

ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO PROGRAM DELIVERY IN ARTS TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT. This inquiry examined the effectiveness of a partnership program in arts teacher education with students who had obtained teaching experience in school settings within one year of graduation. Participants in the study indicated that engaging in classroom-based activities in the on-campus program with expert practitioners increased their level of confidence and willingness to teach the arts in their own classrooms. They found that role playing classroom situations and examining the theoretical basis bridged the gap for them between university classes and their field experiences in the first year of teaching. Above all, beginning teachers recommended learning fewer skills with more in-depth activities in teacher education rather than attempting to learn a quantity of concepts not fully understood or a quantity of skills not adequately mastered.

RÉSUMÉ. Cette étude porte sur l'efficacité d'un programme de partenariat dans la formation des professeurs d'arts avec les étudiants qui ont fait leur stage d'enseignement dans une école une année après l'obtention de leur diplôme. Les participants à cette étude ont déclaré que le fait de participer à des activités en classe dans le cadre du programme sur le campus avec des professeurs aguerris a contribué à accroître leur niveau de confiance et leur volonté d'enseigner les arts dans leur propre classe. Ils ont constaté que le fait d'interpréter des situations scolaires et d'analyser la base théorique a contribué à combler le fossé entre les cours universitaires et leurs stages pratiques durant leur première année d'enseignement. Mais par-dessus tout, les professeurs débutants recommandent d'apprendre un moins grand nombre d'habiletés avec des activités plus approfondies dans le domaine de la formation des enseignants plutôt que d'essayer d'apprendre une quantité de concepts qu'ils ne comprennent pas entièrement ou une quantité de compétences qu'ils ne maîtrisent pas parfaitement.

Many educational organizations and government ministries are undergoing significant restructuring to meet the needs of a modern society (Small, 1994; Watson & Allison, 1992; Wise, 1992). These institutions are reframing school curricula: they are emphasizing generic skills rather

than subject disciplines; and they are moving away from objectives to outcomes-based learning in an attempt to encourage holistic and global thinking. Consequently, there is a re-organization of the curriculum into broader program areas, such as math, science and technology, or the arts (dance, drama, music, and visual arts), and the fostering of multidisciplinary approaches (Ontario), integrated programming (British Columbia), and cross-curricular outcomes (Saskatchewan). In addition, organizations are seeking the support of external stakeholders, such as school boards, teachers' federations, and education ministries, in the development of new programs. Their involvement has assisted faculties to effectively shift the focus of teacher education to a client service orientation; that is, one that is more responsive to the needs of the teaching profession and the aspirations of students (Gurney & Andrews, 1995).

With the implementation of *The Common Curriculum* (1993, 1995) and the recognition of the arts as a core area of the Ontario school curriculum, classroom teachers are expected to deliver instruction not only in music and visual arts, but also dance and drama (Andrews & Gurney, 1993).¹ To assist teacher-candidates acquire this expertise, a team of arts professors was organized at a faculty of education in an urban university to ensure that the students were exposed to a high level of expertise in each discipline. All candidates received an equal amount of instruction in dance, drama, music, and the visual arts, and additional instruction in curriculum planning, evaluation, and integration in the arts. The year-end program evaluation revealed a high level of satisfaction with the multidisciplinary arts course that is implemented by the use of a collaborative delivery model involving university faculty and field personnel (Andrews, 1995a). Students indicated that they improved their knowledge base in the arts, their confidence level and teaching effectiveness increased, and their comfort level engaging in arts activities increased after taking the course. Further, they indicated that they grasped the theoretical elements of the arts, the teaching strategies and resources were useful, the format of the course was conducive to their learning, and they were motivated to obtain more expertise in the arts. To improve and develop the curriculum, further study was required. For this purpose, this inquiry² was conducted to determine: (1) what aspects of the collaborative delivery system enhanced teaching effectiveness in the field; (2) how effectively the theory-practice dichotomy of the university-field partnership was addressed; and (3) what changes could be implemented to improve program delivery.

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are different models of delivery for arts courses utilized in faculties of education. Further, there is no agreement on the instructional skills that should be taught within the context of such programs (Wilkinson, Emerson, Guillaumant, Mergler, & Waddington, 1992). However, progress has been made in developing interactive strategies for this purpose (Andrews, 1990, 1993, 1995b, 1996a, 1996b). Overall, specialists continue to promote comprehensive discipline-based or interdisciplinary approaches (Lehman & Sinatra, 1988), and generalists tend to prefer multi-arts, interdisciplinary arts, or integrated arts approaches (Wilson, 1994). The specialist approaches were designed by music educators (competency-based) and visual arts educators (discipline-based), but these models have not been universally adopted by dance and drama educators (Dorn & Jones, 1988). The generalists often differ in their definitions of the "arts" and in their application. For example, multi-arts may refer to any combination of visual arts, crafts, music, industrial arts, creative writing, drama, and dance. These may be implemented in different ways, for example, through expressive activities, critical analysis, or socio-cultural study (Wilson, 1994).

The research in Ontario focused on teacher education in the arts is limited to a number of reports prepared by professional associations, school boards, and universities. The Forum for Arts and Media Education, a consortium of university professors and arts teachers and consultants, reported in *Teacher Education in the Arts* (FAME, 1985) that the major problems in preservice and inservice programs were limited hours allocated to arts instruction and the need to address the practice-theory dichotomy between the field and university.

Notoriously in Ontario the time limitations on pre-service and inservice arts programs for teachers are very restricting. At the pre-service level in consecutive programs, the time available to train generalist teachers is quite insufficient. (pp. 6-7)

and . .

Unless practice teachers, supervising teachers, faculty members work closely together the practice-teaching process cannot be adequate. (p. 67)

To address these two central problems the writers of the report recommended that faculties of education increase the hours allocated to the arts, and that they adopt a workshop methodology where professional artists and clinical professors participate in the delivery of the courses. Further, they suggested raising standards by limiting enrollments to

candidates with an arts background, equating practical experience to academics for admission, and including studio time in teacher education.

Four years later, a survey of 44 school boards in the Central Ontario Region undertaken by the Arts Curriculum Centre found that boards identified the arts as a top priority in their programming (arts Curriculum Centre, 1989). In response to this finding, the Arts Education Council developed an Action Plan intended to support pre-service and in-service programs. The project established criteria for quality instruction, identified strategies to improve communications between field and university personnel, and promoted integrative (elementary) and specialized (secondary) approaches to the arts (AECO, 1991). That same year educators, professional artists, and school board administrators meeting at an Arts Work Conference in Toronto recommended to the Ontario Ministry of Education that all school boards should develop an arts policy for their schools and all teacher education programs should include dance, drama, music, and visual arts, as well as integrative activities (Wilkinson, Emerson, Guillaumant, Mergler, & Waddington, 1992).

The most comprehensive report on arts teacher education in the province was commissioned by the Arts Education Council of Ontario, and it involved Ministry personnel, university professors, school board administrators, and classroom teachers. Information was gathered on student admissions, staff strength, program duration and content, curriculum integration, and institutional commitment to the arts (outlined in detail in Wilkinson, Emerson, Guillaumant, Mergler, & Waddington, 1992). Overall, the Arts Education Council found that only two faculties of education have articulated a philosophy of arts instruction for their programs. It was also found that contact hours range from no preparation to very few hours; not many arts education professors have doctorates (20%); and no arts expertise is required of the associate teachers who supervise the practical. However, several faculties were taking steps to address the arts through restructuring, and others were actively exploring new methods of integration and cross-curricular applications.

Efforts to reform teacher education curricula have not significantly influenced either the teaching-learning process in classrooms or professional culture in schools (Fullan, 1993). Nor have attempts at reform significantly improved the linking of theory to practice (Cole & McNay, 1989; Wideen & Holborn, 1986). Research has demonstrated that the

theory-practice dichotomy can be bridged through collaboration between schools and universities (MacPhail-Wilson & Guth, 1983; Roueche & Baker, 1986). Indeed university-field partnerships that are successful are guided by a collaboration that has grown from the needs of the clients (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). On this basis a collaborative system of delivering the arts in teacher education was developed. A common course outline was developed for six on-campus and two on-site classes; a faculty professor assumed responsibility for curriculum planning, evaluation, and integration in the arts; and four clinical professors with expertise in dance, drama, music, and visual arts assumed responsibility for instruction in their respective areas.

The curricular framework for the design of the partnership course was developed from the four broad topic areas generic to dance, drama, music, and visual arts: form, meaning, function, and communication (refer to *The Common Curriculum*, 1993 & 1995). Form refers to the elements of a work of art and the way these elements are organized to create an entity; and meaning focuses on describing, interpreting, and evaluating an artistic product. Function emphasizes understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of the arts in society; and communicating requires active involvement in the creative process and a knowledge of that process.³ The curriculum planning component of the course focused on designing lessons using the elements of each arts discipline (form). The workshops emphasized active involvement in the arts through creating and performing (communicating) and were delivered by expert dance, drama, music, and visual arts educators from local school boards. The evaluation component of the course examined issues which involved making artistic judgments, describing and rationalizing one's interpretations, and providing assessments to students, parents, and administration (meaning). The integration component examined the similarities and differences among the arts disciplines, the role of arts within society and within different cultures, and the relationship of the arts to the overall school curriculum (function). Formative evaluation involved small groups of teacher-candidates developing a lesson plan and delivering it in a simulated and interactive setting. Summative evaluation for the course consisted of a group project which involved selecting a theme and writing an integrated arts unit (two lessons each of dance, drama, music, and visual arts). This final project was intended to demonstrate the students' ability to plan and deliver arts curricula and understand artistic form, function, meaning, and the creative process.

METHODOLOGY: A NATURALISTIC APPROACH

Rationale

A naturalistic approach was adopted in this study as this approach offered the principal investigator the opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding of why the collaborative system enhanced the teacher-candidates' confidence, comfort level, and teaching expertise (as outlined in Andrews, 1995a), and in what ways the course could be effectively designed, developed, supported, and adapted. Much research on curriculum improvement focuses on documenting the realities of development and implementation for the purpose of generating more effective ways of using and extending the program (Harris, Bell, & Carter, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1986). A closeness to the program is necessary which is more defensibly developed within a qualitative paradigm, that is to say: "The qualitative-naturalistic-formative approach is especially appropriate for programs that are developing, innovative, or changing, where the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants" (Patton, 1987, pp. 18-19).

Participants

When the principal investigator administered the year-end program evaluation (March, 1994), sixteen teacher-education candidates (i.e., 12% of the students completing program evaluations) expressed an interest in providing further input into the program after they had obtained additional teaching experience.⁴ These volunteers were asked to participate in the study the following academic year after they had obtained teaching experience in the field (June, 1995) by undertaking a telephone interview with structured questions. It is recognized that these individuals may have had strong reasons, either for or against, the course delivery. However, this was a qualitative study designed to gather in-depth data on the effectiveness of the course on improving their learning and identifying obstacles that blocked learning. Hence a keen interest in participation was advantageous for engendering a thickness of data (Kratwhol, 1993).

Interview questions

The program evaluation, a survey with additional open-ended questions (refer to Andrews, 1995a), was developed from a pool of generic questions utilized in the teacher education program to develop the year-

end program evaluations. Additional items were also included to address issues (i.e., level of comfort, theory-practice dichotomy) raised in the report on preservice education in the arts (Wilkinson, Emerson, Guillaumant, Mergler, & Waddington, 1992). The initial review questions were pilot-tested with 10% of the student population who made substantial revisions, particularly in refining the questions by clarifying theoretical concepts. The interview questions for this study were based on the program evaluation questions but the questions were reworked to elicit data on the perceived effectiveness of the arts course for improving instruction in the schools (refer to Appendix 1).

Procedure

Of the sixteen 1994 teacher education graduates contacted in May of 1995, two declined to participate in the study, thereby reducing the number to fourteen (i.e., 10% of those completing the program evaluations). Of these, all taught the arts during the 1994-1995 school year: three had full-time teaching positions; one had a part-time position; eight had supply contracts; and two were not currently teaching, but taught on a supply basis as needed.

The telephone interviews were administered by a research assistant in June of 1995 and not by the principal investigator (who was also the faculty professor who organized the course). Participants returned the consent form, and indicated a date and time when it was convenient to undertake the interview. Background information and telephone interview questions were provided beforehand, and the research assistant scheduled the interviews and recorded the data.

Analysis of data

The data obtained through the structured telephone interviews was analyzed and synthesized to determine: (1) what aspects of the collaborative delivery system enhanced teaching effectiveness; (2) to what extent the theory-practice dichotomy of the program was alleviated; and (3) what changes could be implemented to improve the design and delivery of the course. The interview questions focused on the personal effect of key dimensions of the design and delivery of the collaborative program in their teaching career. These dimensions were initially identified in the initial program evaluation (Andrews, 1995a) and integrated into the interview questions (refer to the words in bold in Appendix 1). These dimensions include a conceptual knowledge of the arts; comfort in engaging in arts activities; confidence to teach dance,

drama, music, or visual arts; the ability to relate concepts to practical activities and to identify aspects of a course impacting on personal learning; the motivation to obtain additional expertise; the willingness to reflect on personal growth; and the ability to critically evaluate one's personal teaching effectiveness. During the analysis, the researcher considered the teacher-candidates' perceptions of each of these dimensions on their personal learning and teaching effectiveness. The data was synthesized to determine those aspects of instruction in teacher education that can be beneficial for enhancing teaching, integrating theory and practice, and improving personal arts learning.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Enhancement of beginning teachers' teaching effectiveness

The teachers indicated that their own teaching effectiveness in the arts was primarily enhanced by the increased knowledge and confidence gained through participation in the course. The visiting professors "made it straight forward and we became more confident to teach." The hands-on experience built confidence in various areas and as one teacher stated: "helped us get over our inhibitions." The practitioners brought real-life experiences to the university classroom that helped with the delivery of arts lessons – warm-up exercises, managing groups, and pacing lessons. As a consequence, as one teacher noted, "they helped me to help others."

It would appear that the involvement in classroom-based activities engendered a "can do" attitude that motivated teachers to introduce the arts in their own classrooms. For example, one teacher indicated that in watching the visual arts demonstrations by her peers, she recognized that one did not need to be an expert in a discipline to be a teacher: "I could do it too!" Further, the lessons gave them an opportunity to participate as a child in a classroom setting, achieve the doable, and realize that all of us have talents. The opportunity of role-playing the children's engagement in arts activities set the stage for teacher-candidates' own learning, and encouraged them to transfer their arts experiences into their own classroom. For example: "I used a lesson from the arts workshops and it went over so well that my credibility with the students was established and the rapport set for the rest of my practicum."

The participants also indicated that it was the range of roles that they were expected to play that increased their awareness of a wide range of possibilities and thereby enhanced their own teaching effectiveness. They were involved in the course by role-playing students, participating in group projects, creating and presenting lessons, simulating classroom experiences, and re-creating a wide range of scenarios: this "participation promoted effectiveness." Above all, these course experiences led one teacher to the realization that: "If you teach properly, you really enjoy it."

The theory-practice dichotomy of university-field relationships

The beginning teachers indicated that the arts team – a university professor responsible for the theory supported by field personnel – achieved an effective blend of theory with practice. To them the theory was quite relevant to the practice as the specialists made the connection. As one teacher indicated: "I have a better understanding" because the fit of theory and practice was quite well done. Overall, the teachers felt strongly that it was the presence of the visiting professors and the expertise they brought to the course that bridged the gap that too often exists between the university and the schools: "I could see it done. . . . practice it as a student. . . . I knew the outcome." Teachers indicated that their practicum went easier with the repertoire of lessons made available: "I definitely used ideas from the program and my teachers were impressed by my creativeness." Further, this has carried over into their new teaching careers: "I was able to implement drama and visual arts, and it got me thinking about ways to connect the four areas – dance, drama, music, and visual arts."

Course improvement

Overall, the teachers interviewed indicated that the collaborative arts course was effective for enhancing their own teaching effectiveness and motivated them to include dance, drama, visual arts, and music within their own classroom curriculum. The major concern was the lack of time (which reflects the constraints of an eight-month program with a 30-hour arts course), and most felt the course could be predominantly improved by increasing the hours in the course so that more time could be spent in each of the disciplines.⁵ There was less concern with learning more skills in the four areas, but rather with learning fewer skills well with a wide variety of activities to support them. There was also the opinion expressed that students should be required to demon-

strate competence in each of the four disciplines via small assignments as opposed to a group unit assignment and presentation, where there was a tendency to focus on what one does best (to obtain the highest marks). Another alternative would be to tie the assignments to the practicum to ensure that students did in fact practice teach in each of the four disciplines. The most recurring comments emphasized the involvement of the practitioners in making the course work so effective for their personal learning: "don't remove the four specialists, extend the program but have the teachers in a class more – that way the lessons could be tried and practiced." They admit they would like more: "a good taste of everything!"

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Summary of the findings

The partnership with external stakeholders in the delivery of a teacher certification program appeared to have significant benefits for the teacher-candidates in this case, not only during the preservice program but during their first year of classroom teaching. The beginning teachers perceived that their confidence and teaching effectiveness was enhanced by their increased knowledge of the arts and personal comfort level engaging in arts activities. For them, the theory-practice dichotomy was overcome by role-playing classroom situations and examining their theoretical basis. Above all, the beginning teachers were less concerned with the amount of skills in each discipline they had to learn, than with the need to learn fewer skills supported by a wide variety of activities; that is, a quality of arts learning rather than a quantity of arts skills.

Implications for teacher education

The results of this inquiry are drawn from a small sample and focus on in-depth interviews and analysis of beginning teachers' experiences teaching the arts in their first year. Further replication studies are currently in progress to verify the findings.⁶ However, these preliminary results have implications for the arts in teacher education and can be used to guide curriculum development in this area. These implications include:

1. Participation in practical subject-specific activities engenders confidence and a willingness to transfer these activities into a classroom setting.

2. The balance of subject expertise, theory, and generalist instruction (planning, evaluation, and integration) within the context of an arts course appears to have significant benefits for the students' personal learning and their willingness to teach the arts in their own classrooms.
3. Partnerships with field personnel can be highly effective in arts teacher education as specialists bring practical applications directly into the university classroom. Conversely, universities provide teacher-candidates with the theoretical framework for examining and improving practice.
4. Faculties of education will need to adjust their programs to recognize that the arts represent a core area of the school curriculum, and they must re-adjust faculty structures to enable partnerships to operate effectively. Further, they must provide budgets so that additional staff can be hired (i.e., tenure-track, secondments, part-time) and resource materials purchased to effectively deliver an interdisciplinary program.
5. Faculties of education and boards of education need to examine the expectations for elementary teachers and identify a realistic knowledge base and achievable skills in the arts, and develop professional development programs that support this learning.

APPENDIX I

Student-Teachers' Telephone Interview Questions

Current status: full-time; part-time; supply; other?

During the telephone interview, the discussion will focus on the following questions:

Course Delivery:

1. How did the presence of visiting professors increase your knowledge of the arts?
2. Did this knowledge increase your confidence to teach the arts? How?
3. When you taught an arts lesson, in what ways did you feel that the workshops enhanced your teaching effectiveness?
4. Are you more comfortable with the notion of teaching the arts in your classroom? Why?
5. Do you have any suggestions with respect to the delivery of the arts education course?

Course Design:

6. What aspects of the course, for example, assignments, projects, team learning, etc., promoted your personal learning in the arts? Explain.
7. Did the theory-practice relationship developed in the lectures and workshops make sense to you? Please comment.

8. Did the course curriculum (objectives, teaching strategies, and resources) relate to your practicum experience? Please describe.
9. Are you motivated to acquire more expertise in teaching the arts as a result of the course. Why? or Why not?
10. Do you have any suggestions with respect to the organization of the arts education course?

Thank you for participating in this study. Your assistance is very much appreciated.

NOTES

1. The revised version of *The Common Curriculum: Policies and outcomes, grades 1-9* appeared in 1995 and remains in effect as official Ministry of Education and Training policy for the Province of Ontario. The arts have retained their importance as a core area of the provincial curriculum.
2. This inquiry was supported by a research grant by the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa which provided for the services of a research assistant.
3. The term "communicating" was changed to "creating" in the latest version of *The Common Curriculum 1995*.
4. Subsequently, the hours in the arts course were increased from 30 to a full course of 39 hours within the teacher education program.
5. The return rate for the arts program evaluation was 56.6%. The return rate is representative of each certification program within the elementary panel: 68 of 118 in the primary/junior on-campus program (57.6%); 34 of 62 in the junior/intermediate on-campus program (54.8%); and 32 of 60 in the primary/junior on-site program (53.3%). Consequently, the overall return (56.3%) is an acceptable sample size (Krathwhol, 1993).
6. The replication study entitled "Re-assessing the effectiveness of a collaborative approach to program delivery in arts teacher education" is currently in progress.

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