York to Los Angeles, from Miami to Chicago, and of rural communities from Charlton, Iowa to Sitka, Alaska, and Jasper County, South Carolina, to Bozeman, Montana, have come to New York University to work with leaders among college faculties, institutions as large as Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art, critics including Allen Hughes and John Simon, scholars such as Richard Turner and Maxine Greene, David Berliner and Richard Shavelson, prominent educational researchers and former presidents of the American Educational Research Association. The list has been long, but in every case the best in theater arts and in general education was put at the service of those who should be, and have become, deeply involved in studying the outcomes of excellent teaching. There are many aspects to teaching, of course, but the center has concentrated on two of these: the development of curricula, and the building of teaching strategies to help meet the challenges of important questions facing not only the arts but the entire spectrum of disciplines within the schools.

The center has not been unmindful of the perennial questions asked by arts educators. These include ways in which young people respond aesthetically to the arts; means by which the skills of the arts are best inculcated; the development of historical insights into arts movements and ideas; and finally, how to synthesize all of this so as to develop a nation of aesthetically and artistically sensitive people who can think critically about the arts.

As this article is being written, it is no small concern to us all that notions of taste, discrimination, censorship, and, above all, judgment are in the national news. I am far from convinced that most people have had the education by which to make reasoned judgments about what shall be supported (or even allowed) in our cultural institutions. Superimposed over these perennial questions has been a series of emergent issues, including those cited at the beginning of this article. There can be no meaningful education in the arts—in fact, there can be no significant learning at all—until the nation's educators, including arts teachers, come to grips with the groundswell of public sentiment demanding accountability from us all. We are the professionals whose expertise must raise not only the standards of American education but the hopes and aspirations of the majority of children in our schools.

As a result of these beliefs, teacher-members of the center have studied and worked collegially with other center members to fashion research questions thought to be most critical in the battle to place arts education high on any list of fields whose history, traditions, insights, and ways of thinking might contribute to the resolution of these issues.

Need we be reminded that the arts in education have not enjoyed the same credibility as our sister disciplines among administrators and other policymakers, nor even among other educators? No wonder, considering the paucity of research attending to these problems.

By means of summer institutes and intense follow-up during the school year, about 35 teacher-members identified questions based on a center-produced matrix of research questions and appropriate to their own school contexts and classrooms. They formulated research projects with the continuous help and support of the NYU faculty and center staff. The questions were framed, the literature surveyed, and combinations of methodologies were created that blended both quantitative and qualitative strategies to which the teachers were introduced at the university. Methods of data handling were presented, enabling teachers to return to

their classrooms ready to use their students as subjects in a wide array of topics suited to the objectives of the center. At this moment, the projects of art and music teachers in the secondary schools across 14 states have been completed and will be ready for dissemination soon. Teachers of theater were added to the center's research agenda in the second year. These teachers, also representative of America's diversity, have returned to their schools to conduct projects to be completed by May, 1990.

A further word should be said about the notion of teacher as researcher. Most people thought it could not be done—that teachers were too involved with their own creativity to stand back and be objective investigators of their own situations. That has not been the case. The dedication, commitment, zeal, and intellectual capacity of the majority of these gifted teachers has been remarkable. So compelling have been these efforts that the center has been advised by its national research board to embark upon a study of the teachers themselves, for this group embodies what it takes to create and succeed in the atmosphere of unrest in our schools. While a few teachers were unable to cope with the severity of the problems in their schools, and some left teaching, the successes of the vast majority give increasing and sustained hope that we can prevail.

Many of the research projects are designed to document the school situation as a whole, as well as the context in which the arts have had to work. They will inform us as to how arts projects have fared exclusive of other fields, or in relation to other academic disciplines. They will provide not only reaffirmation of some traditional views, but some fascinating clues and challenges to ideas about arts education. The research findings should cause us to reassess our practices.

The research projects are obviously based on work conducted by individual teachers in individual classrooms, with student populations whose size would cause traditional researchers to question their validity. We do not believe size of population to be an issue. In our view,

the project raises some significant questions about current practices in music education, although it appears to provide evidence supporting certain others. Following is a description of a few such projects under various headings that follow the center's matrix. In several instances, they directly challenge traditional thought, which makes them all the more tantalizing.

Skill Development

Most music theoreticians would hold that listening skills need to be acquired over a long period of time, and that early training is vital to the development of such skills. One project conducted at a magnet school in Miami suggests otherwise. Given a population of "disadvantaged" middle school students, an intensive program of ear training has produced young people who might score as well as many music majors entering college in departments of music across the United States. Later intervention on the part of the music teacher appears to motivate these boys and girls. Moreover, the use of nontraditional musical materials suited to the background of young people who have been attending to other sounds can also work quite well. It is not as if these kids have not been listening; they have just been focusing on other music. They can be taught to attend to a new set of relationships in traditional music as well. This approach is quite similar to demonstrated successful strategies in teaching children to read.

It is important to note that research in arts education could closely parallel research in general education. For example, reading music is closely related to the process of reading words. Further study should be conducted on the relationships between the symbols in music (notation) and the symbols in reading (letters). It may be safe to hypothesize that full comprehension of a symbol in any discipline must follow visual or auditory experience of another type.

In the visual arts, a research project in Hattiesburg, MS, concerned itself with the quality of the portfolio prepared by high school students for the consideration of reviewers who determine admission to

college art departments. The study challenges the traditional views that the broad art portfolio indicates the student's understanding of the process of creation. Indeed, an attitudinal survey of art students seems to reveal that a smaller portfolio developed by a combination of hands-on studio work and an historical overview of representative examples of great works of arts better prepares prospective college art majors to make critical judgments about their output as well as the works of others. This finding suggests that the standards set by postsecondary institutions relative to admission to their departments may be counterproductive if the object of the portfolio is to expand not only technical skill but artistic knowledge. Once again, it is the art teacher at the secondary school level, rather than the college faculty member, who is attempting to direct some unique outcomes, described in the study, toward a re-examination of the theoretical as well as practical use of the art portfolio as part of the broader education of the artist. Not unlike the position hypothesized as part of the Contemporary Music Project sponsored by the Music Educators National Conference some years ago, this approach of depth vs. breadth, but now measured by both quantitative and qualitative means, should give the art community some pause. It should further underscore the need for arts education to pay more attention to creating a more literate society.

Multicultural Education

The center is about to publish a separate document on multicultural education using the arts as a basis for developing understandings and feelings about and among ethnic groups. At this point, several of the center teacher-members completed research projects that provide hard evidence that we may be attempting to inculcate among students the wrong feelings about different styles, forms, and art objects. The question of appreciation of another culture has most frequently been vested in the supposed need to move people from an attitude of "dislike" to "like" with respect to the arts of different times, periods, and people.

Several of the center's teachers have questioned the desirability of this outcome. Their approach has been to move their students from an attitude of nonacceptance to the understanding that art need not be judged by the viewer. For example, although I am of the Western culture, I don't like Bruckner symphonies. Nevertheless, I recognize it is perfectly acceptable to write music the way he did. I am not anti-Western or anti-high art as a result of this attitude, but I accept the contribution made by this great composer.

Several teachers collaborated on a study of this concept, using essentially the same research modality. The results from widely disparate school districts and states, from urban to rural communities, imply that the use of art to create new and positive understandings among different groups should not be ignored by general educators.

It must be emphasized, however, that the problems attendant upon the education of young people from ethnic and cultural backgrounds other than traditional Western are almost overwhelming. Through the generosity of a private foundation, the center soon will be highlighting a series of issues and providing useful information for arts educators concerned with these young people.

The Arts in Relation to Other Curricular Areas

Virtually every book about arts education I have ever read insists that the arts can play a vital role in illuminating other areas of the school curriculum, but there are little hard data to demonstrate the truth of this statement. A very small study in one of the nation's most difficult urban high schools—although inconclusive at this point—has provided some fascinating information indicating that a combination of art and social studies in the American history curriculum might have a major impact on student success. The data from this small sample seem to indicate that the experimental group achieved higher scores on the New York State Regents Examination than the control groups, even though the overall rate of "passing" was not significantly different across the groups. Even this tiny study, however,

causes us to wonder if we have not stumbled onto a matter of the quality in education as opposed to the often-sought “proof” of success in analyzing data from the viewpoint of the traditional researcher.

Roentgen stumbled onto the X-ray, but he would not announce it to the world until he had conducted exhaustive studies. We at the National Arts Education Research Center, while describing just a few of the results of individual projects by individual teachers in different school contexts across the country, are merely stating that the work of research in arts education has just begun. Indications, glimpses, insights, and intuition, which until now have been described eloquently by a few arts educators (from Mursell and Lowenfeld to Eisner and Reimer) have now been translated from the field to other educators, to the general public, and, one would hope, to policymakers controlling educational support.

There are many more interesting results about to be published; I have mentioned but a few. Other concerns include sequential learning, the effect of the arts on the self-actualization of the individual, the effect of the arts on entire communities, and how to approach similarities and differences within the same cultural

group by means of works of art (including which works to use), are part of other studies concluded this year.

In the center's third year, theater education will be the focus of teacher research. This past summer, 14 theater teachers identified areas of interest. As a result of their projects, to be completed next year, the center will begin to assess not only the perennial and emergent questions, some of which have been described in this paper, but whether or not—and how—these questions compare across three arts disciplines.

Because there are so many research questions that need to be addressed, it is quite difficult to bring this paper to a conclusion. Perhaps it is most appropriate to state that the National Arts Education Research Center at New York University exists principally to help create an important place for the arts in the lives of young people. The arts in education must assume its rightful place, permanently, in our schools, and that place will be assured only as arts educators respond to the same conditions that pervade education overall. Not only is this an appropriate role for the arts, but in our view it is the very reason for teaching and learning about the arts. □