

Culturally Responsive Teaching in Art Education

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Abstract

This article considers the dynamic multi-layered process of preparing White preservice art teachers to teach to diversity in urban settings within the United States of America. Topics are centered on three major categories: teacher education responsibility, teacher education challenge, and teacher education opportunity. The teacher education responsibility section examines teacher educators' roles and responsibilities towards empowering preservice teachers to teach from a perspective that draws upon the histories and experiences of students from increasingly diverse cultural backgrounds. The teacher education challenge looks at some of the problems and issues associated with preparing future teachers to develop their teaching skills and acquire attitudes that will enable them to respect cultural differences and hold high expectations for their students. The teacher education opportunity portion considers opportunities presented by challenges.

Keywords: Culturally Responsive Teaching, Multicultural Education, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Public schools in the United States, due to their nature are expected to address the educational needs of all learners. However, reports and position statements, some generated through the press and media, depict a depressing picture of our public school systems and their seeming inability to provide an appropriate education for the majority of our nation's youth (UNESCO, 2003; Beck, Namuth, Miller, & Wright, 1988; Drucker, 1989). Schools have also been accused of being insensitive to students' cultural backgrounds and thus of failing to serve some student populations because curricula are designed for middle-class White children (Howe & Lisi, 2014; Zeuli & Floden, 1987). Further, art teacher preparation programs in the United States, historically, have focused on content and pedagogy (Dunn, 1995) and prepared their future teachers to work effectively with only one cultural group, dominant mainstream "America." (Howe & Lisi, 2014; Gollnick & Chinn, 2013). In their failure to satisfactorily prepare preservice art teachers to teach diverse student populations, they perpetuate traditional teaching practices that underserved learners from diverse linguistic, racial/ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Considering the new and changing demographics in schools and classrooms in the United States, content and pedagogy alone will not suffice. Ultimately, art education programs will have to prepare prospective and practicing teachers to teach from a culturally pluralistic perspective and prepare them to develop and apply culturally responsive pedagogical practices that draw upon the histories and experiences of students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2010; Koppleman & Goodhart, 2010). This statement is based on the assumption that diversity matters and that all learners, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, religion, age, ability, exceptionality, or socio-economic status should receive an equitable education. An equitable education refers to one that provides equal opportunity for all to receive the education they need and deserve.

In the United States, preparing teachers to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student populations is an area of concern for most colleges and universities as there are a number of contemporary challenges facing teacher education programs in general (i.e., access and affordability, prioritization of outcomes, retention). This paper focuses on transforming art

teacher education programs to prepare teachers to be culturally responsive to the needs of their diverse student populations. This includes teacher education responsibility, teacher education challenges, and teacher education opportunities as related to teaching to diversity.

Teacher Education Responsibility

The United States education system serves an increasingly diverse student population. Students come to school speaking an array of languages and dialects and with various levels of English proficiency. They have diverse learning, communication, and behavior styles based on their ethnic, socioeconomic, and regional backgrounds. Unfortunately, a great majority of these students fail to succeed because teachers have not been adequately prepared to provide instruction that is appropriate, inclusive, and responsive to their students' needs (Howe & Lisi, 2014; Gay, 2010; Beck, Namuth, Miller, & Wright, 1988; Drucker, 1989).

At a time when the percentage of students of color in United States schools is increasing and the cultural diversity within schools includes recent immigrants from various countries of the world, we can no longer afford to perpetuate Western European values and norms (Chin, 2013; Nguyen, Terlouw & Pilot, 2006; Banks, 1988). This statement implies that it is the responsibility of schools, colleges, and art education programs to prepare all educators, regardless of race or ethnicity, to teach in culturally diverse teaching contexts (Garibaldi, 1992). Likewise, teachers in a pluralistic society have the ethical, legal, and moral responsibility to provide each learner with a chance to succeed academically.

A culturally responsible pedagogy “means that schools and colleges, and departments of education have a moral and ethical responsibility to prepare teachers to be culturally responsive, that is, to enable teachers to respond to the educational needs of their diverse student populations” (Smith, 1994, p. 7). Further, to have a culturally responsive teacher education program, schools, colleges, and departments of education would ideally have a mission statement that supports a culturally pluralistic model of teacher education that ensures that the culturally diverse nature of the U.S. is reflected in the curriculum, student body, faculty, and policies (Gollnick &

Chinn, 2013; Zimpher & Ashburn, 1992; Banks, 1977). Additionally, teacher educators have the responsibility to establish classroom contexts that affirm and value cultural differences (Nieto & Bode, 2012; Bennett, 1988). This responsibility is critical to the realization of equality and equity in the schools.

Teacher Education Challenges

Educational research has shown that educators acknowledge the ideals of cultural pluralism; however, traditionally, educational institutions have not adopted pedagogy to reflect the needs of students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and racial and ethnic groups (Smith, 2010; Winfield, 1991; Barton & Wilder, 1964). Additionally, schools have made little progress towards incorporating information into curricula concerning the achievements of traditionally underrepresented groups, as a Eurocentric bias has dominated the United States educational system. Changing schooling to better serve children from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly African American students, is a goal that the U.S. public school system has been reluctant to accept (Smith, 2010). A challenge associated with curricular transformation is that new plans for teaching about difference have been formulated largely through the eyes of mainstream scholars and historians (Howe & Lisi, 2014; Garcia & Goebel, 1985). As a consequence of this mainstream perspective on cultural diversity, those not in the mainstream remain invisible Green (1983).

A further challenge regarding the transformation of art education towards cultural diversity is that the process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society (Pai & Adler, 2001; Apple, 1979; Pai, 1990). According to Young Pai (1990), “[T]he structure of the educational system, the role of the school, and the teacher-learner relationships reflect the social organization and cultural norms of the society...no part of educative process, neither its contents nor products, is free from cultural influence (p. 4).” Thus, it is critically important that art educators acknowledge that pedagogical processes and practices are inextricably linked to the core values and beliefs of a culture.

Schools, for the most part, have not been an instrument of positive social change. Schools/educational institutions are usually the main

agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture (Apple, 1979). Apple asserts that schools and educational institutions do not help to create the class system as much as to reproduce it from one generation to the next, resulting in the process of cultural reproduction. Similarly, Hooks (1994) notes that as classrooms become more culturally diverse, teachers are faced with the way politics of domination are often reproduced in the educational setting. For example, she states, “[W]hite male students continue to be the most vocal in our classes. Students of color and some [W]hite women express fear that they will be judged as intellectually inadequate by their peers” (p. 39). Finally, other authors have also argued that schools and educational institutions function largely as vehicles for the reproduction of society in its own image (Katz, 1975; Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Teacher Education Opportunity

Tomorrow’s schools will bring new challenges and opportunities as they undergo curricular, structural, and cultural changes in order to meet the diverse student populations in a constantly changing world. An education that is culturally pluralistic offers an opportunity for art teacher educators to prepare a new generation of art teachers capable of meeting the needs of culturally diverse learners. New teachers entering the field of art education have the power to shape their students’ ability to understand and value art in a pluralistic society. Further, they have an unprecedented opportunity to influence the future.

The cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious diversity that Western nations are facing is a challenge. It is a challenge because ethnocentrism, intergroup hostility, and other forms of conflict erupt when groups with divergent values and cultures interact. Even so, challenges can become opportunities, if educational leaders respond in a positive manner to the challenges posed by this increased diversity. bell hooks (1994) notes that:

The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In the field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move

beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

Conceptual Framework for Transforming the Art Education Curriculum

Defining the Role(s) and Responsibilities of the Art Teacher

Challenges

Garcia (1995) asserted that successful pedagogy requires a re(definition) of teachers' roles. However, based on the literature, there are many diverse roles attributed to the teacher (Heck & Williams, 1984). Moreover, there has always been a degree of incongruity between the role(s) that teachers believe they should perform and the role(s) established for them by society and school officials (Cruickshank, 1985). In art education, in the United States, there are no explicit role(s) identified for art teachers. Likewise, there is a lack of consensus regarding what the role (s) of the teacher should be (Cruickshank, 1985). Further, teachers' roles are not constant within or among schools.

There are numerous questions that warrant consideration when attempting to define the role(s) of the art teacher; these include: What roles should the art teacher perform; likewise, what roles should the art teacher not perform? Who should determine the role(s) of the art teacher? How should they be determined? What are the expectations of society and others on the periphery of art education regarding the role(s) of the art teacher? Although these questions will likely go unanswered, art education programs will need to grapple with these central questions and issues, among others, when defining the roles and responsibilities of future teachers in art education.

Opportunities

An art education program's conceptual framework can allow teaching faculty to envision the kind of art teacher they expect will graduate from their program. This would entail the knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on that

conceptualization (Gay, 2010). If we are to achieve the goal of teaching all students equitably, it would stand to reason that art teachers be prepared to be culturally responsive (Irvine & Armento, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Central to this idea are educators who are consciously responsive to their students' cultural backgrounds and learning styles. In keeping with this premise, there are some implicit roles and responsibilities of culturally responsive pedagogy. Diamond & Moore (1995, cited in Gay, 2000) have arranged these role and responsibilities into three main categories: *cultural organizers*, *cultural mediators*, and *orchestrators of social contexts for learning*. As *cultural organizers* art teachers are mindful of the role that culture plays in daily classroom dynamics and are able to create and maintain learning environments that affirm diversity. Moreover, art teachers are able to facilitate learning for all students, drawing upon their diverse backgrounds, lending them voice in the form of "personal and cultural expression" (Gay, 2000, p.43) so that their experiences may be incorporated into teaching and learning processes on a consistent basis. "These accommodations require the use of various culturally centered ways of knowing, thinking, speaking, feeling and behaving" (Gay, 2000, p. 43).

As *cultural mediators* art teachers allow students to challenge the status quo and "mainstream cultural ideals/realities and those of different cultural systems" (Gay, 2000, p. 43). Art teachers also help students "clarify their identities, honor other cultures, develop positive cross-ethnic and cross-cultural relationships, and avoid perpetuating prejudices, stereotypes, and racism" (p. 43).

As *orchestrators of social contexts* for learning, art teachers are aware of cultures' influence on learning and align teaching processes with the "sociocultural contexts and frames of reference" of students representing diverse student populations (p.43). Moreover, art teachers help students "translate their cultural competencies [cultural frames of reference] into school learning resources" (p.43). Spring (1995) defines the notion of cultural frames of reference as that, which causes a cultural group to interpret the world in a particular manner.

In formulating a plan that prepares teachers to be culturally responsive, it would stand to reason that art teachers also be prepared to be "agents of

change” as schools can be centers of change (Joyce, Wolf & Calhoun, 1993), and art teachers need to be equipped to guide that change effectively so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equity (Banks, 2010). The *struggle* of transforming a program’s curriculum to prepare future and practicing art teachers to be culturally responsive so they can provide equitable educational opportunities to all student learners revolves around teachers as cultural reproducers of dominant values that oppress, alienate and subordinate as opposed to active agents of change that work towards producing alternative conditions for teachers and students. Moreover, teacher educators can play a significant role in shaping the direction of research and practice in art education.

Defining the Art Education Curriculum

Once the goals, aims, and objectives of an art program are defined, art teacher educators will need to decide upon relevant curricular content to produce the type of teacher envisioned by the art education program. Culturally responsive curricular models situate the student at the center of the learning process. Such models take advantage of students’ cultural backgrounds, languages, life experiences, and learning potentials. To some education professionals, however, culturally responsive teaching is “just good teaching” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Some routine teaching strategies, indeed, may be part of good teaching; however, culturally responsive teaching is more. It is central to the academic success of diverse student populations.

According to eminent psychologist Jerome Bruner (1996) instructional theory should consider how culture influences learning and apply this knowledge to develop instructional designs that will enable and empower students. Likewise, over a century ago, progressive thinker and scholar John Dewey (1902) argued against the notion of “an inherent dichotomy between the child and the curriculum” believing it to be “an artificial division detrimental to quality teaching” (Gay, 2000, p. 111). Both Bruner and Dewey provide a strong rationale for a culturally responsive curriculum.

Culturally Responsive Curricular Framework

The primary goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to empower ethnically diverse learners through academic success, among other things. Knowledge in the form of curricular content is central to this empowerment. To be effective, this knowledge must be accessible to students and connected to their lives and experiences outside the school context (Howe & Lisi, 2014). Culturally responsive curricular guidelines and goals include the following:

- Supports the cultural learning styles and characteristics of learners
- Provides learners with continuous opportunities to develop a better sense of self.
- Promotes values, attitudes, and behaviors that support racial/ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity
- Helps learners develop their decision-making abilities, social participation skills, and sense of political efficacy
- Assists learners in developing the skills necessary for effective interpersonal, interracial/ethnic, and intercultural group interactions.
- Makes maximum use of experiential learning
- Uses assessment procedures that reflect learners' racial/ethnic and cultural experiences
- Is comprehensive in scope and sequence
- Presents holistic views of racial/ethnic and cultural groups
- Is an integral part of the total curriculum
- Conducts ongoing, systematic evaluations of the goals, methods, and instructional materials used in teaching

In addition to culturally responsive teaching goals and guidelines, there are various approaches to culturally responsive teaching. The following continuum has been adapted from the James Bank's model (1999). Curricular approaches range from modest curricular changes to a fully restructured program.

Approaches to Culturally Responsive Teaching in Art Education

The Contributions Approach (level 1) centers on “heroes and holidays” in which the art teacher integrates into the mainstream curriculum information about famous ethnic people such as Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At this specific level of curricular integration /transformation, the art teacher highlights “foods and festivals” or describes and celebrates holidays such as Kwanzaa or Cinco de Mayo. When discussing cultural artifacts, the art teacher pays minimal attention– if any– to their meanings and significance to underrepresented/underserved cultural and racial groups. At this level, the art teacher does not challenge the long-established ethnocentric and male-centric curriculum; therefore, it maintains its fundamental structure, and distinctive characteristics.

Using **The Additive Approach** (level 2), art teachers transcend heroes and holidays, adding content, concepts, themes, and perspectives of underrepresented/underserved groups to the mainstream curriculum without changing its structure substantially. This might include the incorporation of a unit or course that covers, for instance, the role of women in the Civil Rights Movement, or the incorporation of the study of African-Americans during February (“Black History Month”) or women during March (“Women’s History Month”). At this level, underrepresented students learn little of their own history, while other students learn little of the history and contributions of other racial and cultural groups to North American diversified societies.

In **The Transformational Approach** (level 3), the art teacher seeks to change the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum for a more complete and accurate program of study. Students learn to view concepts, events, and facts through the lens of “the Other,” meaning other diverse racial/ethnic and cultural perspectives. Changes in the basic assumptions and fundamental structure of the curriculum become apparent. For instance, most United States schools continue to teach the myth that, “Columbus discovered America.” The so called “discovery of America” by Columbus may be viewed as a great find through the eyes of European descendants, or as an invasion through the eyes of Native American Indians, who already inhabited the land.

In **The Social Action Approach** (level 4) the voices, ideas and perspectives of students are integral to their learning experience. Students examine key social issues—such as racism, sexism, and classism—and take action to resolve related problems. Because the art teacher helps learners acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to participate in social change, they feel empowered. Student self-examination through value analysis, decision making, problem solving, and social action experiences are essential to this approach.

Figure 1. Approaches to Culturally Responsive Teaching in Art Education

Curricular Transformation: Critical Issues and Challenges

Curriculum is considered the lifeblood of the art education program. Therefore, how can the general art education curriculum be transformed so that it does not, simply, consist of special diversity related courses grafted onto standard curriculum? Further, what might be the most effective way to achieve this goal? In shifting to a culturally pluralistic educational paradigm, there are a number of critical issues and challenges related to curricular transformation, including content and re(structuring).

Content

What should be the content of the diversity requirement?

- Global diversity versus country specific diversity
- Antiracism
- Inequality and discrimination
- Cultural dimensions of power and privilege

Re(structuring)

How might the current curriculum be changed to make it culturally responsive? And what should be the ideal structure?

- One course of many designed as a required diversity course
- Two required sequential courses
- Three, four or more required diversity courses
- The entire curriculum be permeated by a philosophical orientation towards diversity

Professional Learning and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

United States schools have not achieved the goal of educating all students successfully. Furthermore, as the public school's populations and classrooms become more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse, it stands to reason the preparation of teachers must include the knowledge, skills, and values or attitudes necessary to teach and reach students of increasingly diverse backgrounds.

In general, Art Education programs in the United States have a long way to go to develop teacher education programs that reflect a pluralistic society. Despite the attempts of associations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to force teaching faculty to pay more serious attention to issues of diversity, many art education programs have not substantively addressed these concerns. Let us make no mistake, the future of U.S. public schools and the children it serves will be greatly affected by the caliber of teachers that we deliver to the classrooms.

In instances when preservice art teachers need to develop specific competencies to teach culturally diverse student populations, it is assumed that teaching faculty are adequately prepared to assist them in the acquisition of the necessary knowledge skills and attitudes. According to Haberman (1987), less than 5% of full-time faculty in schools of education in the United States has ever taught in very culturally diverse K-12 school systems. Moreover, many teaching faculty in art education programs have not been the recipients of educations which adequately prepared them to confront issues of diversity, and most grew up and continue to live in rural or suburban areas. As a consequence of their social origins and previous educational experiences, many faculties lack the racial, cultural and social knowledge base needed to effectively prepare prospective art teachers to teach culturally diverse student populations (Howe & Lisi, 2014; Chin, 2013; Schmidt, 2005a; Haberman, 1987).

Before art education faculty can begin to effectively educate preservice art teachers, they must be reeducated (Irvine, 2003; Howe & Lisi, 2014). Creating professional development for university faculty is difficult at best, because professors have been socialized to believe they are societal experts in their chosen fields. Despite such a challenge, reeducation can happen in a number of ways. First, art education teaching faculty can be reeducated through reading, exposure to activities and events about people or about that which they may know little (Irvine, 2003; Howe & Lisi, 2014). This reeducation consists of not only learning new things but also unlearning some of the old (Knight, Keifer-Boyd & Amburgy, 2005). Secondly, teacher educators must confront their biases—as we all have internalized messages

sent by a society stratified along the lines of race, class, gender, and language (Grant and Secada, 1990). Third, teacher educators must learn to see reality from a variety of perspectives (NCATE, 2002). This notion leads toward an important point of consideration. As the art education program (re)conceptualizes how to best prepare its future teachers to be culturally responsive in their teaching, perhaps it would be equally beneficial to consider ways in which teaching art education faculty can best be prepared to teach diverse preservice teaching populations.

As bold initiatives are proposed in art education programs, such as what I have described, these ideas will threaten business as usual. These proposals will confront fundamental beliefs and attitudes, and lead to disputes. The forces that inhibit change will show themselves almost immediately when this happens, and obstacles will be created likely to either defeat the proposed changes or reduce their potency so that any changes that are made do not fundamentally alter basic assumptions or practices.

Undoubtedly, preservice art teachers will be confronted with various challenges in educating the culturally diverse students who will typically comprise their future classrooms. It seems so unfair to send them out ill equipped to meet the challenge. Thus, preparing preservice art teachers to be culturally responsive is a challenge that teacher educators must undertake.

Many of our preservice teachers come to us with limited interracial and intercultural experiences, and with false assumptions about culturally diverse student populations (Knight, 2014; Schmidt, 2005a; Zeichner, 1993, 1996). To compound the problem, the vast majority of teaching faculty in the United States is white, monolingual, and culturally encapsulated (Schmidt, 2005a; Ducharme & Agne, 1989; Ducharme & Durchame, 1996; Villegas et. al., 1995). These data lead toward an important debate. Can a preservice teacher education become a powerful enough intervention to change the attitudes and dispositions that preservice art teachers have developed over a lifetime? Can we change the attitudes of teaching faculty? Should we spend more time on choosing the right teacher candidates than on changing the wrong ones?

Some scholars have advocated the need to bring parents and community members into university classrooms to express to preservice teachers, and their educators, what their concerns are about education, and how they would like to see education changed to better serve the needs of their children and the communities from which they come (Castagno & Brayboy (2008); Demmert & Towner (2003); Schmidt, 2005b; Delpit, 1995). Though I have focused this article on how art teacher education programs can articulate or model culturally responsive teaching in their programs as they prepare their future teachers to teach from a multicultural perspective that draws upon the histories and experiences of students from diverse cultural backgrounds, further research is needed in the area of how preservice teachers are prepared to work with parents, schools, and communities. More research is also needed that examines student and teacher interactions in culturally diverse settings. Also, as attempts are made to recruit more diverse art education faculty members and preservice teachers, further research is needed in the area of why teachers are leaving or no entering the profession.

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At major research institutions, promotion and tenure decisions weigh heavily on criteria related to research and scholarship. Therefore, should art education faculty devote as much time to teaching and teacher education program development or spend time on special pursuits necessary for academic success in the Academy?

What I have discussed, thus far, concerning culturally responsive teaching deals more with what teacher educators and program designers can do. However, in order, for traditionally White institutions to experience campus wide cultural transformation in classrooms that enable all learners to engage in cultural learning processes, colleges and universities must make teaching as much—if not more—of a priority as academic scholarship. Unless higher education institutions meet this challenge, there will be little incentive for today's professors to acquire and implement a broad range of teaching skills that would allow students to obtain the kind of education they need and deserve.

Concluding Thoughts

In this article, I have highlighted selected issues related to culturally responsive pedagogy. Also, I have offered some ideals regarding theoretical and practical considerations toward defining the role(s) of the art teacher, and curriculum transformation in art education. When considering culturally responsive teaching, however, I am not suggesting that art educators start with comprehensive programs, as it would be unreasonable for me to suggest that art educators toss out their existing curriculums. Instead, an initial first step for teacher educators might be to use the current curriculum as a foundation to help preservice teachers develop a more critical perspective while examining the experiences of African-American, Native-American, women, and other perspectives generally excluded from the curriculum (Amburgy, Knight & Keifer-Boyd, 2004). Moreover, art education teaching faculty, the majority of whom are White, can use their current curriculums to include a critical study of their own racial positionalities and experiences of Whiteness, particularly as it relates to social power and privilege (Jay, 2005). Be that as it may, it is important to note the following: whatever process we use to prepare prospective art teachers, in whatever contexts, and developed through whatever skills and wisdom, no teacher education program can fully prepare its preservice teachers to handle all of the different situations in which they might find themselves during a teaching career. Therefore, the best we can hope to do is give our future art teachers a “jump-start” on a lifelong process of learning. We can hope to sensitize them to the need to continue learning about themselves and the students they encounter, and we can point them in a direction of where to look and what to consider when teaching and working in various contexts. If we reach these goals, as teacher educators, we will have done a great service to our future teachers, and to the students that they will teach

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