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COMMUNITY BASED ART EDUCATION

Cesia Ortiz
Art 399/400

WHAT IT IS

- Community based art education is usually one in which the teacher acts as a facilitator and mediator between the students and the community in which they live in. The art education is a collaboration between the students and the teacher. The curriculum is usually tailored to the students' needs.
 - “Adejumo (2009) defined “community-based art” as a term to describe works of art produced by people living within the same locality, and defined by common interests such as shared concerns, cultural heritages, traditions, and language patterns.

WHAT IS TAUGHT AND TO WHOM

- ◉ What is taught depends on the focus of the program, but the types of art that may be taught include:
 - Performing Arts- music, drama, dance etc.
 - Visual Arts- sculpture, drawing, painting etc.
 - Writing
 - Digital Arts- digital photography, film etc.
- ◉ Programs may be aimed towards:
 - At risk youth/persons
 - Local citizens
 - Older adults
 - Incarcerated persons
 - Homeless individuals
 - People with disabilities
 - Persons who are not part of K-12 art classes

WHO TEACHES IT AND WHERE

- ◉ It is usually taught by local artists with or without formal art education backgrounds, but may include musicians, writers, actors, dancers, craftsmen, folk artist, etc.
- ◉ It can be taught in schools, park facilities, arts centers, art museums, churches, retirement centers, store-front galleries, and local, state and federal prisons (Ulbricht, pg.8).

WHAT DROVE THIS APPROACH

- In researching this topic John Dewey came up often. Dewey formulated the Instrumentalists theory of learning through experience. His pedagogy helped inspire informal education in the sense that he thought knowledge was taught through experience which was limited in a school setting. Dewey also believed that students would learn more if they were invested in what they were learning. Here is where it applies to community based art education; the curriculum for the programs are tailored for people with in that community who it is aimed for.

WHAT DROVE THE APPROACH CONTINUED

- ◉ Dewey's philosophy had much influence in the Progressive movement in education. Progressivists believed that students would learn more through a curriculum that was tailored to them as opposed to a set and general one. That students also learn through active learning. They also believed that through this type of group learning, one would learn to accept different opinions, people different than oneself, and social skills.
- There was a push for this type of learning during the progressive era (1890-1920s) when people started to see the need for change in an era where things were taught monotonously and lacking in substance. The individual is at the heart of Progressivist theory and during the Cold War era, there was a backtrack towards cultural conservatism and unity which ended this movement in education. However this approach is often what is used in community based art education.

HISTORICAL IMPACT

- ◉ Since community based art education is a broad topic, it is difficult to pin point specific information about it. However, below is a general description of why it started and other early examples.
 - Initially in the early 1900s, community based art education was being provided to immigrants so that they could learn marketable skills in settlement houses.
 - “In the late 1960s, artists created centers for learning in response to cutbacks in arts education in the schools and social trends that threatened the well being of our youth. The Artists Collective in Hartford was founded in 1970 to offer the arts as an alternative to gang life and drugs. The Manchester Craftsmen's Guild, founded in 1968, positioned the arts as bridges between at-risk youth in Pittsburgh's public high schools and the possibility of college. A famous musician, alto-saxophonist Jackie McLean, founded the collective. An entrepreneurial ceramicist, Bill Strickland, envisioned and created the Guild.(Davis)”

CULTURAL IMPACT

- ◉ With the examples on the previous slide, the following are the impact they have on the community they service.
 - Assimilation and competitive job training.
 - It used to help immigrants fit in a find jobs within society, but now it could provide training in vocational fields.
 - Positive impact art has on at risk youth.
 - It keeps students out of trouble and in school.
 - It provides an outlet for self expression.
 - Many of the centers that provide this type of art teach art along with something else, this in turns educate the local community.
 - Makes art available to people who aren't in K-12.
 - It changes the manner in which art is viewed in society.
 - It shows how art is valuable.



"Here Bill Strickland is seen teaching a ceramics in the Manchester Craftsman's Guild. When he was growing up, studying ceramics gave him a reason to stay in school and eventually learn about and graduate from college. Through the Manchester Craftsman's Guild and the Bidwell Training Center, which he is CEO of; 3,900 youths are provided with classes and workshops in art and connects them with local artists. "The Bidwell Training Center provides market-driven career education created through strong partnerships with leading local industries. The center offers accredited Associates Degree and diploma programs in [various] fields(bill-strickland.org)."



This program has an emphasis in the culture and contribution of African Diaspora.

- “The vision of the founders was to create a safe haven for at-risk youth to offer alternatives to the violence of the streets, teen-age pregnancy, gangs, drugs and alcohol abuse. The Collective is unique in that its programs represent a non-traditional approach to arts education because they also include social skills training, school success and community responsibility. Individual and group workshops expose children to positive role models, stimulate youth to think critically, develop self-esteem, self-awareness, and pride in one’s cultural identity(artist collective.org).”

COGNITION

- Critical Thinking- through active learning students learn more if they actively engage with the material in comparison to just memorizing it.
- Cooperative Learning- involves both the role of the individual student and as a group member. You can learn about and evaluate yourself, while learning how work with and learning from one another.
- Problem Solving- find a solution to how present and create art work. How to involve the community and how will they relay the message to the community.

PROS

- It connects the students with the environment they live in, which allows for greater understanding of material presented.
- Gives an opportunity to people from marginalized groups to learn about art outside of K-12 schools.
- It can teach more than art if it is an advocacy type program and send out a message to the community.
- Students get hands on active learning.
- It can create an appreciation for all types of art (e.g. performance, visual, craft, music, etc.), tradition and culture.
- Helps promote the value of art.
- Allows for experimentation of ideas.

CONS

- It is rarely connected with the curriculum taught in schools.
- Because not all people who teach community based art education have degrees, they are not taken seriously or are not thought of as teachers.
- Funding for community based art education can be difficult to obtain.
- Most of the art centers that hold this type of art education do not last long.
- Although it is part of art education, it still isn't a component that is researched or studied enough.

OPINION

- ◉ I think it is a great idea to have community based art education because it provides an opportunity to people who would otherwise not have gotten a chance to learn about and make art. I also like how what is taught is customized for the community. I do however think that it is unfortunate that funding for such programs can be difficult to acquire and that is probably the reason why there aren't enough of these programs.

QUESTIONS

- ◉ Do you find community based art education to be just as important as art education provided in K-12 schools? Why or why not?
- ◉ Why do you think community based art education has difficulty standing its ground as a legitimate form of art education?
- ◉ Could you see yourself teaching in a community based art education setting? Why or why not?

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