

The landscape of teacher licensure in the United States: potential implications for art education in Brazil

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ABSTRACT — The landscape of teacher licensure in the united states: potential implications for art education in Brazil — Two scholars from the United States that work in art education programs speak to current issues resulting from the recent policies that have had direct impact on undergraduate courses, fieldwork, licensure and teacher retention. The study is informed by one author's understanding of Brazilian art education through both experiential learning and focused research via comparative studies. The authors provide a contextual framing of the current educational landscape in the states with the intent of informing readers of trends that could have similar negative effects on licensure in Brazil. Finally, the authors will share some strategies they have implemented to respond to these challenges.

KEYWORDS

Teacher licensure. Art education. Policy. Advocacy. Comparative studies.

RESUMO — O cenário da licenciatura nos Estados Unidos: implicações potenciais para a arte-educação no Brasil — Dois professores dos Estados Unidos que trabalham em programas de arte educação falam de questões atuais decorrentes das recentes políticas que tiveram impacto direto sobre cursos de graduação, trabalho de campo, licenciatura e retenção de professores. O estudo é apresentado a partir da compreensão de um dos autores sobre a arte educação brasileira, através da aprendizagem experiencial e da pesquisa por meio de estudos comparativos. Os autores fornecem um enquadramento contextual do cenário educacional atual nos Estados com a intenção de informar os leitores de tendências que podem ter efeitos negativos semelhantes nas licenciaturas no Brasil. Por fim, os autores compartilham algumas estratégias que implementaram para responder aos desafios pontuados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Licenciatura de professores. Ensino da arte. Política. Defesa. Estudos comparativos.

Introduction

Adopting a comparative studies approach, the authors highlight issues and developments in the United States related to art education, specifically licensure. The authors do not purport to have an exhaustive understanding of the Brazilian education system, but this article is informed by the extensive experiences and research the authors have completed in Brazil over the past twelve years. The two authors spent significant time together while at the Ohio State University (OSU) and collaborated on

measures related to an undergraduate program redesign, which was directly influenced by impending legislature that had direct impact on teacher licensure. As such, the two authors attended training sessions together to be informed of developing practices and conducted research with pre-service teachers in order to glean insights from students on how to better mentor and train prospective educators (SAVAGE, CANNON & SUTTERS, 2015). Likewise, the authors have presented their research on one particular licensure model at the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Conference the past four years. During the past four years, each author has dealt with similar issues on the state level in their respective institutions in Ohio and Illinois and have both made significant program changes in their art education courses to better prepare their students to navigate the demands of these recent mandates.

To reiterate, the intent of this paper is not to make a direct commentary on specific aspects of Brazilian education. Rather, taking into consideration the knowledge of trends and concerns voiced by Brazilian colleagues, the authors select and reference specific developments in the United States as a means to perhaps inform the readers about similar approaches that could be enacted in Brazil by the same transnational entities and corporations that are having a negative impact in the states. The following sections of the paper will: one, provide a contextual grounding of how one of the authors has come to understand art education in Brazil and how that understanding informs his research therein; two, provide a discourse analysis of current rhetoric and legislation in the United States that the authors feel could have implications in the Brazilian context; three, provide specific examples of how one author has implemented changes in her role as chair of the licensure program at her university as a means to provide potential solutions.

1 Framing the Discourse

I, Justin Sutters, received a competitive grant from the Ohio State University in the summer of 2010 to conduct a 6-week comparative study at the University of São Paulo (USP) with Dr. Christina Rizzi. Previously, I had taught K-12 art and computer at an international school in São Paulo, Brazil from 2003-2005 and completed my graduate research by analyzing how these two years informed my teaching in an urban school district in the United States. My decision to return for my doctorate was

influenced by a desire to work with pre-service educators and help them to mitigate the social, political and pedagogical challenges I encountered during my nine years as a K-12 educator. This desire led me to investigate other frameworks through a comparative lens and therefore, my examination of licensure in Brazil. During my six weeks at USP, I interviewed numerous professors and a teacher, participated in an atelier for young children, observed a teacher in a public school setting, translated and analyzed program documents and was a guest lecturer in numerous courses. All of these data collection methods informed not only a better understanding of the program at USP, but also how licensure programs are generally structured on a national level. It became glaringly clear that there are numerous differences between the two paradigms in terms of course requirements, fieldwork placements in public schools and required outcomes. Due to the scope of this particular article, I will not expand on the nuances, but I mention it so as to inform the readers of the basis of my understanding, but also to disclose my limitations as an outsider.

However, I was able to expand my knowledge base the following summer in 2011 when participating in an exchange program while at OSU. Over a two-week period, a group of students and professors traveled to state and federal universities in São Paulo, Recife, Goiânia and Brasília. We interacted with students and faculty while also visiting cultural institutions. I was able to glean a wider contextual understanding of some of the regional differences in Brazilian art education.

I then had the opportunity to present my research at the Congresso Nacional da Federação de Arte/Educadores do Brasil (CONFAEB) in 2012 and was a keynote speaker at CONFAEB in 2014. Both congresses enriched my understanding of current themes and challenges in Brazil and again provided content for comparative analysis of each. I continue to dialogue with numerous scholars in Brazil in the hope that our *intercâmbio* will yield insights and inquiry that is fruitful for both. It is in this light that we make visible some recent developments in the United States with the understanding that not all will be directly related to the Brazilian context, but that each brush stroke would add detail and expression to a much larger work that is in process.

2 The Current Landscape of Education in the United States

This article attends to the increasing evidence-based policies impacting art education in the United States, and explores the range of possibilities for higher education going forward, especially if we value keeping the art in art education. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA) (FAIRCLOUGH & WODAK, 1997; GIROUX, 1997; VAN DIJK, 1998, 2001), we investigate the ideologies behind current educational policies, discuss anecdotal evidence from those working with teacher trainees, and consider the opportunities for informal art education. While U.S. educational policymakers and art education stakeholders do share some important goals for student learning and achievement, current initiatives appear to deskill higher education programs and devalue social justice curriculum (COCHRAN-SMITH, PIAZZA, & POWER, 2013; NCTQ, 2013; 2014). By examining the rhetoric behind the data-driven push from educational policymakers, we critically challenge the positions of those who feel they know how to “fix” education. Additionally, we describe the anecdotal evidence being shared by art educators as they work within and outside of educational strictures as a way to illuminate how we are dealing with the “culture of evidence” (KNAPP, COPLAND & SWINNERTON, 2007). This is important since these emergent discussions will help us define art education’s response to culture of evidence policies that hinge on accountability.

We begin with an overview of how discourse related to the culture of evidence has impacted art education programs at the higher education level. Arguing that discourse is “composed of ideas, ideologies, attitudes, courses of action, terms of reference, that systematically constitute the subjects and objects of which they speak,” we analyze and question the influencers and possible agendas behind current policies (FOUCAULT *apud* SCHWANDT, 2007, p. 73). The issue of discursive power in CDA research concerns two basic questions: “How do (more) powerful groups control public discourse?” and “How does such discourse control mind and action of (less) powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control” (VAN DIJK, 2001, p. 355). For this article, we are looking specifically at the educational initiatives and policies calling for drastic changes in how we choose pre-service students and develop “good” teachers. The ways in which education is portrayed in the U.S. today makes

clear that the general consensus is that our educational system is broken, and in defining what needs to change these policymakers devalue those who traditionally become teachers and the educators who train them (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013; NCTQ, 2013; 2014).

3 Contemporary Context and Related Models

Accountability is the hallmark of U.S. educational policy today. Recent initiatives for educational reform are pointed directly at teacher preparation in our nation. “Our Future, Our Teachers,” a policy proposed by the current U.S. administration, the goal of which is to assess the validity of teacher preparation programs through data driven evidence based on the impact of program graduates on their eventual Pre-K-12 students’ test scores. Another example we will discuss is the national survey and evaluation of teacher preparation programs by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), the results of which were released in June 2013, and again in June 2014. Evidence driven policy, on the surface, seeks answers concerning teacher preparation in the U.S.; whether or not we are producing well-prepared novice teachers; and argues that when a program does not meet pre-defined criteria, it should enact change by benchmarking more successful programs, or be disbanded (COCHRAN-SMITH, PIAZZA, & POWER, 2013; OFOT, 2011). Furthermore, these initiatives forefront the idea that teacher preparation programs are so weakened by the low quality of Pre-service candidates that the public should demand alternative paths to teaching.

3.1 edTPA and Pearson

Over 38 states, including where we live and teach, (edtpa.aacte.org) are piloting edTPA or beginning to pilot this testing system created by Stanford University and Pearson Education. Growing out of California’s PACT tests, edTPA assessments were created by a coalition of college’s and universities in response to local considerations (California specific) of teacher prep curricula, but have now been coopted and morphed into a set of national assessments, a one-size fits all mentality that negates state and local needs for teacher education (COCHRAN-SMITH, PIAZZA, & POWER, 2013). edTPA comes with its own language and its own agenda, meaning teacher prep

programs are quickly redoing curriculum and introducing edTPA phrases to students who will need to pass this assessment to gain licensure.

Likewise, edTPA seeks to professionalize teaching through its for-profit assessments that are designed to determine teacher-readiness. A series of links on the 2014 NCTQ report leads to a lesson plan that they feel is an exemplar one. The lesson plan is a template provided by edTPA to teacher educators for use in training Pre-service students as they prepare for their licensure assessments. This is significant for several reasons. One, NCTQ essentially promotes the edTPA agenda by declaring its template an exemplar, and two, edTPA is a market-oriented initiative that collects and provides statistical data to states. State's can then "prove" they are issuing teaching licenses to only those who have successfully passed a robust evaluation of teacher readiness (COCHRAN-SMITH, PIAZZA, & POWER, 2013). Unfortunately, policymakers remain focused on student teachers—how they are selected, how well trained they are, and how to translate and measure their eventual teaching impact on K-12 student achievement (NCATE, 2010; NCTQ, 2013, 2014; OFOT, 2015). Accordingly, more focus and effort is directed at selecting only the most "qualified" prospects, which then limits attracting a diverse and creatively minded student core.

3.2 Teach For America

Both the Department of Education's "Our Future, Our Teachers" (OFOT) proposal (2015, p. 5) and the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCQT) aim to increase teacher trainee quality using "market-oriented" reforms (Cochran-Smith, Piazza, & Power, 2013). Market-oriented refers to enticing high caliber, high performing candidates in non-educational majors or careers with promises of jobs, signing bonuses, reduced or forgiven school loan programming, and leadership opportunities once their teaching commitment is complete, much like *Teach for America* (OFOT, 2015; NCTQ, 2013, 2014). This initiative assumes that "high caliber" candidates are non-educational majors, and that students such as these will need incentives to lower themselves to the act of teaching. Once teaching, these high caliber students will need further inducements to keep them teaching, and once they finish their service, leadership awaits.

3.3 Market Share

Considering all the culture of evidence “gates” teacher candidates will now be jumping through, and both the national and state mandated push toward ensuring top quality applicants, it is not surprising that the number of students willing to apply to our program has decreased. There is also increased angst among those who do apply and enter our licensure program that they might not make it to licensure. In fall of 2013 administrators at OSU started using the term “market share” at meetings as an important measure for department evaluations. In Illinois, a common statement uttered by administrators is that students and parents “need to see more return on their investment”. Doreen Massey comments on how neoliberalism has “hijacked our vocabulary” in fields such as education and the arts and states that “we need to bring economic vocabulary back into political contention, and to question the very way we think about the economy in the first place” (2013).

In response, the faculty at OSU began to consider other options to increase market share including investing in additional faculty for our arts management major and discussing an informal art education option for those interested in community-based arts, museum education or teaching in other non-traditional settings. Having an arts management major allows us to educate and train future arts managers and administrators who can carry social justice missions into their communities.

While we believe each of our teacher candidates is being prepared for “community-based” art education, in that they are trained to look closely at their school community and become involved in the larger goal of bridging the art curriculum to their students, their students’ parents and/or guardians, and to the broader community, public schools remain somewhat distanced from those kinds of goals. NCATE (2010) agrees, adding community-based site observations to the guidelines for quality teacher education experiences. Likewise, McDonald, Tyson, Brayko, Bowman, Delport & Shinomura (2011) found such field placements to be beneficial for teacher candidates. However, our state licensure policies privilege public school settings in which cooperating teachers have three or more years experience in one school site. Policies regarding licensure that negate art education in informal settings leaves little room for expanding community-based programming. Alternative tracks, however, affords us

the space to conceptualize broadening the scope of non-traditional delivery of art education. What we learn from developing alternative art education tracks will serve to articulate new frameworks for pedagogy.

4 The Discourse of Policy Politics

The NCTQ 2013 survey blasted traditional teacher prep programs; finding that less than 10% of rated programs earned three stars out of four (NCTQ, 2013), fueling the public perception that teachers are to blame for educational shortcomings and failures. Naturally, the AACTE (American Association of College Teacher Educators) was not pleased with the NCTQ survey results, and specifically calls their research and evidence gathering flawed (AACTE Advisor, August 9, 2013). NCTQ is also an advocacy group; which has no official standing as a regulator or accreditor of anything—yet it wields significant discursive power that impacts educational policy and make headlines (COCHRAN-SMITH, PIAZZA, & POWER, 2013). A comparison of the 2013/2014 reports show that prep programs that refused to participate in the survey are now unranked, which reads as not qualified. Many universities and college's resisted and/or refused NCTQ's requests for information, specifically noting the lack of transparency in 2013's survey, and now find themselves unranked and therefore invisible. In addition, one of the top teacher prep programs, according to the 2014 review, is *Teach for America* Massachusetts. Politically, all sorts of connections thread through the agenda behind NCTQ, which sounds like a government agency, but it is an advocacy group made up of for-profit educational figureheads, former TFA grads, policymakers and charter schools founders. NCTQ goals are clear. Using evidence-based methodologies (although not made transparent in their report), they assist the educational marketplace through their review of teacher prep programs in the U.S:

Currently, high-caliber teacher training programs go largely unrecognized. The *Review* will showcase these programs and provide resources that schools of education can use to provide truly exceptional training. Aspiring teachers will be able to make informed choices about where to attend school to get the best training. Principals and superintendents will know where they should recruit new teachers. State leaders will be able to provide targeted support and hold programs accountable for improvement. Together, we can ensure a healthy teacher (USA, 2014).

Hidden agendas and the continual construction of the “problem of teacher education” acts as a discursive policy cycle each time NCTQ rolls out their review in *U.S. News and World Report*, a well-regarded publication that then adds more discursive influence by reminding everyone how truly broken education is (COCHRAN-SMITH & FRIES, 2011). Indeed, *U.S. News and World Report’s* yearly rankings of college’s and universities is so powerful that several top ranked universities have been caught cooking the admissions books just to keep their ranking in the elite category (MARCUS, 2013). Rankings influence market share and suggest a hierarchy of reputation as an acceptable reason to spend tuition dollars. The concern for us, in teacher education, is that edTPA, or related licensure assessments, will become industry standards for program efficacy and will have substantial sway on how art education programs are valued within larger structures.

4.1 Teacher Attrition and Retention

In the discourse surrounding educational policy, critical pieces of data remain absent. Missing from the cacophony of policies that seek to entice high caliber students to teaching are data showing that these are the most likely students to leave teaching (Quartz, Thomas, Andersen, Masyn, Barraza Lyons, & Olsen, 2008). Teacher retention rates have long been an issue and the idea of professionalizing teaching, the main impetus behind many current initiatives, is an ideology that has existed for many years, and yet more teachers leave the profession each year than join it (NCTAF, 2003; QUARTZ, *et al.*, 2008). Since OFOT looks at retention rates as evidence of good teacher prep, getting new teachers to stay in the classroom is important for program rankings. This will be difficult, as the reasons behind teacher attrition are varied and have been studied multiple times through multiple lenses (INGERSOLI, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b), and furthermore, recruiting top talent will not solve student achievement issues (BOYD, GROSSMAN, LANKFORD, LOEB, & WYCOFF , 2009). Research shows that the most qualified, high-performing teacher candidates generally leave the profession faster than any other group studied (DARLING-HAMMOND & SCLAN, 1996; MURNANE, 1991; STINEBRICKER, 1999, *apud* QUARTZ, *et al.*, 2008). Some leave for positions in administration, but more often high caliber teachers leave teaching after three to five years for better paying jobs, jobs with more

administrative or peer supporting structures, or they seek higher degrees that lead to careers outside of K-12 education. Moreover, those who identify as “social justice educators” leave because they believe they can enact change faster outside of educational systems (QUARTZ, *et al.*, 2008). Instead of offering incentives up front, perhaps policymakers should work harder at retaining teachers so they can continue to develop into seasoned educators. That would involve higher salaries, more autonomy, real administrative support and better working environments as today’s college students are looking for respect, money, and comfortable working environments (QUARTZ, *et al.*, 2008). Attracting top talent to teaching would require a cultural shift in how we value teaching as a profession. Current discourse in U.S. educational policy makes clear that we devalue teaching and teachers (OFOT, 2011; NCTQ, 2013, 2014).

Conclusion and Recommendations

As educators we should be looking for ways to resist ideologies that crunch numbers and disregard the unquantifiable — and if informal, policy-free settings help us keep art at the forefront, we could begin to imagine what that might look like in practice. Alternative art education could be a viable option for many art educators, especially when considering the shift toward evidence-based assessment and the devaluing of creative activity and freedom of choice in art classrooms. Preparing students to work in museums or community-based art venues would allow us to maintain social justice missions, to continue to promote relevant and interesting art curriculum, while ignoring the culture of evidence bearing down on traditional education. Non-school environments offer a rejection of conformity, embracing the idea of learner interests as central (KNUTSON, CROWLEY, RUSSELL, & STEINER, 2011). But we, like many of our colleagues who teach in licensure programs, still believe art instruction is critical in our public schools too and these alternative programs should not be implemented in lieu of formal art instruction provided by licensed art educators in the K-12 setting.

In our very real scenarios, we are the professors who designs assessments, aligns and maintains myriad standards, ensures that teacher trainee records are kept, and produces data that shows that learning objectives are met. Even though

quantitative research methods are not in our backgrounds, we are being forced to become data analysts every semester. Like the future art educators we prepare, we long for room to create, to dream of curriculum that makes learning fun, and the freedom to teach our students accordingly. The challenge then becomes how to do both. Whether it is traditional art education or community-based/informal art education, we will each need to articulate our value as a discipline and identify synergies that link and support the efforts of keeping art education, in whatever capacity, visible and viable.

This is critical for art education because in the discursive policy cycles spinning through current educational debates the arts have not been part of the discussion. NCTQ has not looked at programs that prepare art educators specifically, but they will be getting to the “specials” soon. So, we are not as visible for now, but as their power as an influencer in U.S. educational policy ramps up, we need to be active agents in a culture of evidence. Against our own will, we have felt compelled to arm ourselves with the necessary data to respond to the challenges set before us. This article is an act of resistance on our part and a call to others, perhaps even in Brazil, to push back. Using the same rhetoric of current policy discourse, students — in the states and abroad — deserve better.

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