Preservice Education and the Novice Teacher

by

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Teacher educators now appear to have a different set of concerns about the preparation of art teachers than in the recent past. As art teachers are required to include additional curricular content of art history, art criticism, aesthetics and studio production in the schools, demands are placed on higher education programs to expand knowledge bases and add specialized teaching skills to the preservice program. In an effort to meet the demands of more comprehensive programs of instruction in art education, the pedagogical bases for skill development appropriate for the beginning teachers may be overlooked in favor of more advanced theoretical content in these expanded curricular areas.

In learning how to teach, Berliner (1988) points out that the novice teacher first needs to learn the "objective facts and features of situations." A set of context-free rules must be learned to guide procedures. In the novice stage, teachers are following rules, labeling, describing events and classifying contexts, but not actively determining or controlling (through their own personal action) what is happening. Berliner further points out that this control will not occur until the teacher becomes competent in making curricular and instructional decisions.

Educational researchers, examining skills of beginning teachers across grade levels and disciplines, point out that the areas in which inadequacies in skills were most common were those related to understanding and managing behavior problems in the classroom (Benz & Newman, 1985; Sweeney, 1984). In this regard, Berliner points out that expert teachers use well-practiced routines which result in well-trained students who are constantly on task (Berliner, 1988).

The following items represent knowledge bases and skills that are included in the research identifying essential criteria for beginning teachers across disciplines and levels (Benz & Newman, 1985; Boyer, 1984; Sweeney, 1984). These items have been organized into categories to illustrate the essential components of a preservice program. Where applicable, the items are translated into art education terminology, and the lists have been extended within categories to include more comprehensive skills. Each skill can be further analyzed into more detailed tasks and may be considered to be essential for preservice education.
Curriculum: Content and Assessment

- Plans units of instruction and individual lessons.
- Prepares and uses instructional media and technology.
- Develops evaluative instruments (tests, quizzes, and grading strategies).
- Evaluates and reports student work and achievements.
- Exhibits and promotes student work.
- Demonstrates knowledge of preparation in content areas of specialization.
- Uses effective written and oral communication.
- Locates and uses materials and resources in specialty areas (studio production, art history, art criticism, aesthetics).
- Knows how to evaluate instruction.
- Selects and organizes materials.
- Knows techniques of instruction.
- Assesses and implements instructional innovations.

The Setting: The Classroom and the School

- Uses consultative skills when interacting with other professionals.
- Understands professional ethics and legal obligations.
- Understands teacher's roles in relation to administrators, supervisors, and counselors.
- Works well with parents.
- Works well with other teachers.
- Uses the community as a teaching resource and for the promotion of art programs.

Effective Teaching Skills

- Applies theories of learning and aesthetic development.
- Uses a variety of effective instructional techniques (questioning, modeling, demonstrating, problem-solving, cooperative learning).
- Clearly states goals using appropriate supportive materials.
- Uses effective delivery systems and instructional resources.
- Teaches basic skills in studio production, art history, art criticism and aesthetics.
- Introduces information in sequential fashion.
- Proceeds in small steps at an appropriate pace.
- Stimulates creative thought processes.
- Provides for successful practice and planning by students.
- Guides students to additional sources of information as needed.
- Helps students to evaluate what they have learned.
- Manages classroom behavior appropriate for the activity.
- Demonstrates effective methods of working with children who have learning problems.
- Demonstrates skills for mainstreaming handicapped students.

Beginning art teachers may have difficulty implementing comprehensive curricula where varied kinds of information and learning tasks are required by the activities of making, talking, responding and conceptualizing about works of art. When the subject matter is even less familiar, the novice teacher will need to gain some experience before a diagnostic perspective is acquired, whereas experienced teachers possess the ability to predict the kinds of errors that students will make in new learning situations. Areas which are frequently mentioned in the educational research as needing improvement include the length of field experiences and the development of the novice teacher's understanding of the psychology of learning and its application to teaching (Benz & Newman, 1985; Sweeney, 1984). Only when similar occurrences of behavior are recognized across contexts will the novice teacher be able to interpret classroom phenomena and apply this knowledge during instruction.

References


