

Constructing an International History of Art Education: Periods, Patterns, and Principles

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Abstract

History of art education has blossomed and faded as a research methodology in art education. Often historical research is perceived as easy, as merely a time-consuming process of finding and reporting facts. Histories are not simply chronicles of dates, events, and important people, however. Meaningful historical research uses theoretical frameworks to construct interpretations of the past that can raise questions to inform present praxis. Identifying underlying assumptions and inquiry processes used in constructing an international history of art education can suggest the complexity and challenges of studying development of the field over time and across national borders. An international history might be organized in a variety of ways: geographically and politically; by historical periods; according to formation of national identity; or as a web of European-based influences. Dualism between a classic thesis and a romantic antithesis explains many aspects of the field, pointing out tensions between social needs and individual desires for art education, gendered leadership, and teaching technical skills of drawing vs. teaching art for self-expression. Bourdieu's sociological theories offer a strong foundation for examining the field in relation to structured social spaces in the context of global capitalism.

Key Words: historical periods, classic thesis, romantic antithesis, Bourdieu, sociology of culture, field, cultural capital

Several years ago I was invited to research and write an international history of visual arts education (Stankiewicz, 2007). Although the result was only one chapter in one subsection of a two-volume international handbook on arts education, the work was daunting. Where to begin? As I contemplated the project, I identified a few basic ideas as starting points:

- Art education is socially constructed.
- Although human beings have innate desires to make marks and objects, and to interpret those marks and objects in relation to the world around themselves, marks and objects only become meaningful in social and cultural contexts.
- National governments support art education when political and economic benefits are apparent, however, individuals seek art education to meet their desires for a good life.
- Histories of art education should critically examine development of visual arts teaching and learning in relation to cultural, social, and technological changes over time.

I also set a few procedural rules for myself. Since I do not read languages other than English fluently, I had to rely on English-language sources. The assignment came with a time limit; therefore, I chiefly used secondary sources. In historian's terms, secondary sources are those written after an event or at a distance by persons who were not present and did not participate. Primary sources, on the other hand, are documents or artifacts from the time and place under study. Primary source documents are generally written by eyewitnesses to or participants in the events under study. Typically, such documents are collected in specialized archives where researchers go to examine them.

It would have been impossible to travel around the world, visiting archives in each country, and building a story of visual art teaching and learning over time for each nation or region in the single year I was given to complete this work. Fortunately, I had access to three major international compendiums on art education history, proceedings produced for Penn State History of Art Education conferences from the mid-1980s into the mid-1990s (Amburgy *et al.*, 1992; Anderson & Bolin, 1997; Wilson & Hoffa,

1987). Since proposals for these conferences and papers for the proceedings had been peer reviewed, I had access to a good deal of secondary source material that met accepted academic standards of quality.

In addition, I searched my university library and on-line databases for relevant books and peer-reviewed journal articles. The university reference librarian for visual arts not only located several useful sources but also requested that the library purchase some books to enhance its international collection in art education. A doctoral student from China, Yujie Julia Li, helped me find specific references for that country and translated portions of one book for my use. I chose to deliberately avoid most writings on art education in the United States, having contributed to a research handbook with chapters on 19th and 20th century North American art education history (Stankiewicz *et al.*, 2004; White, 2004). I knew that I would, of necessity, bring my North American perspective to the task. Thus, in spite of limitations of time and language, I began with an extensive research base, which I supplemented with selected primary sources and some documents available on the Internet.

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Making Meaning of International History

As I read and took notes on all this material, I began to feel overwhelmed. How could I organize so much information? How could I make sense of so much material in ways that did not unduly privilege English-speaking, European and North American nations? I could frame the stories of visual arts education around the world in various ways. Historical periods, geo-political entities, nationalism and national identities, networks of international influences, topics or themes each might provide a framework or be combined to shape an international history.

Following Pearse's (1997) speculation about history of Canadian art education, one might use either a geographical, political scheme (examining art teaching and learning in turn in European, North and South American, Asian, Australia and Pacific Island, and African countries) or structure a story into historical periods. Such periods might include: 1) pre-modern informal means of art education, from ancient history up to the Renaissance in European-dominated nations, roughly ca. 100 BCE-ca. 1600, later in

non-colonial countries in Asia, the Pacific, South America, or Africa; 2) formalized artist education and liberal art education for elite amateurs, ca. 1600-1800; 3) emerging capitalism and middle-class aspirations, ca. 1800-1840 and later; 4) industrial drawing systems, dominated by England's South Kensington system in English-speaking countries and British colonies, ca. 1840-1910; 5) emergence of the self-expressive child artist, ca. 1910-1960; 6) turn toward intellectual rigor, ca. 1960-2000. In fact, such periodization became part of the organizing framework for the chapter.

A third way of framing international history of art education might be in relation to forming or maintaining national identity, a theme found in a number of written histories (Arano, 1992; Boschloo, 1989; Kraus, 1968; Masuda, 2003, Winter; Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1992). A fourth approach might be to map the complex web of influences from Western to Asian and other countries that had not been British or European colonies, and, in some cases, back again (Barbosa, 1992; Chalmers, 1985, 1992b; Foster, 1992; Okazaki, 1987, 1991, 1992; Rogers, 1992; van Rheedem, 1992). Freedman and Hernandez (1998), for example, identify six waves of European influence on international art education: 1) the dissemination of the ideas of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel who argued that drawing and manipulation of objects should be necessary elements in children's education; 2) establishment of art in schools for character development and to support industry in Germany, France, England, and other northern European countries; 3) the study of artistic development as part of Child Study; 4) the dissemination of ideals of Progressive Education which promoted child art and common goals for fine art and education; 5) a movement toward fine art guided in part by Bruner's notion of discipline-based curricula; and 6) expansion of the art curriculum to include visual culture "grounded in global, socioecological concerns and what it means to live in increasingly image-based, technological environments" (p.183).

Like Efland (1990), Freedman and Hernandez (1998) position art education as a school subject; thus, in their book, history of art education becomes a subset of curriculum history. In their conclusion, Freedman and Hernandez argue that their international case studies reveal "three themes of curriculum that define the cultural history terrain of a school subject" (p. 185).

These themes include: professionalization and internationalization of a school subject; state politics and the resilience of national identities; and, finally, cultural ideals and the construction of self (p. 185). My own continuing research has examined the development of professional identity among North American art educators, thus I agreed that these themes were important. Nonetheless, I wanted a more dynamic theoretical framework through which to interpret an international history of visual arts education.

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Perceiving Patterns in the Past

The Classic Thesis. As I continued to analyze stories of art education around the globe, I noticed certain patterns emerging. Although accounts of education for artists and artisans prior to the 19th century could be found, stories about art education for young people tended to take that century as a starting point. Many of these stories were grounded in ideas about national economic development, in accounts of political leaders' goals for building internationally competitive industrial bases. The most prominent international influence was England's national system of industrial drawing instruction, commonly referred to as South Kensington. Not only did instructors trained in the South Kensington system work throughout British colonies from Canada to New Zealand (Chalmers, 1985, 1992b, 1993, 2000), but young people in Africa and India took South Kensington's drawing examinations through much of the 20th century (Carline, 1968). The late David Thistlewood labeled the approach to art education exemplified by South Kensington's art masters as the classic thesis of art education (Thistlewood, 1988, 1992). As Thistlewood described it, this classic thesis stresses drawing and design as dual elements in modern, industrial art education, taught by professional instructors who demonstrated and demanded technical excellence while regarding drawing as an academic discipline. This discipline "was associated with national purposes and aspired to academic respectability" (Thistlewood, 1992, p.181).

In North America, I could link Thistlewood's classic thesis to the rise of technical literacy in early 19th century common schools (Stevens, 1995). Here drawing joined writing, mathematics, and science as school subjects that were expected to prepare boys and girls for participation in the growing

industrial economy. Likewise, many of the secondary sources I had found on art education's history told stories that positioned establishment and development of formal, school-based art education as actions in national economic interests. Governments supported art education as a means to develop human capital, to prepare skilled workers for a range of manufacturers and to teach good taste to consumers who would aspire to purchase better designed goods.

Although Thistlewood identified this classic thesis of art education within a historical context, we continue to find echoes today in arguments for the importance of the visual arts from political leaders and government officials. For example, at the December 2004 Asia-Pacific Art Education Conference, Dr. Darwin Chen, Chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, described a series of goals for the strategic development of Hong Kong, the first of which is enhancing income and living standards for all members of Hong Kong society. He continued by affirming the importance of art education for the area's future development (The Hong Kong Institute of Education, 2004). Mr. Yu Shu Tak, also a member of the Hong Kong Art Development Council, spoke about the importance of art education in economic development, citing works by Americans Richard Florida (2002) and John M. Eger (2003) who connect information technologies, arts and culture, with professional jobs and urban economic growth. In May 2006, the U.S. Education Commission of the States, which advises state government leaders on educational policy issues, published a conversation with three chief state school officers about the importance of arts education. Elizabeth Burmaster, Wisconsin's state school superintendent, declared that one of the most effective messages for arts education advocacy "is linking the arts and arts education to economic development because that is the biggest challenge in our state" (Education Commission of the States, 2006, May). These Asian and North American voices show that the classic thesis of art education resonates in the early 21st century.

The Romantic Antithesis. There is, however, another side to this story, the romantic antithesis linked to a lower status discipline of teaching art, rather than the more prestigious discipline of teaching drawing (Thistlewood, 1992). As exemplified in England, proponents of the romantic antithesis

tended to be female teachers of art who praised playful and spiritual aspects of art-making, with roots in the Arts & Crafts movement critique of industrial manufacturing. The 19th-century romanticism of John Ruskin and his disciples in England, North America, and elsewhere contributed to this antimodern critique of industrial societies (Lears, 1981).

Although Ruskin and William Morris argued for art as a means to social change, their message was dissipated and distorted by the increasing separation of fine art from daily life. Ironically, Arts & Crafts designs were transformed into a preferred middle-class style for mass-marketed consumer goods. Morris's socialist politics were submerged into workforce education through manual training, which evolved into general enculturation intended to make workers satisfied with their lot in life (Soucy & Stankiewicz, 1990). As Lears explains, antimodernism "was not simply escapism; it was ambivalent, often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress" (1981, p. xiii). As a reaction against perceptions that modern life was over-civilized, alienating, and inauthentic, the upper-middle-class men who dominated this intellectual and artistic movement sought intense experiences, embracing premodern symbolism, spiritual and martial ideals, therapeutic self-fulfillment, and sensuous irrationality. The antimodern symbolic culture they claimed offered a refuge from a complex, threatening world where wars, technocratic rationality, and capitalism threatened individual freedom even as these phenomena offered progress and the expanded opportunities of modernism.

While the male members of the National Society of Art Masters who espoused the classic thesis sought professionalism for themselves and academic recognition for their field, the mostly female members of the British Art Teachers' Guild considered themselves advocates for children's learning in art and improved methods of teaching. Words such as natural, expressive, fresh, spontaneous, colorful, or organic characterized the discourse surrounding child art, primitive art, and modern expressionist art. Spontaneity, natural development, and self-expression were privileged over the disciplined mastery of conventions found in the classic thesis of art education. A number of modern artists collected examples of child art (Fineberg, 1997) and many countries depended on art education heroes or heroines to fly the flag of the romantic antithesis with its inherent contradictions.

Laslo Nagy organized the first exhibition of child art in Hungary in 1907 (Karpati & Gaul, 1997). Ten years later in England, Marion Richardson met Roger Fry who included works by her students from Dudley Girls' High School in an exhibition at the Omega Workshops (Holdsworth, 1988). Fry was a leader among the sophisticated critics, like Alfred Stieglitz in the United States, who displayed child art in galleries that also pioneered exhibitions of avant-garde painting and African sculpture. Florence Cane in the United States (Stankiewicz, 2001), Arthur Lismer in Canada (Grigor, 2002; Pearse, 1992), and Kanae Yamamoto, who introduced the Free Drawing Movement in Japan (Okazaki, 1991), were among many professional heroes and heroines who emerged in the early 20th century. Their romanticism differed from earlier romantic idealist influences on art education in several respects (Efland, 1990; Stankiewicz, 1984). In the context of 19th century romanticism, art was generally considered subsidiary to morality. In modern romanticisms, artists claimed that high art transcends ethics and morality, even as art was used to symbolize nationalism and modernity.

Dualism. The tensions and paradoxes of dual approaches to art teaching emerged in many nations during the last decade of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th. Some version of Thistlewood's classic thesis continued as the official form of art education, while seeds were planted for the romantic antithesis. The classic thesis continued to be strong, particularly in colonial societies (Stokrocki, 1997; van Rheeden, 1990, 1992). Students in British colonies, for example, followed the South Kensington system and were subjected to drawing exams originally developed for admission to English universities (Carline, 1968). The classic thesis, the South Kensington system and its descendents, tended to be associated with art education for social control, art instruction that served the economic needs of the dominant culture and treated learners as future workers who needed to be civilized. Thus, art education contributed to cultural imperialism by teaching young people in European and North American colonies or from indigenous groups that their traditional arts were not as highly ranked in an aesthetic hierarchy as European arts, nor was their artistic taste as finely cultivated as that of European experts (for an example from Israel see Toren,

2004). Art educators transmitted racist beliefs through their assumptions that true art was solely a product of Greco-Roman, European traditions and that white males from northern nations possessed the best aesthetic taste and most genuine artistic genius (Chalmers, 1992a), devaluing the art forms and informal art education methods of pre-colonial societies.

Although Thistlewood identified the romantic antithesis as “a by-product of the English Arts and Crafts Movement” (1992, p. 181), this alternative approach to art education had earlier roots in female experiences, in the use of art education for ornamental education for elite young people, a grounding in cultural rather than industrial technological experiences and a focus less on national political needs than on individual desires for distinction through art (Bourdieu, 1984). Specialist art teachers of the romantic antithesis identified themselves as artists or artist-teachers, not simply as teachers of art. Their personal experiences with the contemporary art of the day, then breaking out of traditional academic frames, reflected more extensive studio education as well as opportunities for continuing professional development through artist-led summer schools, university or art school courses (Stankiewicz, 2001). The art specialist encouraged children to drawing from memory, imagination, or observation of real objects, not simply to copy from flat examples. Nature study reflected in part nostalgia for a rural past, but also the popularity of impressionist landscapes and scientific study of the natural world. Some drawings from nature could be adapted for ornamental surface designs; however, *design* no longer meant only ornament. The term could refer to theories about elements and principles of pictorial composition. The Prang texts, used in North America and influential as far away as Japan, discussed at least three functions of visual art: constructive, representational, and decorative work (Foster, 1992; Masuda, 2003, Winter; Pearse, 1997; Stankiewicz, 2001). No longer restricted to chalk or pencil, children were encouraged to use more fluid media as well as clay, cut paper, and other materials derived from Froebel’s gifts and from Victorian fancywork. Color interested art educators and students around the globe, as more and more art teachers recognized the charm of paintings produced by children outside the rigid bounds of the classical thesis of art education.

Adapting a Theoretical Framework

In addition to being organized by a scheme of historical periods and the dual patterns of Thistlewood's classic thesis and romantic antithesis, my chapter on international history of art education was informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theories of *habitus*, fields, and cultural capital (1983, 1984, 1996; Bourdieu & Darbel, 1990). The late French sociologist argued that the structured social spaces that surround individuals help construct fluid mental frameworks, or *habitus*, that establish dispositional knowledge (Grenfell, 2004, p. 27). The kinds of art one is exposed to as a child, parental attitudes toward the arts, and community values in regard to art—all these contribute to how one understands art. Fields are similar to *habitus* in structure and function, but while *habitus* shape individual cognitive structures, a field functions in a larger social space. Education and art are both fields, as is art education. The field of art education has been socially constructed by practitioners and other stakeholders. As practitioners are inducted into the field, their *habitus* interact with the dynamic principles of the field, causing change over time, to both the field and the conceptual frameworks of practitioners. For example, as more women with greater access to studying art entered teaching, their dispositional understandings of art contributed to tensions between the existing classic thesis and the emerging romantic antithesis.

In his analysis of the field of 19th-century French literature and publishing, Bourdieu (1996) examined the emergence of a dualistic structure with parallels to the dualistic structure Thistlewood claimed for art education. One aspect of this dualism is tension between autonomy, the desire for art to stand alone outside social constraints and conventions, and heteronomy, the principle that art should serve social needs. This tension between art for art's sake and art as social handmaiden has, as discussed above, been a major force in the development of art education. One can see a case study of tensions between autonomy and heteronomy in the social and educational reforms that challenged and changed art education in Quebec, Canada, during the 1960s (Lemerise, 1992; Lemerise & Couture, 1990).

According to Grenfell (2004), Bourdieu uses *culture* ambiguously to refer to small-c-culture, i.e., “languages, traditions, characteristics and beliefs” (p. 89), as well as to big-C-Culture exemplified by aesthetic fields such as the visual arts. Bourdieu (1983) defines capital as a force or power inscribed in the objectivity of things. Capital can be used metaphorically, as in references to social capital or educational capital, both of which can enhance life chances, or to refer to an objectified or embodied potential capacity to produce financial profits, i.e., enhancing economic chances. Bourdieu asserts that “it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory” (p. 242). In his writings, Bourdieu identifies dynamics of four types of capital: economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Symbolic capital is, from Bourdieu’s (1996) perspective, a kind of capital that denies its potential economic value, instead asserting its power as a marker of distinctions. Within the romantic antithesis, art was symbolic capital that denied its materialism and asserted naturalism, a biological basis rather than social construction.

In Grenfell’s (2004) analysis, symbolic capital is displayed in three principle forms: economic, social, and cultural capitals. Social capital refers to a network of high status friends or contacts with influential acquaintances; it can be converted into objectified economic capital if a friend makes a loan, and may be institutionalized through nobility or hierarchical social ranking. Traditional fine arts are associated with cultural elites who share similar aesthetic values as part of their social capital. For the field of art education, social capital connotes professional networks: peers and colleagues, advisers and mentors.

Education, professional qualifications, marks of distinction, or actual objects, such as artworks, may denote cultural capital (Grenfell, 2004). Lamont and Larreau (1988) propose simplifying Bourdieu’s richly complex usage, which follows rhetorical practices valued in French academic circles, to focus on the exclusionary function of cultural capital. In their definition, cultural capital is institutionalized within the dominant culture as “*widely shared, high status signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion*” (p.

156, italics in original). Thus, if the romantic antithesis is dominating the field, as it was during the 1963 UNESCO Seminar in Canberra, Australia, then proponents of the classic thesis may be excluded from power and their perspectives discounted (Peers, 2001, 2002).

Notions of capital can help explain not only the field of art education, but also individual motivations for engagement with art teaching and learning. Formal instruction in visual arts within state-supported schools developed in contexts of capitalism. Much history of art education, however, has been written by those espousing the romantic antithesis. These writers have generally ignored any grounding of the field in political dynamics of global economies. As forms of cultural capital, visual arts contribute to the class status of those who not only own art objects, but, more importantly, respond to art works and consume works of visual culture. Persons who do not share the aesthetic capital or taste preferences of the dominant culture may be excluded from social or work opportunities; they may feel ill at ease in high culture settings, such as museums or concert halls. Cultural capital may be converted to economic capital, for example, when a young woman who received an ornamental education in the arts married a man of higher socio-economic status. Educational qualifications, which can also be described as educational capital (and considered a subset of cultural capital), may include the amount of formal schooling and number of diplomas or degrees one has. Formal schooling institutionalizes cultural capital. Art education can build cultural capital when it is part of formal or informal education. However, cultural capital can also be inherited, transmitted through families which engage with the arts, in such a way that it becomes a taken-for-granted part of one's identity.

One of Bourdieu's major contributions has been to increase awareness that formal and informal transmission of cultural capital can help maintain and reproduce "social stratification systems" (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 154). In other words, arts education—perhaps even more than other forms of education—integrates the dissemination of content knowledge and skills with the conferral or confirmation of social status. Thistlewood's classic thesis openly evokes markers of heightened status, while the contrasting romantic thesis naturalizes such markers, treating them as innate abilities rather than

socially constituted. Acquisition of European-derived artistic forms has been seen as a means to elevate indigenous peoples to so-called civilization, as well as a way to develop such peoples as human capital. The perspective of the dominant culture, that education should meet the needs of society, tends to define society solely in reference to the values and beliefs of that elite. Bourdieu, however, “saw the need to reconcile the demands of education for society and the economy with the personal need of individual development” (Grenfell, 2004, p. 56). His notion of cultural capital can be interpreted to imply agency, to allow space for an individual to claim ownership and choose how to use (or not use) cultural capital. Notions of human capital, such as those found in many current rationales for art education (Eger, 2003; Pink, 2006), tend to position people as workers in dominated positions whose knowledge and skills are developed because they are useful to industrial or consumer capitalism.

Still Under Construction

Although my chapter was published two years ago, it remains a first attempt toward a comprehensive international history of visual arts education. In addition to metaphors of cultural capital, I used metaphors of mapping as I wrote to indicate that my paper provided an overview, not a detailed portrait of the landscape. Principles of autonomy, heteronomy, dualism, and temporality (change over time), adapted from the work of Bourdieu, served as coordinates for my map, defining art education’s relationships to larger social forces. Another author would construct a different interpretation.

Art education should be considered more than a subset of curriculum in formal education; art educators now claim informal education in visual culture from cradle to grave as their territory, for example, in the growing field of art museum education. At the same time, licensed art teachers are realizing that the territory of school-based art instruction they have claimed for almost 150 years is contested. In the United States, student access to visual arts education is declining as a result of educational reforms that have narrowed the curriculum to reading, math, and sometimes science (Chapman, 2005). This reform legislation positions art education after the school day, as relaxation from preparing for tests, or as remediation to make

other school subjects more easily digested. Artist-teachers and teaching artists are organizing into professional groups and gaining awareness of how to ask for health and pension benefits. They are seeking to build their status as primary providers of arts experiences in educational settings, replacing licensed art specialists.

Bourdieu argued that “art and culture by definition exist to supersede what has come before and to be in their turn superseded” (Grenfell, 2004, p. 100). In order to understand art education, we need to examine how time has changed the field. Histories of art education written early in the 20th century treated the classis thesis as the authorized form; by mid-20th century the story described how the romantic antithesis had replaced the classic thesis as exemplifying good art education. By the 1980s and 1990s, Efland’s (1990) streams metaphor supported an eclectic boat where discipline-based and multicultural forms joined their elders, often in controversy but also in hoped for confluence. As a field, art education has a course of development and complex structural relations with the social and cultural contexts in which it continues to develop. More comparative study of art education across geographical sites and political boundaries is needed to help us better understand who we are and what we do as art educators. One way to frame such explorations is within Bourdieu’s theories of distinction, cultural capital, and social construction of cultural fields.

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