AUSTRALIAN Art Education

Educational Leadership Beyond Behaviourism, the Lessons We Have Learnt From Art Education

Dr Susan Paterson, Richard Stone

Jerome Bruner the pre-eminent educational theorist referred to the year 1956 as the birth of the cognitive revolution (Efland, 2002: 15). This conceptual shift moved education and our understanding of intelligence on from the scientific positivism associated with behaviourism.

Basically behaviourism limited thinking to a stimulus-response approach to the development of intelligence. Learning was supposedly objective and experience, emotion or metaphysical thinking was not welcome in the academic classroom. Behaviourists assumed that certain subjects like the arts were non-cognitive in nature and resided in the domain of affect (Efland, 2002: 10). Art was often categorized as a non academic subject, practical not scholarly, emotional not cognitive.

Education and how we elicit the best in teaching and learning in our classrooms is an intricate art. Creative educators have spent many years trialling and testing strategies which elicit the best in human performance in their respective domains. Elliot Eisner (1985:22) stated that the behaviourist- positivistic tradition regarded experience as unknowable and thus this type of approach to teaching and learning focussed only on what children did. However, he suggests that;

> As students of the hidden curriculum have told us, students learn more than they are taught and teachers teach more than they know.   (Eisner, 1985:22)

Behaviourism was concerned with student behaviour rather than exploring their experiences and developing their ability to think creatively, reflectively and critically about themselves, their environment and their actions.

The American philosopher John Dewey, distinguished between artistic and scientific thinking in his book Art as Experience (Dewey, 1934). He considered that artistic thinking involved more perceptive than logical forms of thinking. This form of thinking he believed was generally governed by sensory and aesthetic criteria. Sensory experiences dominate the early childhood environment and act as key motivational strategies encouraging cognitive receptivity.

Eisner in describing the paradigm shift in teaching and learning from behaviourism to the cognitive revolution, suggested that new modes of inquiry were required to appreciate the experiences children have in school not just the behaviours they display (Eisner, 1985:22-23).

Today, we acknowledge that the brain works in complex ways and we are fully aware that emotion plays a major role in how well students think, in fact as many major sporting coaches would suggest, motivation and performance go hand in hand in achieving that competitive edge. It is would seem that effective learning must involve a balance of perceptive and logical approaches. Forgas (2000: 402) explains there is strong evidence that positive and negative affective states facilitate different information-processing strategies. He states that there is little doubt that the delicate interplay between cognition and affect has been a moving force behind many of the greatest of artistic achievements (2000:1).

All subjects including the arts are now seen as having their cognitive and affective components (Scheffler, 1986, in Efland, 2002: 10). It would seem that the way curriculum addresses models of teaching, learning, evaluation and assessment should reflect the concerns of contemporary education. If we aim to elicit meta-cognition, higher order and critical thinking skills then our educational models must match what we are attempting to develop in our students; their mind as well as their behaviours.

Laurence Stenhouse (1989:54) points to the following quote by Ralph Tyler as being the classic definition of a 'behavioural objective'.

> One can define an object with sufficient clarity if he can describe or illustrate the kind of behaviour the student is expected to

acquire so that one could recognise such behaviour if he saw it (Tyler, 1949:59-60).

It seems odd that some still assess according to behavioural objectives like those suggested by Tyler in the 1940s. This is because this type of assessment is 'logical' and 'measurable' and makes life easy for the examiner and assessment authorities. Art education however has developed different forms of assessment which enables teachers to deal with the subjectivity of artistic expression and take into account the thinking process as well as the final outcomes. Graeme Sullivan's (2005) text Art Practice as Research examines various forms of educational inquiry.

> Although scientific inquiry has enormous status, the capacity to cater for the full dimension of human need and knowing is limited. (Sullivan, 2005:65)

Internationally it seems that programs with a traditional skills based emphasis are thought to be the panacea for the growing emotional impoverishment and confusion of youth. However as Daniel Goleman suggests, this superficial approach ignores the change in youth culture and the dominant influences of the postmodern era (Goleman, 1996: 231). It also largely ignores the developmental needs of children and the relevance of the 'other' languages of children, the visual, musical and kinaesthetic ability that come naturally to children through the senses in the early years of learning (Gardner, 1983; Malaguzzi, 1987). According to Eisner (1985: 374) over emphasis on verbal and mathematical reasoning seriously biases the conception of human intelligence and impedes the development of socially valuable interests and aptitudes.

Multiple intelligence theory (Gardner, 2005) is now widely accepted throughout the world and many educators appear to respect the differences in specialist domains. More importantly it is now acknowledged that each subject domain will require strategies which are most suited to their own specialist outcomes.

In Art education, teachers attempt to develop higher order thinking skills through the study of art and culture. This is generally developed by praxis, where practice is informed by theory.

Swift (1998:20) noted:

> In my view the only way in which art can meaningfully engage with the present and future of the individuals who study it, is by enmeshing practice with theory so that every experience can spring from either source and the interplay between them.
>
> (Swift in Hughes and Swift, 1998: 20)

The art teacher does this in complex ways; firstly by teaching skills as well as knowledge, and secondly the most challenging stage, they require students to delve into the unknown waters of aesthetic discrimination and understanding.

Aesthetics literally means 'sense perception'. It is a concept not only confined to art. In fact individuals will make aesthetic decisions everyday of their lives in one form or another. Aesthetic discrimination helps us choose our clothing, build and decorate our homes, develop our cities and provide facilities for the citizens in our societies. Aesthetic discrimination and the application of artistic design will build our material and philosophical life worlds.

What we know, value and respect in life is what we then demand for our world. Sometimes our choices are limited by our budgets, but at other times we can go 'posh' on a shoe string, making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Ah, metaphors are such wonderful things! But in reality metaphors as well as our aesthetic perceptions call upon imagination and how well we can imagine solutions to problems.

To feel comfortable with imaginative thinking past experiences are important. These past experiences help us make cognitive leaps, often called connections. They are our lateral thinking strategies which can help us see the light or enable us to achieve a new paradigm shift.

Thinking depends more on feeling than many educators of the past had been prepared to admit. Indeed it was the realisation that emotion played a significant role in how well educators developed all of the intelligence domains which moved cognitive theory in education on beyond behaviourism.

80

Paulo Freire (2002:80) in his seminal text Pedogogy of the Oppressed describes two ways of teaching; the banking concept

(the behavioural model) where students are receptacles to be filled with the teacher's knowledge and is called upon simply to memorise the contents narrated by the teacher, as opposed to what Freire describes as the problem-posing method where the teacher is always 'cognitive', preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with students. The students in this latter model are no longer docile listeners but become critical co-constructors in dialogue with the teacher (2002:81).

Freire points out that where banking education anaesthetises and inhibits creative power, problem–posing education involves constant unveiling of reality, empowering individuals to critically evaluate their place in the world in order that we may achieve true freedom and humanity.

However, whilst the important stars of educational research such as Dewey, Bruner, Vygotsky, Freire, Eisner and Gardner, to name but a few wrote about the move towards a cognitive revolution, often their wisdom was not taken up by administrators or leaders within the educational sector. In fact what was educationally sound was often put behind what was seen to be financially sound or 'measurable'. When economists make educational decisions, outcomes may suit bank balances rather than students' minds.

An example of this is truancy which is a serious issue British schools today. Thousands of students don't want to go to school. Recently £800 million pounds were spent trying to solve the truancy problem and students were paid to attend lessons.

Has this initiative proved to be money down the drain? What is the real reason why students do not want to go to school? Has the national obsession with assessment destroyed the confidence of a generation of students? Why would a student want to go to a school where they have no opportunity or chance of reaching their intellectual potential in their domain of aptitude?

It could be argued that the money would have been better spent on curriculum and pedagogical development that suits the changing requirements of students and society, to help build an educational environment where students can gain a sense of self confidence and esteem rather than having to suffer in a system which silences, oppresses and dehumanises the learner. (One recalls Freire's analogy of the banking model here).

It takes more than bricks and mortar to make a good learning environment, it takes intelligent, committed and positive teachers, together with students and parents who want to give children a chance to achieve success in education.

Richard Hickman (2000:10) points out that teachers' have the responsibility to take students forward from a place where both feel secure. He suggests that the educational environment must have an atmosphere of purposeful enquiry, creative experimentation, risk taking and contemplation.

Turning around an ineffective educational environment takes imagination, vision and good leadership which pays attention to the intellectual and emotional welfare of professionals. Head teachers are ultimately responsible for the educational environment of their schools. However leadership does not stop with the Head teacher, leadership happens at year level, faculty and departmental levels. Individual teachers are also leaders in the sense that their decisions are made with the team of students they are supervising.

Leadership works to construct the organisational culture. Weick and Westley (1997) (in Wong and Evers, 2001: 122) suggest that employing the concept of culture in the study of organisations, has advantages and;

1. is evident in the use of language, words and expressions of the groups

2. is embodied in artefacts or the material objects the group produces

3. is embodied in coordinated action routines, that is the social exchanges and relationships within the organisation

Thus the culture of an organisation becomes a barometer of social harmony and organised productivity. Leaders through their vision become the creators of culture (Lakomski in Wong and Evers 2001:123). They are also ultimately responsible for

the management of the functional and the dysfunctional aspects of the cultural environment. The question remains how do we improve educational leadership so we can eventually improve education and make schools places where students want to come to?

Successful leaders will take into account the role of emotional intelligence, within the construction of the organisational culture amongst its members. Tomlinson (2004:22) suggests that the emotionally intelligent school will;

1. enable the identification of potential in each individual and the staff as a team to encourage successful career management

2. enable understanding of the importance of aligning school and individual objectives to maximise the benefits for both parties

3. translate success in career development into resilient loyalty to the school to retain the key players

4. acknowledge and reward people's strengths, achievements and successes

Leadership must also be encouraged in every staff member within the school as they also assume the role of the leader of their students, in turn mentoring and encouraging leadership qualities within each of these students.

As part of the socialisation in school, children learn to act, interact and react with a variety of people. Through interaction with teachers who display good leadership qualities and who build positive and nurturing educational environments, students can develop what Gaudelis and Speirs (2002: 2-3) see as important qualities; the critical agency to help them interpret, create and critique the culture that surrounds them.

In essence it would seem that:

•   Leaders in schools must exercise an appropriate level of respect for the professional integrity of staff members as individuals and as a teaching body.

•   Leaders should work hard to create and maintain a working environment in which individual teachers are permitted and encouraged to act with a reasonable degree of professional freedom.

•   Leaders should acknowledge that individual teachers need to maintain "ownership" of their teaching, i.e. to control and determine content within curriculum guidelines and to be able to implement this efficiently.

•   Leaders should acknowledge that delivering the curriculum is not the only thing teachers do, they also stimulate, inspire, engage through personal interaction, and demonstrate by example and model as practitioners.

•   Leaders should support and encourage individual teachers to make full use of their particular interests, talents and skills.

•   Leaders should acknowledge that each teacher has his or her own personal approach to the delivery of curriculum and that these are adjusted to suit the individual differences of each class member.

•   Leaders must ensure that teachers feel welcome and respected as individual members of a team with special talents to help the team elicit the full potential of every student in their charge.

•   Leaders must recognise that an honest, positive and nurturing environment is productive whilst a punishing, chastising and deceptive environment is destructive to a student's confidence.

•   Leaders must listen to staff members and respect the role of each of the subject disciplines in providing a breadth of experiences where all students can feel they are developing their range of intelligences and achieving success in their areas of potential.

It is the intelligence, generosity and enthusiasm of a dynamic teacher that will inspire students to respect learning and will encourage them to take along the spark the teacher has ignited as a torch through their life's journey.

Respect for individual "voice" to express, debate and negotiate solutions to problems

is the greatest tool a teacher and any leader must possess for a positive democratic working environment. Educators must co-construct a culture which will develop a learning environment where there is the freedom and imagination to invent, deliver and celebrate success. A place devoid of an autocratic obsession with assessment and punishment, which values Roald Dahl's Miss Trunchbulls over the Miss Honeys of this world.

References.

Dewey, John [1934] (1980) Art as Experience, New York, Perigee.

Efland, Arthur (2002). Art and Cognition, New York, Teachers' College Press.

Eisner, Elliot (1985) The Educational Imagination On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs, New York, Macmillan.

Friere, Paulo [1970] (2002), Pedagogy of the Oppressed, New York, Continuum.

Forgas, Joseph (2000) Feeling and Thinking the Role of Affect in Social Cognition and Behaviour, Paris, Cambridge University Press.

Gardner, Howard 1983, Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, New York, Basic Books.

Gardner, Howard (2005) Multiple Intelligences- the Latest Theory and Practice, London, Covent Garden Conference.

Gaudelis, Yvonne and Speirs, Peg (2002) Contemporary Issues in Art Education, New Jersey, Prentice Hall.

Goleman, Daniel (1996), Emotional Intelligence, London, Bloomsbury.

Hickman, Richard (2000) Art Education 11-18 meaning, purpose and direction, London, Continuum.

Hughes, Arthur and Swift, John 1998, Broadside 1. Birmingham, University of Central England in Birmingham.

Malaguzzi, Loris (1987), The Hundred Languages of Children, Reggio Emilia, Department of Education.

Stenhouse, Lawrence (1989), An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development, Oxford, Heinemann.

Sullivan Graeme (2005) Art Practice as Research. Inquiry in the Visual Arts, London, Sage.

Tomlinson, Harry (2004) Educational Leadership, London, Sage Publications.

Wong Kam-cheung and Evers Colin (2001) Leadership for Quality Schooling, London, Routledge.

Dr Susan Paterson, Senior Lecturer in Art and Design, Cardiff School of Education, Wales, UK.

Mr Richard Stone, Wesley College, Melbourne, Australia