EDAR518: VISUAL ARTS CURRICULUM AND TEACHING 3

Assessment Task 1

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM MODELS

Comparison Between Discipline-Based Art Education in a Visual Communication and Design Lesson.

Word Count: 1940
Discipline Based Art Education Vs. Teaching for Artistic Behaviour

If you ask any student who is studying any form of Art, be it visual art, studio art, design, music, or dance, to tell you the main, outstanding difference they find between their Art lessons and a subject like English or science, most of them would say that art is not boring. That’s the main reason I did Visual Communication and Design (VCD) in high school – I needed a break from the dreariness of the so-called ‘main’ subject areas. VCD for me was a chance to think freely, to use my hands, and most of all to be able to practically express myself. To not follow rules to the letter, like balancing a chemical equation for example, while coming up with concept ideas was highly liberating. Even the theory components in these classes were interesting: not particularly the content, but the way the lessons were delivered to us!

Since starting my Diploma or Education, I’ve learned that there are many methods in which a teacher of the Arts could teach their subject to the students. Some of these methods are, discipline based art education, flipped classroom, visual thinking strategies, and teaching for artistic behaviour (choice-based art education). I will be using a VCD lesson as an example throughout this essay (because I haven’t done any other form of art past year 8 in school) to analyse and compare two of these methods. The methods I have chosen are ‘discipline based art education’ and ‘teaching for artistic behaviour’. First of all, let’s take a closer look at what these two methods are. What are their aims and outcomes?

Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE)

Discipline based art education takes a logical, structured approach to art education. It is the most widely used and funded art teaching method in the world. DBAE is a combination of four branches of art education. These are,

- Art production
- Art history
- Art criticism
- Aesthetics

Dr. Elliot Eisner (1933 – 2014) was an advocate of discipline based art education. He said that, “students should not only have the opportunity to make visual works of art, they should learn how to see these works as well. And they should not only learn to see works of art, they should also know something about the times – the social circumstances – in which the works were created” (Eisner, 1987). In the same journal article, Dr. Eisner also said, “Ideally, the arts should be taught in relation to other subjects. Each of the arts would be taught in a way that allows for parity between subjects.” (Eisner, 1987), this draws direct parallels to curriculum requirements in AusVELS.

Rationale: Essentially, discipline based art education gets the students to develop a more holistic view of art, from the creation stage to the critiquing process. It “develops students abilities to understand and appreciate art. Involves a knowledge of the theories and contexts of art and abilities to respond to as well as to create art.” (Discipline-Based Art Education: Becoming Students of Art)
Outcomes: By treating art education like any other subject with a set of guidelines and structure, this method ensures that visual art fits in with the students general education – regardless of the students skill level or talent.

Teaching for Artistic Behaviour/Choice Based Art Education (TAB)

In contrast to discipline based art education, choice based art education hones in on the student's imagination and creativity. Naturally fostering their talent. It is a grassroots method that lacked the funding and backing that DBAE has (Joni Hough, University of North Carolina). Teaching for artistic behaviour,

- Regards students as artists who make choices
- Support multiple modes of learning and teaching (pedagogy)
- Students are encouraged to try out new things
- Incorporate multiple ways of assessment

Rationale: The main belief in teaching for artistic behaviour is seeing the student as an artist. The students are allowed to work at their own pace, utilising their own abilities. Most of the class time is spent on practical components, with the students being encouraged to find out the theories by themselves (although from a VCD point of view, this may be a bit of a challenge as there are some technical fundamentals that surround design!). The teachers in these classroom observe the students strengths and weaknesses and cater their teaching accordingly. This allows the teachers to provide the students with in-depth instructions and help the struggling students more.

In these classrooms, it is not uncommon to see a student who has a good grasp on the subject teaching another student who might be struggling. This is advantageous for both parties because the struggling student can continue to learn until the teacher can see to them, and it helps the other student because this acts as a revision method for them. After all, teaching another person something you know is a great way to revise!

The other important aspect of teaching for artistic behaviour is tailored assessment. Students are not (usually) subjected to standardised assessment rubrics. Instead the teachers are encouraged to individually assess the students on their personal achievement and growth. Risk taking, following a line of thought over time, going deep within a preferred medium or technique, experimenting, and bringing aspects of their life in to their art are some of the artistic behaviours that teachers value (www.teachingforartisticbehavior.org). Self-assessment and collaborative assessment is also encouraged in choice based art education.

Outcomes: By treating each student as an artist, and giving them control over their subject matter, choice based art education ensures that the student is always motivated during the class. The teachers deliver a more personalised lesson to the students, and the assessment is based on artistic behaviour, where the rubrics are negotiated between students and teachers and are broad enough to address student differences (teachingforartisticbehavior.org), students become self drive, more rounded artists.

Lesson Topic
Now, the best way to compare these two methods would be to conduct a two similar lessons using each of the methods and weigh the pros and cons of each. Unfortunately I don't have that luxury, so I'm going create a hypothetical Visual Communication and Design lesson for year 9 and compare the two methods. The lesson would be on the principles of design. The students will have to correctly identify the principles of design by the end of the lesson. Each teaching method would have a different approach to how the principles will be delivered to the students, and different assessment criteria, and hopefully we'll see which method would be ideal for the lesson.

Lesson on The Principles of Design Using Discipline Based Art Education.

To coincide with discipline based art education, I'll start off this lesson by explaining to the students what the different principles of design are and giving a concise description for each of them (symmetry, repetition, hierarchy, movement, contrast, proportion). I would then show the students some examples of design work like movie posters, promotional poster for products, vehicles, general advertising etc., and help them identify the design principles utilized in these pieces. For example, I would show a question I would ask would be,

"Look at this poster. Can you tell me the design principles that have been used?"

I would then give the students a few seconds to observe the poster and let them answer. Hopefully they will correctly identify design principles like, hierarchy,
repetition, and movement. As they call out the different principles, I will ask them to elaborate and tell me if the principles have been used effectively or not (hierarchy: Darth Vader's head being the biggest object in the poster, bigger than Luke or Leia. This gives the viewer a sense of the power and omnipotence that Vader posses). The idea behind doing this exercise is that the students will learn the principles and how they have been used effectively in pieces of visual communication.

The outcome of this lesson is that the students will be able to correctly identify and explain the different design principles and eventually successfully use them in their own work. The outcomes will be assessed by giving each student a paper with 10 examples of visual art and getting them to list 5 design principles and in a sentence to elaborate on them. I will then grade their answers on correctness and validity of their justification for identifying the principles.

Lesson on The Principles of Design Using Teaching for Artistic Behaviour.

Teaching for artistic behaviour is quite a contrasting method to discipline based art education. So for this lesson, instead of introducing the design principles and explain to them how each principle is used in piece of visual design, I'll ask the students to bring use an existing brand logo and manipulate it visually. After that I'll ask the students to design an advertisement for a magazine using the manipulated logo. The type of magazine will have to correspond to the type of logo they they selected, i.e. Nike - sporting magazine, Apple - technology magazine etc. The students will have about a lesson to complete this their work, and full creative control over their advertisements. Once the students have completed the advertisement, they will pin their work on the wall. I will then go through each one and ask pick design principles that I see in the work. I will then ask the students to tell me (and the class) why they used certain elements (the students will have no knowledge about the principles yet). After they've explained why they used these, I would use the students work as examples and show them the different principles. I will at this point also use real advertisements and posters and ask the students to identify various design principles in them. This will show the students that the principles they unconsciously used are actually utilized by professional designers and are indeed valid principles that are used to grab and manipulate the attention of the audience.

This lesson's outcome will be the same as the lesson using DBAE. That is that the students gain an understanding about the principles of design and be able to identify and hopefully use the principles consciously in their own work.

As hypothesized, it is very evident that teaching for artistic behaviour and discipline based art education are two contrasting methods of teaching art. Discipline based art education, to me, is a more logical teaching method with clear steps. For a subject like Visual Communication and Design a certain level of structure is indeed needed because there are certain technical theories and skills that have to be taught and explained first before the students get a full understanding of them. Although as seen in the lesson which used teaching for artistic behaviour, by giving the student the chance to do their own advertisement before introducing them to the design principles, I was able to show them that they used them without knowing in their everyday design and artwork. Drawing comparisons with their advertisements to commercial advertisements, the students will gain a higher level of confidence that would stem from a sense of achievement. This method however, is more time consuming than discipline based art education - which is a major negative in a lesson that's constrained by time.
Both these methods have their positives, but I think my ideal method would be teaching for artistic behaviour with a bit of structure. A DBAE and TAB hybrid. Using the positives of both methods mainly because I find disciple based artistic behaviour is too restrictive to be a method of art education. Artists and designers thrive when they're left to own devices.
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