Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education

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Art Education in a World of Cross-Purposes

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This chapter considers a number of policy challenges for the field of art education. It suggests basic orientation to policy considerations and proposes several sets of research questions that need perpetual attention. Distinctions are drawn between the survival and the health of the field. Purposes, techniques, youth cultures, technology, teacher preparation, philosophy, curricula, support resources, and standards are considered as major areas of policy analysis. The conclusion recommends the development of a more extensive research-based policy capability for the field of art education.

ART EDUCATION AND QUESTIONS OF POLICY

To study art education is to discover and engage a field rich with achievement and promise. On one hand, this comes as no surprise because art education encompasses and embraces great artistic and intellectual traditions of work in and about visual form, each of which with its own habits of mind, approaches to achievement, and history. On the other hand, the accomplishments of art educators in the United States represent something special. Many contextual factors work against serious instruction in things visual. Gains in art education have been purchased through the extraordinary dedication of individual teachers working alone and in groups. In one sense, art education in the United States is defined by the unremitting struggle to sustain a reasonable purpose: developing basic visual knowledge and skills in individual students.

Like all other fields, art education works in a context created by forces over which it has little control. It also has areas of responsibility where it can exercise significant control. A third reality is not discussed as much as it should be. This reality can be demarcated by asking several illustrative questions: What choices does the field make about dealing with conditions that appear to be beyond its control? How well does the field delineate and then protect those things that are essential to its survival? How does the field manage the relationship between decisions in areas it cannot control and decisions in areas it can control? How much and what kind of thinking is being done about the short- and long-term ramifications of real or
prospective changes? What are the forces influencing areas over which the field has little or no control and areas in which it has control? How are distinctions made between dysfunction and obsolescence? What lies immediately ahead that represents a challenge, an opportunity, or a significant danger? How does the field and its organizations determine the nature and conditions of its interaction with others?

In-depth answers to these kinds of questions are normally sought through policy studies. The field of art education has been fortunate to have a number of outstanding thinkers who, from time to time, have devoted themselves to such questions.1 The field has made significant advances in policy sophistication over the last 30 years. Time and experience have shattered a number of naïve illusions. The formulation of national standards for student learning has provided a critical reference point for policy development (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations [Consortium], 1994). Still it remains questionable whether the field of art education has sufficient policy analysis capabilities given the scope and magnitude of its efforts and responsibilities. Because art education is primarily funded by local government, and because local school governance is connected in various ways to state and federal governments, and because governments at all levels support arts and humanities councils, most of the field’s external policy attention is focused on government or government-influenced issues as they arise. Such efforts continue to be important. No amount of sophistication can be too great when dealing with the political, legislative, and organizational issues of governmental education and arts policies. But there is more, much more. Governmental policies are not developed in a vacuum. All policies are based on ideas, and ideas are conceived, developed, promoted, and funded. Ideas grow from basic points of view. Basic points of view or core beliefs are the foundations for policy frameworks that compete with each other (Gerzon, 1996; Hope, 2002). Understanding these frameworks and their interaction is critical.

It is important to remember that, in the United States, individuals working in the most powerful governmental positions convince a majority of the people to vote for them. This means that governments both reflect and direct. Many nongovernmental forces create values and influence decisions at all levels in all sectors. In the policy realm, to focus on government and government-sponsored organizations without attending to other contextual forces is dangerous and potentially destructive. For example, marketing techniques used to inveigle children and youth create the social and aesthetic environment for formal art education in the schools. Decisions about the nature and content of messages and items that create youth cultures are far more influential than anything said or done about art education by the federal government, and have at least as much influence on student learning as the decisions of local school boards.

This juxtaposition of education and marketing illustrates a truth about present conditions. Considered comprehensively, the pressures and issues in the context for art education reveal a world of cross-purposes. Not only are there direct and obvious oppositions, but also there are situations where what seems positive in the short term turns out to be negative in the long term. Cross-purposes work not only against the visual arts and art education but also within them. For example, freedom of expression and public support are important conditions for the visual arts. Regularly, one is achieved at the expense of the other.

This chapter provides an overview of many policy issues that influence the present and future of school-based education in things visual. In the text, the terms art and visual art

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1From time to time, writers such as Laura H. Chapman (1982, pp. 113–130), Charles Dorn (2001), Elliot Eisner (2001), Constance Bumgarner Gee (1999a, 199b), and Ralph Smith (1987, 1993, 1995) issue warnings and recommendations based on policy analysis. Tom Hatfield, the executive director of the National Art Education Association (NAEA), has nurtured policy orientations in the work of that association. Such efforts can be the foundation for building enhanced capabilities.
and things visual are used to encompass and address all of the many specializations in art, design, crafts, architecture, and film/video; art and design history; criticism; philosophy of art; and so forth that constitute work in the visual world. Although each of these fields and their specializations have their own policy concerns, this chapter is devoted to considerations of policy matters affecting the whole as the basis for general education in things visual—art education—from early childhood through the high school years.

The chapter begins with several points about policy, continues with a discussion about the survival and health of art education, and concludes with an annotated list of policy areas and questions. It looks toward the possible future of policy research in art education. Its purpose is to construct and connect possibilities that would place policy analysis and action in the service of substantive art education as a counter to forces that would place art education in service to policy goals external to matters of instruction and individual enlightenment and competence in things visual.

POLICY AND ITS POWERS

Essentially, policy means some sort of engagement with simple or complex efforts to make successful decisions or to influence the decisions of others. Obviously, decisions can be made with or without research, the application of significant intellectual technique, or any thought at all. Policy may also refer to larger, established frameworks that govern specific decisions. For example, in the United States many endeavors are supported by maintaining a tax system that provides incentives for individual giving. This overall policy produces a framework for millions of individual and group decisions about philanthropy and fundraising. This framework—embedded in the American way of doing things—is both generated and reflected by many federal and state policies.

Beyond these generalities about policy lie many critical issues. Each decision has consequences. Some decisions are better than others. Some approaches to decision making obscure rather than clarify and produce illusions rather than illuminations of reality, thus leading to danger, dysfunction, or loss. These considerations are particularly important when considering issues of policy research. Research is a critical part of sophisticated policymaking. But often, there is no time for in-depth research before decisions must be taken. This means that chances for success usually improve to the extent that research-based thinking and projecting have been done in advance. Such thinking and projecting are primary purposes of intelligence operations in government, commerce, and the military; and of market research in advertising.

When research and policymaking are connected, what makes the result valuable? What predicts a good decision? A way to begin answering is by drawing a distinction between policy as activism and policy as wisdom seeking. All entities and efforts have a purpose. Some have given more thought to their purposes or stated them with greater precision than others, but purpose is present, either by design or by default. Activism can take any purpose and disconnect it from the greater reality. Activism tends to narrow perspective so that everything is evaluated and projected on the basis of what happens with respect to a single issue. Single-reference activism has significant powers to destroy the healthy connections between research and policy. Normally, such activism has no interest in what has been learned before; no willingness to consider, understand, or support the interlocking elements of larger systems; no patience; no sense of humor; and a highly selective acceptance of the facts. Activists already have all the answers. There is no question that activism can influence decisions. American society at present is replete with individuals and groups with a single objective, a deep understanding of activist techniques, and not much else. Opposition and obstruction are high arts. The activist
HOPE approach is not very careful about what it does except in its own narrow sphere of interest. Thus, activism has tremendous corrosive powers. More hidden are the abilities of master politicians in all fields to manipulate activists unmercifully, thus adding cynicism to myopia. Few readers of this chapter can be unaware of the significant problems art education has experienced for decades due to efforts of activists in education and in the arts to reduce attention to sequential curricula, qualified specialist teachers, time and resources within the school day, and so forth, in pursuit of goals they consider having higher priority.

In a policy arena pervaded with activisms where activist techniques appear to win regularly, there is great temptation to put all of a field’s policy chips on the activists’ square. But devoting everything to the games of activism can obscure and obstruct the steady pursuit of reasonable purposes, for such a pursuit is multidimensional. It requires making all sorts of connections, including connections with activistisms and activists. Pursuing purposes steadily over time calls for policy development based on wisdom seeking, on understanding, on seeing the relationships of parts and wholes, and on synthesis. Research plays a critical role here, for research brings information, data, and various analytical techniques to decision making oriented to showing things as they are. To activists, the only research that matters is that which supports the current focal point of their activism; to them research is a branch of propaganda.

Policy analysis devoted to wisdom seeking is different: It tells the known truth as comprehensively as possible at the time of telling. It develops a sense of where the make-or-break variables for a field and its practitioners really are and how they are evolving. Wisdom-seeking policy analysis also tells the truth about what is not known. It separates what is fact from speculation. Wisdom-seeking policy analysis does not minimize the presence of opposition to the pursuit of basic purpose. For example, it recognizes that forces opposing serious art education in the schools are far greater than one or two press-pilloried individuals, a political party, or any particular organization or group. Wisdom-seeking policy analysis does not demonize or join community swoons; rather, it explains. Policy informed by research and connected to the steady pursuit of reasonable purpose does not advance, promote, or reinforce illusions. It does not imply that supporting this person or cause will solve everything, or make everything appreciably better than that person or cause can make it. At the national level, this kind of policy development focuses on functions to be served more than the methods to be employed. For example, it is more concerned about what students are learning than about drawing polarized distinctions between artists and arts teachers.

The comprehensive, thoughtfully engaged approach of wisdom-seeking policy analysis is thus able to consider ramifications and deliver warnings. It can identify and illuminate conflicting agendas. It is comfortable with asking the question, “What can go wrong with this apparently good idea?” It can help to avoid long-term losses at the cost of short-term gains. It can ask hard questions about projects, language, jargon, and scope of thought contained in ideas and operations as they relate to the steady pursuit of reasonable purpose. It can lay out strategic and tactical options and present the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Policy analysis and development based on wisdom seeking have produced spectacular advances in all kinds of situations and enterprises. But history—ancient, modern, and recent—is full of examples where wise policy advice was ignored. In the activist environment of early 21st century America, ignoring wisdom-seeking policy analysis is a natural consequence of struggles to gain power over things. Such struggles regularly obscure the primary purpose of education to develop individual powers in things. Onrushing events and funded activistisms devalue efforts to bring policy analysis and development into the slower rhythm of the research-based decision making that supports teaching the substance of visual content in ways that produce individual competence and understanding.

A field’s decision about focused activism versus steady pursuit of reasonable purpose partially reveals its concept of leadership. Today, within the broad field of arts education, there is
so much activism on the part of professional arts advocates and education reformers that sets of images and cultures reinforce each other to produce an illusion that the evolving interplays and progressions of activisms lead the field. To the extent that this view dominates, the steady pursuit of reasonable purpose based on content is obscured. Expertise, images thereof, and references thereto are transferred from the profession to the activist group with the biggest megaphone available at any particular time. By continuously acquiescing to such conditions, a field can lose control of its internal purpose, thus diminishing the areas over which it has control and expanding the number of areas where it is controlled by other forces. The wrong weighting between activism and steady pursuit of purpose produces serious strategic consequences. The steady pursuit of reasonable purpose through wise policy decisions increases the field’s identity and security. Activisms supporting sets of projects, purposes, or educational fads damage and eventually destroy field identity and security.\(^2\)

Clearly, policy is a serious and complex arena containing tools that must be used carefully. To be effective over the long term, the wisdom-seeking approach must dominate. Art education would not be where it is today without significant wisdom-finding capabilities. The National Art Education Association has worked especially hard to keep attention focused on disciplinary content, vigorous teaching, and field identity and security. All these achievements provide a strong foundation for building policy capabilities of greater sophistication and scope. This means an expansion in the kinds of research associated with art education. It means more connections with contextual issues in ways that analyze and synthesize these issues into a relationship with the reasonable purposes of art education. It means that policy analyses for art education must be generated by individuals centered in things visual, or, at least, things artistic. Let us look further at why all these are important.

**SURVIVAL AND HEALTH**

For the human body, the distinction between survival and health is fundamentally clear. There is a strong relationship; but one is not the same as the other. When the terms are used beyond biology, confusion and conflation are common. It is natural for a field and the professionals within it to seek improvement. Searches for improvement often produce criticism about the present, as though the present is the enemy of the future. If care is not taken, messages associated with efforts to improve health can be transformed into inaccurate messages about survival. There are many dangers here, and avoiding them begins with making clear distinctions among issues of survival, issues of health, and the degree to which issues of health have an impact on survival. Thoughtful policy analysis is critical because it can produce reasonable valuations for losses and gains. Activists tend to treat every setback as a survival issue and present it in those terms. The cumulative effect is a pernicious image of failure and decline irrespective of the facts.

What are the survival issues for the field of art education? What are the true make-or-break variables? These may be formulated in various ways, but here are several things that the field must have in order to exist.

1. There must be a definition of content and purpose sufficient to distinguish art education from other fields. The field must answer the question, “What is unique about what we do and the content for which we are responsible?”

\(^2\) Security here refers to the continuing ability of the field of art education, or of any field, to continue fulfilling its primary—and to some extent unique—responsibilities. Security means far more than job security.
2. A sufficient number of policymakers and/or the public must believe in the work of the field. For these people, the field must answer the question, “Why are the unique things we do worthwhile?”

3. There must be a group of professionals capable of practicing effectively in the field and advancing it. These individuals must be able to answer questions 1 and 2 as a preface to the question, “What should I/we be doing in this field?”

4. There must be a body of people who prepare new professionals. In addition to answering the first three questions, they must answer the questions, “What do future professionals in this field need to know and be able to do?” and “What of this is most important to teach in the time available?”

5. There must be students able and willing to learn.

6. There must be basic resources: curriculum, time, materials, and facilities, for example.

Take any one of these things away for an appreciable period of time, and art education’s survival is threatened. This is true at every level: from the single school to the nation as a whole.

By itself, the list reveals little that is not already understood; it should be used regularly in policy analysis to consider statements, ideas, decisions, and projections about the arts and art education. For example, the loss of any one entity, whether it be an arts council, a university teacher preparation program, a particular philanthropic effort, programs in a school district, and so forth, tragic as it may be, is not a survival issue for art education in general. This truth is not cruel; rather, it is enabling.

Thoughtful policy analysis puts gains and losses in perspective and thereby enables more appropriate decisions about next steps. A loss of distinction between tactical setbacks and strategic necessities can produce conditions where one of the strategic survival factors is threatened in subtle ways while attention is focused too exclusively on real or potential tactical losses. For example, in recent years there have been continuing attempts to deny the field of art education its uniqueness by asserting that it is important only to the extent that it achieves objectives beyond teaching and learning in and about things visual, for example, that its primary purpose is to illuminate or teach other subjects. From a survival perspective, tactical losses such as specific entities or programs are minimal in comparison with any potential strategic loss of the field’s identity with unique purposes and content. To the extent that such a strategic loss is sustained, the ground is cut from under all the other make-or-break variables. Indeed, the field’s identification with a unique and reasonable purpose is the most important survival element of all.

Over the years, art teachers and their organizations have seen local, statewide, and even national policies evolve that strike at one or more of the six survival variables identified earlier. Yet, although there have been and remain many local tragedies and disappointments, overall, the field has survived and shows every indication of continuing to do so. In policy terms, survival elements are those that cannot be lost or traded away in any circumstances. This is why analyses of ramifications are so essential as ideas are put forward about art education and its future. Proposals to improve the field that attack or weaken these strategic necessities are not worth following. Partnerships that do not protect the survival points are questionable and perhaps dangerous. When internal yearnings for improvement are reflected in actions and rhetoric that corrode the strategic base, they need shunting into more productive channels.

Of course, the health of the field is linked to its survival. But for purposes of seeking time-specific situation analyses as the basis for developing plans and projections, the health of the field deals with quality, quantity, and choices about such issues as curriculum balances and methodology. Questions about any one of these issues can be posed in terms of health or in terms of survival. For example, efforts to improve quality can be presented either as an opportunity to build on gains already achieved through the hard work of professionals, or as
an attempt to correct failures caused by professionals. The first strengthens the conditions for survival; the second weakens them, particularly to the extent that the second support arguments that the visual arts can be taught by those unprepared or barely prepared in the content of the field. Another example: Issues of quantity can be discussed either in terms of a larger rationale or as the primary rationale. An illustration is (a) using low enrollment numbers in art education to justify policies that provide more opportunities for students to gain knowledge and skills in this unique field of study, or (b) using low enrollment statistics as an indication of popularity and market share, thus, justifying the reduction or the termination of programs.

These two examples demonstrate how critically important it is to deal with health issues in a way that analyzes their potential effect on policies related to survival. Vigorous debates over content balances in curricula and specific teaching methodologies are important to the advancement of the profession. But there is no reason to conduct these debates in ways that weaken the basic strategic survival positions of the field as a whole. Such self-discipline and self-regulation within a field are facilitated when each professional has a fundamental understanding of what is at stake.

Issues of survival and health are not and cannot be influenced or decided by art educators alone. Clearly, art education interacts with other fields and their interests, both within and beyond the arts and education. The intensity and complexity of these interactions, unfolding primarily in a climate of activism, make it even more important to understand and act in recognition of the fundamental survival issues. Such an approach is essential for establishing a reasonable basis for cooperation, even though establishing and articulating this basis will bring charges of setting up barriers or failing to cooperate. But attention to survival and health means entering into all relationships and considering all ideas by asking several strategic policy questions:

1. Will the action we are contemplating cause us to diminish or deny the uniqueness of our field; that is, what can the visual arts do that no other field can do?
2. Will it harm understanding of what we do and its importance among those who make fundamental decisions about our survival, including parents and students?
3. Will it diminish understanding of the need for professionals to conduct the work of our field?
4. Will it damage our ability to recruit, develop, and support future professionals?
5. Will it decrease the number of students we are able to serve with substantive, sequential art education?
6. Will it diminish the fundamental resources we must have in order to teach?

These questions have been posed in negative terms, because the purpose of asking them is to prevent decisions that have negative effects. If, in reviewing a past or potential decision, the answer is “no” to the questions, or “no, just the opposite,” then the decision is not touching a survival issue.

Another way to obtain a quick policy sense about issues of survival and health is to play a game of take away. What happens to the field of art education in terms of survival and health if a certain thing is taken away? By doing this exercise, one learns that the field is stronger than the rhetoric about it often implies. For example, the field has had the tragic experience of losing art education programs in many cities and even in the whole state of California. In those locales, survival criteria were not maintained; but, nationally the field as a whole survived and continued building its capabilities. Now, some of these terrible losses are starting to be reversed. Another example: For quite a few years now, many have been concerned about the possible loss or severe diminution of the National Endowment for the Arts. Although such a loss seems unlikely, the survival of the Endowment is not a make-or-break variable for the field of art education. There
is no apparent direct link between the survival of any governmental arts or education entity in Washington and the survival of art education as a field. The strategic survival issues are placed elsewhere and are not linked to federal agencies and quangos (quasi-autonomous governmental organizations, e.g., the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, The Arts Education Partnership) as much as to ideas, professional practice, students, and local resource streams. Looking at prospects and issues this way may appear to be cold and calculating; but in reality, it produces the kind of understanding and sensibility that enable a field to protect what is necessary for survival and work for improvement in its health while maintaining productive relationships based on realistic assessments of associated efforts and activities.

The preceding paragraph must not be interpreted as expressing a lack of concern for specific local conditions or for the well-being of agencies and organizations that individuals or groups consider important. On the contrary, it argues that these concerns can be addressed more effectively by keeping them in perspective. Normally, for the field as a whole, this means treating them as health issues rather than as survival issues. Keeping the national distinction avoids the problem of extrapolating local or specific situations beyond their real scope and thus producing or contributing to a negative overall image for the field of art education. When survival really is at stake, nationally or locally, there will be no history of overstatements and false alarms to dilute attention.

Such an approach is critical in addressing the issue of justification. Confusions about survival and health can lead to serious misjudgments about how to justify. Constantly portraying issues of health as issues of survival produces a climate of crisis that borders on continuing panic. In turn, this atmosphere produces the tendency to justify art education in fashionable terms, moment to moment. Such an approach is extremely dangerous, implying that the field has no unique mission that serves as a basic foundation for its work, it attacks a strategic necessity. To the extent that the mission is always defined in terms of “the cause of the moment,” to that same extent art education loses its identity. This is a perfect example of how short-term gains can contribute to long-term losses. If art education has every purpose, then it has no purpose of its own. Of course, art education is always under pressure—a fate shared with all fields. Allowing those external to the field, or the field itself, to deal with every problem in survival terms produces too many external and internal negatives and multiple cross-purposes. Research-based, wisdom-seeking policy analysis has a significant role to play in reviewing events and ideas, conditions, and prospects and sorting them in terms of their effect on health, survival, or the relation between the two. Produced and presented on a broad scale, such analyses will no doubt show that the survival probability for art education is quite high if the fundamental strategic conditions can be maintained. What are some of the issues that need watching if the future is to be secured?

POLICY ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

Purposes

Previously, the case has been made for the importance of a unique, reasonable purpose, for answering the question, “What does the field of art education do that nothing else can do?” This question is predicated on a more fundamental question in terms of student learning, “What does study of the visual arts accomplish that nothing else can accomplish?” On the surface, these questions seem rhetorical. However, the questions are important because the answers provide a foundation for almost all else. The answers are not always easy to give because the world of the visual is multifaceted; many-splendored; and rich with specializations, points of view, and connections to other fields. The visual arts have many uses and thus are used in
many ways. In addition to their roots in artistic action, they have connections with history, the therapeutic, social and political action, marketing, and personal response and fulfillment on all sorts of levels. But such multiple connections are not unique to the visual arts. Neither are multiple uses, and so, a primary policy question is the extent to which educational purposes are centered primarily on the visual arts themselves or on their connections and uses. In a comprehensive curriculum, there is not an either/or answer, but rather a spectrum upon which different answers are appropriate at different times and places.

This inclusive approach is in contrast to a more activist position that chooses one point on the spectrum and defends it against all others. In one critique of the single-answer approach, Eisner (2001) writes

However, the study of visual culture, influenced by critical theory, pays less attention to culture’s aesthetics than to its politics. Students study the art of popular culture to understand the sociology or politics of the image. In this view, what we sometimes refer to as the fine arts are seen not so much as dazzling or even high human achievements, but as products representing what those in power choose to praise. (p. 8)

To delve into this matter further as an educational policy issue, it is instructive to conduct another take-away exercise. When this is done, one finds that a focus on making or understanding something visual creates the uniqueness around which art education centers its work. Going further, one finds that in human terms, the visual arts and its specializations evaporate or transform into something else unless there is or has been creation of a work. It is the creation of or attention to the presence of a work of art or design or craft or architecture or film or any other visual manifestation that identifies the field uniquely.

This condition comes as no surprise. All disciplines and fields of endeavor involve the ability to do something or the results of having done something in that field. Medicine is about the practice of medicine, fundamentally. Mathematics is about the ability to think and work mathematically. Scholarship in the humanities is centered on the production of scholarly work. The connections of medicine, mathematics, and humanistic scholarship to history, therapeutics, social and political action, and so forth are all real and important, but they are not a substitute for the central core activity of the field. The core activity enables the connections. Connections, honestly made, reveal the centrality of the core activity.

This point is important because the adverse justification climate, discussed earlier, can foster rhetoric implying that producing work in a visual medium is secondary to the connections of visual arts with other purposes, worthy as they are. It is not unusual to see articles indicating that the first purpose of the visual arts now is to support political action and social change. Certainly, the visual arts can do this to some extent, but they are not unique in having this ability. They may be able to bring a unique dimension and poignant force to political and social change, but political and social change and the visual arts either separately or in the aggregate are not the same thing. Each is at least as big as the other. Conflating them diminishes both, and in the present climate, visual content loses. A larger vision for art education has already been articulated. The national voluntary K-12 standards for the visual arts recognize the critical importance of learning to do work and communicate in things visual. They support visual history and analysis and connections with other disciplines. The standards acknowledge how rich purposes can be without abandoning the essence, the prime mover of effort in the visual realm (Consortium, 1994).

The thing that art can do uniquely is art itself. At a most basic level, the history of a thing does not make the thing; making the thing produces the basis for its history. Aesthetic response, if the words retain their standard meanings, indicates reaction to a thing that already exists. These are not advertising points for studio-based learning, but rather basic realities that help place
all the elements of art education into perspective: first, to deliver the best possible education to students; and second, to protect a strategic necessity of the field, that is, a clear and honest articulation of reasonable and unique purpose—what it does that nothing else does. From a policy perspective, the question of purpose is extremely important because a field insecure about or divided over purposes, or appearing to be insecure or divided enables individuals or groups with other agendas to work one set of purposes against another and vitiate the field’s security, both in image and in fact.

From time to time, various visual specializations and professions fall into the trap of denying a home base in fundamental visual content. Professional aspirations coupled with yearnings to produce effective public relations can lead to pronouncements that an individual or a field centered in visual content is really centered in psychology, assessment, politics, therapy, sociology, media, communications, and so forth. At times, this can produce conditions where connections are called for and denied in the same set of rhetorical or organizational gestures. The problem is denying visual content roots rather than being proud of or advancing the cause of a field that uses or produces multidisciplinary work.

Policy-oriented research about purposes would focus on such questions as:

1. How unified and clear is the field’s message about its unique purpose, both in general and to specific audiences?
2. If there is a lack of basic clarity or unity, what forces, issues, or prospects are producing disagreement or confusion at a fundamental level?
3. To what extent are healthy arguments over secondary purposes, connections with other things and disciplines, methodologies, and weightings of curricular elements producing either the image or the fact of a loss of a central unique purpose?
4. How can decisions in the present and in the immediate future be crafted to promote creativity, debate, and advancement in the field while maintaining a clear internal and external focus on central disciplinary purposes?
5. What are the indicators that the field is gaining or losing understanding about the fundamental purpose of art education among specific groups?

Technique: Visual

All theories notwithstanding, every field considered basic has a body of factual information, terminology, and techniques for doing work in that field. A student in a 12th grade calculus class has far more mathematical technique than the 1st-grader struggling to write and understand numbers; study has produced a progression of technical ability that supports creative applications. In some fields, the technique is the content, but in most others technique is a means for creating or working with content. This is just as true with regard to the techniques of scholarship as it is with the techniques of making works in visual form—design, fine arts, craft, architecture, film, and so forth. In every field technique enables more: Those who have it can understand more and do more than those who do not.

Reading through much of the art education literature, especially that of the last few decades, one senses a real ambivalence about and sometimes antipathy to technical studio skill. This fear may be more present in writing about art education than in art education itself, but whatever the case, the field’s overall position on the acquisition of studio technique is critical. Where does

3Throughout the chapter, sample policy questions are posed in terms of “the field.” However, questions work equally well for smaller units, such as a state, school district, school, or collegiate program that prepares art teachers. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that these are only some of the questions that could be asked about each topic and that the topics are only some of the topics to be addressed by comprehensive policy effort.
it lead policy for art educators themselves to suggest that writing is intellectual but drawing is not (Best, 2000).

This chapter is not the place to debate the issue; it is more productive to point out that art education is working under significant pressures antipathetic to the fundamental generative techniques for producing work in visual form due to a number of forces that are not correlated in the same way for any other field. These include combinations and collisions of desires to nurture creative expression in a psychological sense; to move art education beyond creative expression defined as play time with art materials; to join contemporary movements in the visual arts that substitute verbal conceptualization for visual sophistication; and to produce or introduce shocking spectacles. Attempts to divorce visual art from technique and craft are not evident across the whole range of visual action. But the forces of opposition are formidable, and without strategic understanding, it is possible that those who seek a rich, comprehensive art education that includes but goes beyond studio technique may be presenting their goals in ways that deny their own field its most basic technical foundation.

Of course, it is possible to focus on the acquisition of specific studio techniques to a point that limits contact with important matters of history and analysis or applications in and connections to fields of specialization within the visual world. But it is equally possible to deny technique its importance in a way that undercuts the role of technique in delineating the uniqueness of the visual arts in all their manifestations as a school discipline that is basic to general education. For just as the acquisition of technique in languages, mathematics, the sciences, and historical and social analyses is a major part of what each of those disciplines teach uniquely, so is the acquisition of artistic and intellectually based visual technique a major part of what art education teaches uniquely.

Several continuing policy and research questions are:

1. How is studio technique understood and valued internally and externally as a component of art education? What are the ramifications of the answer to this question that impinge on strategic necessities for the survival or health of the field?
2. What are the distinctions and relationships among creative expression, studio technique, historical knowledge, and analytical technique?
3. How is the field dealing with distinctions and relationships between (a) studio technique and technology (Healy, 1998) and (b) studio technique and artistic freedom?
4. What are the policy ramifications of presenting studio technique as being either confining or liberating? How can policy analysis help clarify indications of the difference in specific situations?

Youth Cultures

The visual arts are being taught to students heavily influenced by mass-produced youth cultures. Targeted marketing to children and youth has reached such intensity, sophistication, and coverage that such traditional cultural formation powers as the home, school, and religion have lost overall influence (Hymowitz, 2000, 2001; Ruggerio, 2000). Specific reaction is manifested in home schooling, school vouchers, and charter schools, all to some extent attempts to swing the pendulum back to local adult control. But irrespective of how these particular struggles turn out, youth cultures will always be a critical policy issue for art education.

Analytical questions can begin with the values promoted by a particular youth culture concerning the nature of work, patient application to the development of knowledge and skills, willingness to tackle difficulty, and the relationship between individual and community. A youth culture that sends the usual current messages—everything must be fun; everything must be sensational; everything must be simple; everything must be new; everything must change
constantly; everything must be fast; everything must be easy; everything is essentially about “me,” what’s “cool” is what adults don’t like—is not supportive of serious education in any discipline, much less the visual arts.

It is not unusual to hear admonitions that educators should meet students where they are. This sounds reasonable, even logical. However, accepting this view means that both policy and educational challenges are defined by how far students are from the nature of the discipline to be studied. Particularly powerful questions arise here if one believes that education is to lead people to knowledge and skills they do not currently have.

Several perennial policy questions in this area are:

1. What are the forces creating youth cultures at various levels, pre-K—12? To what extent can the values promoted by these youth cultures be generalized?
2. To what extent are the values and messages being promoted by these cultures consistent with the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the visual arts?
3. If there are consistencies, how can they be reinforced? If there are inconsistencies, how can these be addressed in ways that promote student learning?
4. What is the role of art teachers and the field of art education in addressing issues of youth culture at individual, classroom, school, district, local, state, and national levels?
5. What is the field’s responsibility to students regarding their ability to understand visual manipulation in the messages they receive?

**Technique: General**

We are constantly being bombarded with information and analysis about technology—practical applications of scientific discoveries in machinery, drugs, and electronic systems. In general, very little is said about technique—applications of technological habits of mind in all dimensions of life. Readers of this *Handbook* are familiar with problems that occur when everything is considered a science, whether it is or is not. The 20th century was replete with disasters caused by misplaced faith in scientific and technical approaches. Policymaking can be severely and dangerously skewed by reliance on technical means alone. Yet, technique is widely favored as the initiator of action, is pervasive, and is the mode of choice for major forces influencing education policy. It is critical to remember that the technical imperative when applied to policy is intended to produce a single decision for everyone. Thus, purely technical thinking is in severe contrast to artistic thinking, where there is no standard solution, but rather a continuing development of individual solutions.

As stated previously, technique and technical thinking play powerful roles in making art, studying it, and presenting it. But technique alone is never enough in any of the arts. Most arts professionals understand this, but many outside the arts who have heavy influence on the conduct of art education do not. Clear evidence is seen in means proposed to attain higher levels of accountability in elementary and secondary education. The proliferation of techniques, systems, standards, measurements, evaluations, assessments, and standardized tests all indicate how powerful technical thinking is in our society as a whole and in education. The wonderful and continuing successes in machine technology only reinforce the idea that the same mode of thought can be applied to every problem, irrespective of its nature. The result is loss of faith in and respect for professional judgment and individual professional action (Ellul, 1964; Hope, 1990; Ortega y Gasset, 1961).

Art education policy development will proceed for some time under conditions that overweigh the importance of technical thinking. Policy analysis is critical to understanding how this problem is unfolding and in what areas at specific times and over time.
The following policy research questions have continuing importance:

1. How is technical thinking—one-size-fits-all ideas, systems, and evaluations—manifested in the present context for art education? How are technique-based ideas evolving in areas that impact the strategic fundamentals of the field? What opportunities and problems exist or are possibilities or probabilities?

2. What messages can the field best present about the issue of technique and technical thinking? How can the field of art education inform students and the public at large about positive and negative relationships between creativity and technical thinking?

3. In terms of the health of the field, what are the potential impacts of technological thinking on concepts of evaluation, accountability, and funding. To the extent that the answer is negative, what can be done to counter trends or to ameliorate their effects?

4. How can the field prepare its future professionals to work with the challenge of technological thinking as it evolves? What are the potential impacts of this issue on teacher preparation curricula?

Technique: Applied

The field of art education is deeply concerned with art content, but it is equally concerned with technique and methodology. The field includes attention to studio technique, scholarly technique, research technique, educational technique, evaluation technique, and so forth. Such sets of technique and their relationships are typical in all fields of endeavor. Specializations arise within fields concerned with specific techniques or from methodologies associated with specific bodies of work—restoration in the visual arts, for example. But the work of art education and particularly its policy context are regularly impacted by applications of other bodies of technique. Political and advertising techniques are two of the most powerful. In the visual arts, it is clear that there is a vast difference between imitating how an artist or designer acts and being successful at what an artist or designer does. Imitation can only go so far. The same is true of politics and promotion. For art educators interacting with professional politicians or promoters, imitation is not enough. Both of these sets of techniques are powerful producers of illusions. Because politics and promotion have deep relationships with policy and policymaking, any policy effort intending to support art education must attend to political and promotional techniques per se, to the illusions they can create, and to their applications, both separately and together, in specific circumstances.

This means far more than the fundamental tasks of watching and reacting to specific legislation, regulation, or messages. It means developing the capability to understand what each game is and how it is being played, especially because the games never end. For example, it is extremely critical to know when consultation is sought on a real or symbolic basis, when the field is being involved or bypassed regarding matters affecting its health or survival, when incidents are being extrapolated into norms in order to advance a particular rearrangement of powers, and so forth (Gee, 1999a, 1999b).

4For example, the results of polls are of little use when developing policy when those polled have little understanding or knowledge of a subject. Public opinion derived from the most super of super majorities regarding questions of neurosurgery is worthless. This is why there is significant concern among experts in any field about ratings or decisions based on polling technique. Another example is evaluation technique that assumes all achievement can be expressed in mathematical terms. Another is promotional technique applied to education when celebrity presence is substituted for student learning.
Several continuing research-based policy analysis questions in this area are:

1. What sets of technique—promotional, political, fundraising, accountability related, and so forth—beyond the field of art education have the most impact on policy development either in or affecting the field?
2. What are the features of these sets of techniques? How have they been applied in ways that affect art education? How are they being applied now? What applications seem most probable in the immediate future? What among these is supportive, benign, or dangerous?
3. What external sets of techniques, or specific generic techniques within them, are most supportive of art education by their very nature? Which are most destructive by their very nature? What are the indicators that techniques or their applications are becoming dangerous to the health or survival of the field?
4. How can the field best position itself to address issues of technique as well as content in policy debates? What kinds of specific research are needed to gain these capabilities? What is the content of this research in general, or for specific circumstances?

Technology

Magnificent achievements in technology are among the glories of civilization. Advances in computing, with their direct applications to communication and their heavy reliance on things visual, represent a new level of opportunity and continuing promise for art education. They have lifted a number of design fields into new levels of career prestige and raise issues of design content in K-12 art education (Davis, 1998). Technology has enlarged the meaning of technique development in the visual arts. Beyond these and many other technological facts and issues lie a number of serious policy matters associated with content and the development of visual thinking.

The computer enables many things, including illusions: Access becomes confused with capability; mouse and keyboard technique becomes confused with intellectual skill; compilation becomes confused with knowledge; and so forth. Policy analysis can look at the whole field of technology, its relationships to education in general, and its specific relationships to visual learning of all kinds. For example, a major policy question is how to keep technology from narrowing possibilities rather than expanding them. If visual experience beyond the natural daily context is primarily confined to what can be seen on a computer screen, experience narrows and the full promises of technology are not being realized. Technology issues are not easy (Gelenter, 2001), and approaches to them that favor a comprehensive and substantive art education require deep understanding of numerous issues and their relationships, including the massive funding of political and promotional operations to promote the sale of technological equipment.

A number of standing policy questions in this area are:

1. What technological capabilities do we have now, and what capabilities are projected in the immediate future?
2. How do these specific technologies and the composite effect of their continuing development relate to the field’s specific goals for student learning in various areas of the visual arts?
3. What is involved in establishing policy positions that enable the field to both support and critique technology as appropriate? What kinds of alliances to support or critique are created, and what are the ramifications of these alliances?
4. What are the economic issues associated with technology? Examples include the replacement of teachers by technical means, distance learning, constant provision of current equipment, efficiencies of delivering instruction, and so forth.
Teacher Preparation

Like other school disciplines, the field of art education has done a lot of deep thinking about teacher preparation. Standards, constant professional discussions about methodology, curriculum and methodological philosophies, and from time to time an overabundance or shortage of teachers are all standard subjects. Much past and continuing work in this area is policy oriented; thus, an expansion of the field’s policy analysis effort would involve connecting specific issues of teacher preparation policy with the other kinds of policy issues that we have been discussing.

A major factor here is that knowledge is expanding at a rapid rate. Skill requirements are expanding also. But the time available is not expanding. Indeed, financial and other pressures are causing many states and institutions to reduce the number of hours required for an undergraduate degree to at or near 120 semester hours. Increasingly, contextual forces are influencing professional decisions about content, sequence, and method. In response to political pressures generated by the education reform movement, teacher preparation is being freighted with all sorts of accountability mechanisms. Pursued and established through vigorous, sophisticated applications of political and advertising techniques, these accountability mandates carry significant dangers along with their intended, purported benefits for student learning. For example, at the same time that there is a vast intensification of accountability mechanisms in teacher preparation, and indeed in teaching as a lifelong career, teacher shortages are producing alternative certification plans that simply bypass current and prospective accountability systems.

Clearly, policy analysis in this area is a continuing responsibility because the field is unlikely to have the will, patience, or resources to turn on a dime every time there is a call for change. Constant changes and self-enlarging systems are ingredients in recipes for dysfunctions, which in turn usually produce more changes and new or bigger systems. If such a cycle is now apparent, or becomes part of the field’s contextual future, a policy-oriented analytical approach continually focused on student learning in the visual arts has the best chance of keeping the field out of danger and, indeed, of helping it to advance as changes and systems proliferate and confusion mounts.

Sample research-based policy questions for this area are:

1. How does the field best keep teacher preparation focused on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop competencies in the visual arts in individual students?
2. What external pressures seem most influential on teacher preparation policies? What are the sources of these pressures?
3. How can the field best respond to that which appears problematic or destructive? To what extent can policy research and analysis enable the field (a) to predict difficulties and be somewhat ready to meet them and (b) be proactive in ways that maintain control or preempt activism by forces that attack or erode conditions for effective teacher preparation?
4. What kinds of orientations to policy issues should be part of the content of teacher preparation?

Intellectual and Curriculum Issues

The proliferation of theory in every field is, in part, an offshoot of the scientism that pervades our age. Theorizing coupled with overspecialization can develop a self-vitiating power within a field, a power that sustains itself toward ultimate irrelevance (Elkins, 2001; Ruddick, 2001). A careful policy effort can critique both theorizing and specialization without showing disrespect to the productive powers of each. It can also analyze the ramifications of specific theories and the findings of specific specializations with regard to their potential impacts on the survival
and health of the field. It can make useful distinctions between theory as explanation and theory as ideology. Thoughtful policy analysis cuts through jargon to meaning for decision making. It refuses to accept buzz words such as interdisciplinary, elitism, multiculturalism, diversity, self-esteem, and so forth, as indicators of automatic positives (Smith 1989, 1995). Almost all these concepts are double-edged in some way. For example, interdisciplinarity is an important goal for education. An individual’s ability to integrate the knowledge, skills, modes of thoughts, points of view, and content of two or more disciplines is a tremendous achievement. But too often, interdisciplinarity is used to obscure or obviate the need for knowledge or skill development in specific disciplines sufficient to enable their combination in an interdisciplinary effort or project. Likewise, multiculturalism can indicate an expansion of knowledge to include information, languages, and approaches used by those beyond one’s home culture. But multiculturalism can be used propagandistically to deny or denigrate the achievements of Western cultures, thus advocating, and at times, producing a new narrowness (Windschuttle, 2002).

The purpose of policy analysis in such matters is not to stop or start intellectual efforts, theories, discussions, promotions, or debates, but rather to understand their potential impacts on primary goals for student learning in the K-12 years and the work of the field to support such learning.

A number of important policy questions in this area are:

1. What ideas in all applicable fields are providing the most influence on the present evolution of art education as a field? To what extent is there a distinction in levels of influence between ideas generated within and those generated beyond the field?
2. What are the ramifications of these ideas for the security and health of the field? How easily can apparently good or beneficial ideas be turned against the fundamental purposes or strategic necessities of the field? How likely are such turnings?
3. What are the indicators that concepts, ideas, and modes of thought external to the visual arts are beginning to overshadow, obscure, or obviate visual content? For example, how do art educators know when to become concerned that they are teaching toward a single idea more than teaching the visual arts specifically and/or comprehensively?
4. Given the fact that ideas come and go, and given what is known now, what bodies of ideas are likely to constitute the next few waves of fads and trends? What positives and negatives are evident in these potentials?

Funding and Rhetorical Support

Surveying the whole field of art education pre-K-12, two things are obvious. First, billions of dollars are being spent on art education each year, mostly from local tax revenues. Second, these funds, as large in the aggregate as they are, are insufficient to the need. Clearly, funding is so critical that it regularly overrides almost all other policy considerations. The pressures to operate in this way push any field away from comprehensive policy considerations. In other words, constant funding pressures can reduce the possibility of doing the kind of work that would reduce these pressures over time in many cases. At the very least, these pressures diminish prospects for the kind of advancements that a broader policy analysis would surely bring. Although there is a great deal of understanding about funding patterns and the relationships of policy to funding at local, state, and federal levels, at base, art educators and those who represent them must know how to work the system as it evolves (Hooker, 1987). How fast and in what directions are funding mechanisms changing?

Rhetorical support is important not only in and of itself but also for its relationship to funding. Rhetorical support comes in word-based testimonies but also symbolically through grant
programs, publication of achievements, recognitions and prizes, and all forms of speaking and writing, including policy analyses themselves. Both funding and rhetorical support announce the presence of a field to those outside it. Normally, each comes at a price. The role of policy analysis in this area is to consider the real and total cost of the price required or exacted. This real and total cost needs to be calculated in terms of not only student learning but also the survival and health of the field, because the survival and health of the field are essential for student learning in things visual. How many grants have been entered into without calculating the cost of what will happen when the grant stops, an almost certain inevitability?

Clearly, major policy efforts must be devoted to obtaining necessary funding and gaining the most positive rhetorical support possible. But research-based, wisdom-seeking policy analysis can place this continuing effort in a larger context that connects it to such things as the operations of political and advertising technique; issues arising from one or more youth cultures and reactions to them; movements in the worlds of ideas, realities, and potentials for technical means, and so forth.

A number of important policy questions in this area are:

1. What does a composite picture of primary funding sources and patterns for art education reveal about priorities for maintaining and increasing financial report? Where should the most concern about funding be focused?
2. What is the relative weight of secondary funding; what are the various types of rhetorical support; and what do the answers tell the field about concentrations of promotion and development energies?
3. How well is the field doing in connecting issues of financial and rhetorical support to goals and objectives for student learning. What forces in the context are supporting or disrupting such connections?
4. What kinds of projective research and analysis are needed to deal with future funding and future issues of rhetorical support? For example, what is the role of the individual teacher?

Standards and Resources

The field of art education is naturally concerned about standards and resources. It is both true and fun to say that we have standards because we have the visual arts, not the visual arts because we have standards. Standards based on great achievements in the fine arts, design, crafts, architecture, film, and so forth, exist and continue to evolve. In 1994, the art education field joined other arts disciplines in publishing a consensus-based set of national voluntary standards for K-12 students (Consortium, 1994). Such results always represent a compromise; thus, no one person can be entirely satisfied with the result. But after a long developmental struggle, the standards hit the target sufficiently to gather broad support as a baseline document for use in state and local circumstances. The policy impact of this standards effort is extremely positive for the most part; for example, approximately 47 states have either endorsed the standards or developed their own standards based on the National Standards. Effects from the standards effort are still being felt and will be felt for many years to come. For one thing, the standards text provides one formulation of the fundamental uniqueness of the content that is the responsibility of the art education field. Therefore, because the text protects that uniqueness, it or another text that serves the same purpose is a matter of basic security in the policy arena. For example, the standards cannot be achieved by students without teachers who have expertise in subject matters based in or centered on the visual arts. Meeting the standards requires resources and the development of student learning year after year throughout elementary and secondary schooling. By the nature of the context they delineate, the standards indicate that regular study,
not casual experience, is necessary to develop competence. Indeed, the articulation of the unique content of art education in the standards is an anchoring reference point for almost all other decisions, thus, for policy analysis, research, and development.

Standards written in ways to ensure that they can serve as an anchoring reference point are a critical necessity tied to basic security in ways that are not always readily apparent. Anchoring policy to student learning is essential, but such anchoring works only if student learning is defined in terms of specific knowledge and skills centered on the discipline in question. Thus, not only is the presence of standards a critical policy issue, but also the nature of standards and the purposes they reflect are equally critical. Not just any standards will do. This is why standards revisions are among the most critical decisions, particularly in fields like art education that are not broadly understood to be fundamental or basic. Policy efforts regarding standards must draw upon an understanding of both (a) all the forces directly opposing or subtly countering substantive learning and (b) the danger of substituting formulations or methodologies for basic content. They must foster an acute sensibility to positive and negative relationships between that which is foundational and that which is faddish or trendy. They must be based on a clear understanding about distinctions between what is essential for the survival for the field and what is good for the health of the field.

A number of perennial policy questions in this area are:

1. How are standards affecting policies at various levels and locations, and how are policies affecting the fulfillment and application of standards?
2. How secure are specific sets of standards, and what are the potential meanings of any insecurities for student learning?
3. Are there ideas or policy initiatives that essentially undermine capabilities to achieve standards while purporting to support standards? For example, to what extent are there instances of specific parts of the standards being abstracted and overemphasized in preemptory ways?
4. What are the prospects that the field can control any effort or attempt to change the national standards of 1994? What are the policy ramifications and research needs if it appears that the field either can retain or may lose control?
5. What rhetorical relationships between resources and standards are most effective in gaining additional opportunities and resources for student learning?

Other Policy Areas

The previous list of topics is only a beginning and is intended to show, by example, the kinds of work research-based policy analysis should do. Other areas such as demographics, economics, relationships with organizations and groups in the arts, culture, and education, media, and general education policy are also extremely important and need attention.

FUTURE ISSUES

Famed business consultant Peter Drucker (1970) is often credited with the thought that research, policy analysis, and projection are not so much about predicting the future, but rather for studying the futurity of present decisions (p. 131). The kinds of questions posed previously can be asked constantly over time. No matter how much policy-oriented work is done, no matter how much research and thinking are accomplished, there are always unpredictable events that alter everything. September 11, 2001, is a case in point. In a few minutes, cultural
conditions changed radically (Brooks, 2001; Knight, 2001). In situations like the present, and indeed all the time, a wisdom-seeking analytical effort can reveal what is happening and what might happen in a way that relates to what might or should be done in the field’s area of responsibility. Even if we do not know what is next, we can know what is now and create out of our knowledge, research, and sensibilities optional scenarios of what might be next, and how we might lead or respond. After all, this is what intelligence analysts are doing in all the areas that affect our basic security as a nation.

Present and future policy analysis cannot ignore the presence of values, inclinations, and interests that produce different views and interpretations of situations, and thus about what should be done next. In all fields where there is active policy analysis, there are serious disagreements. In the main, these disagreements sharpen understanding, except when activism or yearnings for a certain result obscure the truth or the potential opportunities and dangers inherent in possible conditions, decisions, and ramifications. Overall, much writing labeled arts policy is really advocacy. Advocacy never finds any danger in its own recommendations. Advocacy is a critical piece of the arts and arts education effort. But it is based on promotional technique—not on policy analysis—and thus is not a sufficient base for solid decision making. In arguing that advocacy is not enough to accomplish the purposes of a recent report published by RAND and The Pew Charitable Trusts, McCarthy, Brooks, Lowell, and Zakaras (2001) write that,

In undertaking this research, we made no initial assumptions about the proper role of government in the arts, or about the value of one kind of artistic expression or experience over another. We have tried to avoid any type of advocacy for the arts in order to try to conduct the kind of impartial, empirical analysis that forms the basis of sound policy. (p. 3)

The dangers of building the kind of policy analysis capability necessary to address the complexities outlined previously are several and serious. Among them are backlashes to findings that counter or express concern about long-advocated positions, decisions, or directions; roiling public disagreements over interpretations of facts; the development of evidence that contradicts or confirms beliefs held as myths; critiques of positions and actions taken by powerful groups and forces in the arts, education, and culture generally; vulnerability to the charge that the field is being selfish in focusing everything on its own goals for student learning, its fundamental security, or its health; charges of failure to cooperate, to be good partners, and so forth. Let it be noted that these possibilities exist in every field where sophisticated research-based policy analysis and synthesis are well established.

What alternatives does the field of art education have? Policy is always with us, created either by design or by default. The art education field is where it is today, because a number of leaders in various sectors of the field have been courageous in addressing policy issues associated with basic survival and continuing health. Most of these efforts have grown from a highly developed personal sensibility coupled with great expertise, a bloodhound’s nose for the scent of danger, the will to speak out, and in many cases, a position from which to be heard. The aggregate result of these efforts over the years has provided more security for the field than many realize. Without a continuation and intensification of these efforts, a vacuum will be created as complexities mount. Essentially, the field has two choices: a) to develop and intensify its capability to understand and influence policy on its own behalf or (b) to accept and react to the policy decisions of others. It is virtually certain that the art education field risks grave peril if it allows those external to the field free reign to shape its policies and policy context.

A policy effort of greater capability is needed to ensure that the field has capabilities for warning itself about potential problems ahead. Reacting forcefully is important, but it is not enough. Danger is not always obvious immediately. The same is true of golden opportunities.
The capability development advocated here cannot be acquired quickly. It is needed, not just for art education but also for all the disciplines in the general field of arts education. Policy analytical capabilities in all these fields have grown over the past 2 decades. Experience has been a great teacher. Associations such as NAEA are working with a far greater policy sophistication than ever before. There is an urgent need for more data and information about current conditions. The facts themselves are valuable, but when used as the basis for strategic analysis, their value increases many times over. Indeed, the policy capability needed is the ability to analyze in specific areas and to synthesize these analyses into composites that give the overall picture of status and prospect that in turn leads to wise decisions.

Developing these capabilities means creating a relatively small group of professionals steeped in research and analysis, content and technique, who are able to draw information from a wide variety of sources, make connections, and develop integrated evaluations of import that are reasonably accurate most of the time. These professionals are not dictators, but thought provokers serving the field by watching and attending to its basic security and fundamental health more than to its temporary image. They pay particular attention to ideas and movements that narrow vision and to coercive illusions that lead art educators to deny, diminish, or denigrate the basics of their own field.

The tremendous needs for increases in student learning that require the field to advance call for the development of a research-based policy capability, tied first to continuous pursuit of the reasonable and unique purposes of the field. It is indeed immaterial or unnecessary for such an effort to be closely associated organizationally with advocacy, partnerships, or the larger connections among art, politics, and philanthropy that occupy the attentions of what is usually called arts policy or cultural policy on the national scene. It seems in this point in its development, the field of art education would benefit most from an overt intelligence operation based in a few universities, connected to applicable policy issues, and devoted to supporting the field’s powerful and critical interests in increasing and advancing student learning. Moving forward in this direction can certainly improve prospects for advancing the health of the field, and may even be critical to its long-term survival in a world of cross-purposes.

**AUTHOR NOTE**

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