

# Chapter 9: Ideas and Concepts That Impacted Art Education, 1998–2019

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**In 2014, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Research Commission set forth an agenda for art education focusing on teaching and learning in the visual arts based, in part, on responses from NAEA members.** I have a long history with this Commission, serving as the first Research Commission Chair (1993–1998), as a member of the task force that reinstated the Commission (2010), and as a member of the current NAEA Research Commission (2012–2016). For the Research Agenda, there were three themes: (1) professional research literacy; (2) four research topics, including social justice research, demographic research, assessment/evaluation research, and emerging technology; and (3) four research factors including student learning, art educator teaching, content/disciplines of art and art education, and educational contexts/settings where art learning takes place. The first two research themes were helpful in organizing the content of this chapter and the third theme was incorporated into first two themes.

## Professional Research Literacy

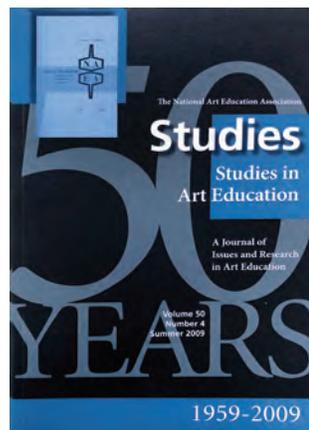
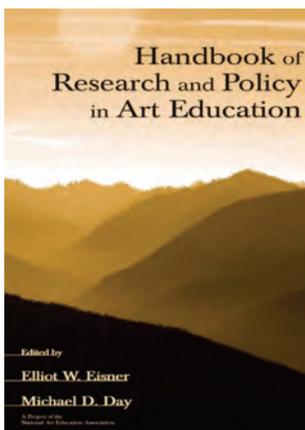
In 2004, Elliot Eisner and Michael Day edited the first *Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education* to ensure that “the field of art education has a body of scholarship to which prospective teachers of art and... those aspiring to scholarship in the field should have access” (p. 1). Although research and policy directions have changed over 18 years since its publication, this *Handbook* marked a milestone for art education. The six sections in the *Handbook* included historical currents in art education, policy perspectives impacting the teaching of art, learning in the visual arts, teaching and teacher education,

forms of assessment in art education, and emerging visions of the field. This *Handbook* is a treasure trove for understanding how emerging ideas have evolved and changed leading up to the early 21st century.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of NAEA, in 1997 Mary Ann Stankiewicz, editor of *Art Education*, asked five former editors to select one article worth rereading from assigned decades, for a [special issue of the journal](#). For the decade 1987–1997, Gilbert Clark designated five articles prior to choosing the Hamblen and Galanes article as the final one; topics included art education curriculum development through a historical lens (Erickson, 1995), multicultural components in art curricula (Clark, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990), using contemporary art to teach about professional art criticism (Lee, 1993), a critique of Hirsch’s (1987) construct of cultural literacy (Zurmuehlen, 1989), and organizing curricula content for instructing about aesthetics (Hamblen & Galanes, 1991). These articles reflect the influence of discipline-based art education and its deep roots in art education theory and practice at that time.

In 2009, Doug Blandy edited the [50th anniversary issue of \*Studies in Art Education\*](#), to commemorate its inaugural issue published in 1959. In comparison to the articles in *Art Education*’s 50th anniversary issue, ideas and concepts in this *Studies* issue included reconsidering roles of creativity, critiquing historical research, the nature of art, and arts-based research. The topic of creativity was a major emphasis, as reflected in Viktor Lowenfeld’s (Burton, 2009) contributions to art education and his ideas about creative practice, notions about contemporary aesthetics and Vincent Lanier’s and Irving Kaufmann’s ideas about art and creativity (jagodzinski, 2009), and in a critical analysis of and reconsidering concepts related to art education and creativity inquiry and praxis (Zimmerman, 2009). Other topics included arts-based research, as distinguished from qualitative research, and how researchers can use art processes in their inquiry (O’Donoghue, 2009), and the necessity for developing a coherent knowledge base about practices in early art education (Hafeli, 2009).

The shift of interest, issues, and research in art education has waned and resurfaced over the years. Creative self-expression was a dominant theme in art education in the late 1930s and lasted for more than 50 years. Then there was changing support for creativity in art education from a high point in the 1960s and 1970s to its fall during the 1980s to late 1990s, when art



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education focused on community-based and multicultural art education. From the late 1990s to 2019, with the advent of expanding technological and social communication environments, themes related to art education research and practice were emphasized, including multicultural, global, intercultural, and visual culture art education along with arts-based practice, design education, and the history of art education methods and strategies. In 2010, interest in creativity resurfaced, as evidenced by two issues of *Art Education* devoted to creativity (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Zimmerman, 2010) and a book published by NAEA in 2015 about creativity research and practice (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015). In addition, the themes of the 2011 NAEA Convention—creativity, innovation, and imagination—were applied to both education and business communities.

Advocacy for art education, for those inside and outside the field, is important if art education is to continue as an important subject in schools at the local, state, and national levels, and internationally. The NAEA report, *Learning in a Visual Age: The Critical Importance of Visual Arts Education* (2016), was the outcome of an NAEA-sponsored meeting at the Aspen Institute. This document helped inform policy and decision making and a series of [advocacy papers](#) (Zimmerman, 2011) that focused on communicating the value of visual arts education. The Advocacy White Papers for Art Education expanded on five main points found in *Learning in a Visual Age*: what high-quality art education provides, how high-quality arts education can prepare students for the future, what excellent visual arts teaching looks like, how to infuse the arts into learning environments, and ensuring excellent visual arts education for every student. A main point was that advocacy must remain at the forefront if art education is to remain essential and vital in our nation’s schools, museums, community centers, and anywhere where the arts are learned, taught, and practiced.

### NAEA Research Commission Study

Milbrandt and two of her Research Commission colleagues (2018) analyzed art education research published between 2014 and 2016, concluding that there was a wide variety of research methods used in art education, the clear majority of which were qualitative studies. The four Research Agenda topics were used

to determine current trends in art education. In *Studies in Art Education*, articles that focused on issues of social justice were the most frequent, with relatively fewer others emphasizing demographics, technology, or assessment. *Studies* articles did focus on topics of education theory, visual culture, and curriculum (and these were mainly theoretically oriented). The topic of demographics garnered the least number of articles; Milbrandt and her colleagues concluded that although the topic of social justice continues to be important, other themes need to be researched so that the future of art education as a critical and dynamic teaching and learning subject is assured.

### Four Research Topics

#### Social Justice

Social justice inquiry and praxis, a prevalent topic in contemporary art education, includes equity of access to and opportunities for quality art education for all students in school, museum, and community settings. It includes a diversified art education teaching force, with a focus on community-based education, and brings together art education practices through feminist, multicultural, and global teaching and learning strategies, including ability rights and environmental programs, along with performance pedagogy and visual culture art education practices (Garber, 2004). Artwork that emphasizes social justice can take many forms that support social change centering on inequality or injustice, including activist, community-based, public art, and cultural development (Dewhurst, 2010).

Working with local communities is important for developing equitable, differentiated community-based curricula for art students and involves building connections between communities and schools where community members, teachers, and students participate. Topics currently being addressed in community-based art education often focus on cultural, historical, and social inquiry that addresses local concerns such as a community’s history, built environment, ecological issues, and the local people who create art, and issues such as homelessness and rethinking use of rural and urban spaces. Financial, social, and cultural inequalities also are in the forefront in social justice art education; theoretical foundations based on feminist leadership may be linked with activist artmaking and pedagogy, and directions for social change and empowerment enacted through community engagement by challenging the political nature of organizations and those who hold power (Sandell & Zimmerman, 2017).

#### Technology

In the 21st century, teaching and learning using technology enables art educators and students to interact across local, national, and international boundaries (Tillander, 2011). Technology tools, processes, and resources are incorporated

in a variety of art and design education programs that emphasize creating products and services in tandem with studio arts. New digital technology environments delivered through modes of mass media communication include images, audios, video games, crowdsourcing, social networks, and collaborative research, and have had a great influence on art education research and practice. The integrative and interdisciplinary nature of art and design teaching and learning in diverse environments also plays an essential role in linking all subjects. Contemporary STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) art educators and researchers often promote social justice in an age of collaboration and use contemporary technologies and social media to prepare students to reinterpret traditional forms, break boundaries, and use innovative types of social communication. Ideally, students should have access to and learn methods of reading and critiquing the ideological content that is presented to them through traditional and contemporary forms of communication (Duncum, 2007).

### Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment in art education is used to provide feedback for improvement of education initiatives in respect to teaching and learning in a range of settings, effectiveness of curricula and standards, and the safety of education facilities. Evaluation is represented in systematic processes that can determine the quality of teacher performance or student achievement for purposes of grading and reporting, or deciding whether a program, curriculum, product, procedure, or policy has met intended processes, the quality and quantity outcomes, and what might be done to make a program effective.

The [NAEA Assessment White Papers](#), edited by Deborah C. Sickler-Voigt (2018–2020), consist of more than a dozen essays about assessment methods and their applications. These essays focus on current and established assessment theories and practices that are relevant to a wide variety of NAEA members as well as parents, administrators, and the general public to help understand assessments and how they are applied in the field of art education. The five sections of the collection of papers are: Assessment in Art Education: Building Knowledge; Assessments That Promote Vibrant Learning Communities and Advocate for the Visual Arts; Planning and Implementing Visual Arts Assessments; Analyzing, Interpreting, and Reporting Art Education Assessments; and Visual Arts Assessments: Case Studies From the Classroom and Beyond.

### Demographic Research

Demographic research emphasizes information about group environmental and economic conditions, values, and perceptions, and often describes environmental and economic conditions and experiences and values within a group. The



The Assessment White Papers for Art Education consist of five sections of essays.

nature and quality of existing conditions and practices can assist in establishing baseline data or setting benchmarks to influence future art education practice and policy. There have been few large-scale demographic research studies comparing different or similar populations of art students and art educators, the content of art programs, or settings. There are, however, examples of local and national studies emphasizing how art education has moved from a focus on the United States to include global perspectives about teaching practices, assessment procedures, and resources that support student learning through promoting cultural sensitivity and participation in a globally interconnected world (Delacruz et al., 2009; Manifold et al., 2016). In the future, art education research and praxis are situated to have an significant impact in developing appreciation for aesthetic beliefs and artistic expressions of members of local sociocultural communities, and at the same time to exemplify openness, respect, and a sense of caring and responsibility for those from one's own and other communities around the world.

### Concluding Thoughts

In addressing art education themes and praxis from 1998 to 2019, it is evident that a new research agenda for visual arts education for the future will need to take into account many different constituents' interests as well as priorities already set by those who have participated in the past. This research agenda will also need to address significant changes in art education theory and praxis to meet new challenges. Interest in and new prospects for art education at state, federal, national, and international levels are needed if art education teaching and learning are to become a necessary and vital component of all students' education. ■

## Note

1. *Looking Back: Editors' Selections From 50 Years of Studies in Art Education*, edited by Kerry Freedman (2009), emphasized research and theory development in *Studies* from 5 decades, from the 1960s through the early 2000s, that highlighted themes influencing art education including creativity, feminism, multiculturalism, interdisciplinary education, and visual and digital culture. Some of these topics can be seen as anticipating themes in this chapter that focused on art education research and practice from 1998 to 2019.

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