

ABSTRACT

A ZERO SUM GAME? ELIMINATING COURSE REPETITION AND ITS EFFECTS ON ARTS EDUCATION

By

Ting-Pi Joyce Carrigan

In 2011, with ongoing concerns over state budget shortfalls and the increasing educational cost structure, California state legislators focused their attention on measures that could lead to access, added productivity, and value in order to sustain the current educational system. One of the recommendations provided by the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) was to eliminate state support for course repetition in activity classes. In 2012, the Board of Governors (BOG) adopted the changes to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations to limit the apportionment a community college district could collect for student attendance in credit courses that are related in content. This limitation on apportionment was intended to specifically limit student enrollment in active participatory courses such as those in the visual and performing arts.

This qualitative interview study used the Discipline-Based Art Education framework to bring forth the experiences of 13 community college visual and performing arts (VAPA) instructors. The purpose of the study was to understand how VAPA instructors experienced the elimination of course repetition, how they reconciled the requirements of their discipline with the state educational policy, and how these changes influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning.

Findings showed little uniformity and commonality in the approach participants took to reconcile the pedagogical practices of their discipline with the state-initiated curricular changes. The findings also indicated that VAPA instructors had very different perceptions of their students' developmental levels. Consequently, their approach at making changes to their curricula varied significantly.

Furthermore, all VAPA instructors in the study felt strongly that skill building was inherent to the process of arts learning and making. With the loss of arts courses due to recent budget cuts coupled with the loss of course repetition, VAPA instructors argued that students would find the pursuit of arts studies to be cursory and insignificant, and many would likely choose simply to give up.

This is a critical time to bring to the forefront discussions on the place arts education has in the community colleges.

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AND ITS EFFECTS ON ARTS EDUCATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the arts discipline, the repeated arts-learning experiences increase the likelihood of arts engagement and appreciation later on in life (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Furthermore, arts education is critical to the development of holistic learning, the expansion of mental capacity, and the fostering of experiences and emotions in different forms (Dobbs, 1992; Gardner, 1987; Viglione, 2009). While educational experts agree arts education is important, opportunities to study the arts are diminished as arts classes continue to be cut from the K-12 and higher education systems due to budgetary concerns (A. Cohen, 1987; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Viglione, 2009).

In the K-12 system, federal mandates for funding eligibility is driven by assessment test scores as required by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Since then, the NCLB mandate has changed the focus of primary and secondary education (Viglione, 2009). With funding tied to test scores, school administrators have directed more attention to disciplines that lend to high-stakes testing such as mathematics, reading, and the hard sciences while languishing in the commitment and support for arts education (Viglione, 2009; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

In the same way, accountability pressures are also manifesting in higher education. In the California Community Colleges (CCC), the nation's largest higher

educational system (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2011; CCCCCO), arts education has increasingly come under pressure from the public and the state to demonstrate accountability in terms of degree completion, certificate attainment, and gainful employment. Most recently, concerns over state budget shortfalls and a continually increasing educational cost structure have prompted state legislators to take action directed at adding productivity and value in order to sustain the current educational system. One such action called for the elimination of credit course repetition in the area of visual and performing arts (California Legislative Analyst's Office, 2011; LAO).

Problem Statement

In July 2012, the Board of Governors (BOG) adopted the changes to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations to limit the apportionment a community college district can collect for student attendance in credit courses that are related in content. This limitation on apportionment was also intended to specifically limit student enrollment in active participatory courses such as those in physical education, visual and performing arts (CCCCO, 2013). This legislative action is of significant impact for community college visual and performing arts (VAPA) instructors as course repetition is central to how they teach their subject area.

California legislators' call for educational policy change implies implementing changes on many fronts. These changes impact the way VAPA instructors deliver the content and how they meet the standards of their discipline, how they continue to practice their profession effectively, and ultimately, how and whether the value of arts education, with all its intrinsic benefits, is sustained.

Changes in Course Repetition Policy

The CCC serves 2.6 million students in 112 colleges (CCCCO, 2011). The system operates under the state policy of open access, which affords all persons age 18 or older the opportunity for admission based solely on their ability to benefit (LAO, 2011).

In 2011, following state budget shortfalls in the CCC system, the Legislature directed its attention to cost-saving measures. The LAO, which provides nonpartisan fiscal and policy analysis for the California Legislature, turned its attention to regulations that allow students to repeat a class multiple times. Of particular interest is the issue of students with high-unit counts who have accumulated well in excess of the 60 units of credit required for a degree or transfer to a 4-year institution. According to the CCCCCO, nearly 120,000 students had earned 90 or more units of credit in 2009-2010. Of these, 9,000 students (7.5%) had earned more than 150 units of credits (LAO, 2011). The LAO (2013) noted that excessive unit-taking happened more frequently in the CCC and the California State University systems and it could drive up the cost of higher education.

The LAO posited that several factors contribute to the excess unit-taking. Some students may be taking additional classes not required for their majors because of self-interest while others repeat courses in hopes to improve their grades and skills. Still others take extra classes because they lack a clear educational plan or the classes they need are not available, so they enroll in non-required classes to maintain their fulltime student status (LAO, 2013).

Even though the LAO acknowledges that there is a dearth of data on the causes of excess unit-taking (LAO, 2013), the bottom line is, regardless of reasons, the excessive unit-taking is creating a bottleneck in the CCC and the path to degree completion is being

obstructed by students who are not moving forward fast enough to reach their educational goals.

As state funding decreases, state legislators are concerned about providing enrollment opportunity for specific populations such as recent high school graduates. The LAO noted that enrollment priority given to continuing students, including those with high-unit count, is adversely affecting the open access goal across the CCC. With the likelihood that the system will need to further reduce course offerings due to budget shortages, the LAO recommended that a cap be placed on state-supported instruction rather than continue to subsidize community college students with a high-unit count (LAO, 2011).

While legislators seek to implement savings measures, the elimination of course repetition does not take into account the existing pedagogical practices in the arts nor the instructors' need to make curricular modifications to meet these changes. Gaining further understanding of the value of arts education is more critical than ever as research is very limited. Educational practitioners and policymakers will be able to make decisions and take appropriate actions that do not look to diminish further art education in the schools.

Implications in the Arts

The elimination of course repetition has significant implications for VAPA instructors and students. It is necessary to consider the perspective of the community college arts instructors as the discipline experts in order to understand the ramifications of eliminating course repetition in the discipline. Recognizing how VAPA instructors practice their arts training and how they have designed the arts curricula to promote access to arts education is critical, particularly when the teaching of the arts is at odds

with proposed educational policy. For prospective VAPA students with limited arts preparation, this legislative action looks to eliminate their means of enhancing arts learning and skills. Arts education may in fact be out of reach for those who can least afford it.

In higher education, institutions are typically responsible for the development of their curricula (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). It is the goal of educators to promote critical thinking and appreciation of diversity and to expand the student's capacity to acquire knowledge, analyze it, and learn the process of judging for themselves (Baxter Magolda, 2002). In addition, VAPA instructors' approach to curriculum design for art production presupposes the notion that repeated practice of a skill is pivotal to the learning process and that each art encounter helps expand the students' field of reference and their life experiences (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Successive repetition of VAPA courses is currently the practice in college level arts curricula. Repetition is necessary to achieve skill mastery in VAPA production. In particular, for art majors' courses, repetition is critical to build and enhance skill mastery. Arts production is a multifaceted process that includes the study of art materials; the learning of traditions of craftsmanship; the development of personal qualities (e.g., persistence, patience, and self-criticism); the understanding of artists' motivation; and the expression of ideas in visual, aural, and physical forms (Dobbs, 1992; Hatfield, 1999). Without the course repetition option, arts-majors cannot be expected to build portfolios or participate in auditions that can showcase their range of skills. Moreover, opportunities to equitably compete for transfer to 4-year institutions as art majors would be limited.

Community college students pursuing art education as art majors or as non-majors often lack arts education foundation as well as the financial means to pursue their educational goal (A. Cohen, 1987). Students may have some exposure to the arts but, as Bumgarner Gee (2004) argued, exposure to the arts is not the same as receiving formal arts education. Visual and performing arts instructors understand the challenges students face and purposefully design curricula to address the limited preparation and exposure to arts education.

Additional research is needed to understand the impact of eliminating repetition in skill mastery courses in the art discipline. As the discipline experts, community college VAPA instructors are uniquely qualified to make the case for advocacy; however, there are limited opportunities to participate and engage in broader discussions about pedagogical and curricular changes. The legislative action to eliminate course repetition has significant implications on how the discipline experts teach and promote arts education. It is important to take into account the unique character of the VAPA discipline and the overall value of arts education.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative dissertation is to examine how state-initiated curriculum changes are likely to influence the promotion of access to arts learning and teaching of arts education. This study will give voice to visual and performing arts instructors, describe their experiences in addressing state-initiated curriculum changes, and contribute to the limited research on understanding the challenges of sustaining the development and progression of arts education.

Research Questions

These primary questions frame this study:

1. How are arts instructors redesigning the arts curricula in light of new state educational policies on eliminating course repetition?
2. How do arts instructors see these state-initiated policy changes impacting their teaching practices?
3. How do arts instructors anticipate state-initiated curriculum changes impacting the access to arts learning for students with limited preparation in the arts?

Theoretical Framework

The literature on the field of arts education and its overall purpose remain the subject of debate among scholars and educators (Dobbs, 1992; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Clark (1991) contended swings in school policies and practices in response to intellectual, social, economic, and political challenges oftentimes evolved around three major orientations: child-centered, society-centered, and subject-centered. He said, the development, transition, and convergence of these three major educational orientations provided the background and rational for the arrival of discipline-based art education. Clark expounded that discipline-based arts education has the hallmarks of a comprehensive arts framework. He said, it establishes the interrelationships between the child-society-subject-centered triumvirate as well as the interplay between teacher, student, content, and setting.

Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) is a comprehensive theoretical approach that has received wide acceptance in art education (Eisner, 1987; Geahigan, 1997; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). The DBAE provides the framework to investigate how art

instructors develop professional preparation, which informs their ability to respond to the goal of teaching art. Art education through the DBAE lens brings to focus the sharing of conceptual tools, materials, and methods of inquiry used by art instructors to help students become familiar with the outlook and experience of a seasoned practitioner of the arts (Dobbs, 1992).

Discipline-Based Art Education

Discipline-Based Art Education theory is seminal to reinvigorating and to carving a place for art education in schools (Walling & Davis, 2003). Before DBAE, the focus of art education in the schools was mainly on art-production, self-expression, and creativity. These objectives did not necessarily provide a holistic experience for the student. With the development of DBAE, art education was to be extended and informed by complementary disciplines (Dobbs, 1992).

Dobbs (1992) explained that DBAE is a theoretical approach that derives content from four foundational areas of art that provide knowledge, skills, and understanding. The four disciplines allow the student to have a broad and rich experience in (a) art production, (b) art-criticism, (c) art history, and (d) aesthetics. This theoretical approach provides multiple perspectives from which to view art and it emphasizes active involvement from the student and the teacher. This is a comprehensive yet flexible approach that takes into account the differences in teacher training as well as a student's preparation and background (Dobbs, 1992).

With DBAE, Dobbs (1992) stated, students become increasingly sophisticated with each art encounter as they move from simple to more complex processing of knowledge, skill, and understanding. Dobbs further explained that each content

specialist, regardless of their function in the art community, was responsible to demonstrate to students how the combined disciplines created various levels of art experience. He contended that the multifaceted approach of DBAE is equivalent to the process that artists describe as the creative process—a process that is informed by a variety of ideas and inspirations.

Using the DBAE framework is valuable in the examination of the proposed legislative action that will alter the theoretical underpinnings from which art education is designed in the community colleges.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions shall apply:

Course— “Means an organized pattern of instruction on a specified subject offered by a community college pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b) or (c) of section 55002” (CCCCO, 2013, p. 31).

Skill-based course—A course in which a student attains proficiency or skills through supervised repetition and practice.

Course repetition—“Occurs when a student who has previously received an evaluative symbol in a credit course, as set forth in section 55023, re-enrolls in that course and receives an evaluative symbol” (CCCCO, 2013, p. 32). Title 5 regulations specify the circumstances under which a student may repeat a course.

Repeatable course—Per the CCCCCO, starting January 2013 district policy may designate only three types of courses as repeatable: (a) “courses for which repetition is necessary to meet the major requirements of California State University (CSU) or University of California (UC) for completion of a bachelor’s degree,” (b) intercollegiate

athletics, and (c) intercollegiate academic or vocational competition” (Title 5 California Code of Regulation as cited in CCCCCO, 2013, p. 39).

Active participatory courses—These are “courses where individual study or group assignments are the basic means by which learning objectives are obtained” (CCCCO, 2013, p. 31). Students are limited to four aggregate semester enrollments in active participatory courses.

Courses that are related in content—“Are those courses with similar primary educational activities in which skill levels or variations are separated into distinct courses with different student learning outcomes for each level or variation” (CCCCO, 2013, p. 32).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study is circumscribed by several assumptions, limitation, and delimitations. The broadest assumption is that the methodology used in this qualitative study is effective and appropriate to solicit descriptive and powerful narratives that capture the experiences of VAPA instructors. Another assumption is that the method of collecting information will add dimension to knowledge and inform policy and practice in a meaningful way.

The recruitment of the participants was limited to four community colleges; all located in Southern California. Participants in this study were fulltime, tenure-track or tenured visual and performing art instructors who have been teaching at their colleges for at least 5 years. All the participants were asked to contact the researcher to participate in this study. Therefore, it could be argued that the participants in this study might have prior dispositions or prejudices on this matter. Conversely, participants were also made

aware that the researcher is the Dean of Fine Arts at a community college. As such, participants may experience some reservations in speaking openly and candidly about their perspectives.

Another limitation of this study is the relatively small sample of participants. While it is reasonable to assume that the information gathered reflect the experiences of a group of VAPA instructors, the data collected is not intended to represent the experiences of all VAPA instructors teaching in community colleges across the state.

This study explored how state-initiated curriculum changes would likely influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning. The study was guided by questions that specifically pertain to the VAPA disciplines. Possible connections or comparisons to other discipline areas (e.g., physical education and career technical education) that were also subject to the elimination of course repetition will be left unexplored.

Finally, this study did not seek to report on the impact or outcomes of this regulatory change on VAPA students (i.e., persistence or transfer rate as VAPA majors), it looked only at the VAPA instructors' experiences in addressing state-initiated curricular changes.

Significance of the Study

While several studies tend to highlight broad educational reforms, there are few studies specific to arts education that address VAPA instructors' attitudes and concerns about educational policy changes, their immediate effects, and how changes have positively or negatively impacted them. Swings in education policy tend to mirror the intellectual, social, economic, and political reality of the nation (Symcox, 2002). Therefore, educational policy changes will continue to alter the educational landscape. It

is thus important to have research that seeks to know how these changes impact higher education and those who are entrusted to design the curricula and teach the subject matter. This study aims to add depth to the often hasty calls for legislative changes in education policy. It is the aim of this dissertation to bring forth the voices of the arts instructors and their critical perspectives in order to gain understanding of the totality of the effect of implementing educational changes.

It is the intention of this research to draw attention to arts policy and practice. Substantive information from VAPA instructors can expand understanding and add dimension to the often one-sided perspective in legislative changes. Effecting policy changes requires understanding the underpinnings of the VAPA disciplines. Using the DBAE lens will add a critical perspective about the nature of arts education. The important information gathered from this research can assist in reframing discussion about the place for arts education.

Conclusion

The elimination of course repetition is an example of educational policy that was not grounded on the understanding of the unique nature of arts education. The lack of an accurate insight into the teaching of the VAPA makes it easy to overlook the constraints that are placed on the instructors and the students.

Models of sound educational practices should inform and drive educational initiatives and policies. Sweeping educational policy changes that fail to take into consideration existing practices, resources, and proper professional development run the risk of experiencing inconsistent implementation (Darlington, 2008) and possibly failure.

This research aims to provide the vital perspectives of the arts instructors in order to appreciate in its totality the effects of educational policy change.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review explores how visual and performing arts instructors perceive their role as the discipline experts. Emphasis is placed on how instructors make meaning of their roles as teaching artists and the curricular issues of arts pedagogy in an increasingly state-regulated academic environment. Visual and performing arts instructors teaching skill-based courses have unique needs and demands due to the nature of their discipline. Few studies examine how these instructors experience state-initiated policy changes that impact the way in which they teach to their subject area. This literature review also examines education policy implementation models including community of practice and critical approach in order to understand the effects of state-initiated curricular changes on visual and performing arts instructors.

The Value of Arts Education

In recent years, with a progressive emphasis on accountability and a standard-driven approach to education (Goodwin, 2000; Koff, 1999; Marché, 2002), discussions on the value and the place the arts occupies in education have run the gamut from improving test scores in other subjects areas to developing imagination, creativity, and overall mental capacity in students (Eisner, 2000; O'Brien, 2007). The attitudes toward arts education are disparate as teachers, administrators, policymakers, and community

members struggle to define a place for the arts among other core subjects competing for limited funding dollars (Marché, 2002).

Educators and art supporters argue that the arts contextualize one's cultural and social identity and heritage (Koff, 1999; Laney, 2007). Koff further argued that most cultures live within the context of their art and participation in the arts is critical in perpetuating cultural membership. In works of art, people find cultural history and the values and experiences of entire communities (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). The learning of the arts is therefore the learning of a major form of human communication (Dobbs, 1992; O'Brien, 2007; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008) that connects people and their experiences.

In the learning of arts, students acquire understanding of nonverbal forms of communication that can transmit powerful messages about ideas, emotions, and values that shape their world (Davis, 1999; Dobbs, 1992). According to Zakaras and Lowell (2008) the language of art, unlike other forms of communication, has the potential to affect the full range of human faculties both in the art creator as well as in the individual who is experiencing the work of art.

The benefits of learning to read the language of art has prompted many to examine the role of art in enhancing the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, problem-solving capacity, and other behavioral and psychological traits (Dobbs, 1992; Eisner, 2000; Hamblen, 1993). The intrinsic benefits of arts education continue to provoke debate regarding the content for instruction, the goals, and the objectives of arts education (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Gibson (2010) described the ongoing tension as a struggle between the desire to nurture creativity and the stifling tendencies of organizations. Organizations such as schools and colleges, art supporters, art critics, and

policymakers have different ideas about what should be the purpose and mission of arts education (Eisner, 2000).

The debates over what constitutes appropriate and substantive core arts curriculum is far from settled. Koff (1999) and Hatton (2003) framed debates on core curricula as that of having much larger implications. Instead of being solely about content, these debates are about what should constitute the knowledge bases and the promulgation of the values of society.

Literature on the content of arts education remains widely dispersed. Thus, DBAE as a theoretical lens helps to clarify how postsecondary arts education interconnects the four main foundational areas of art that provide knowledge, skills, and understanding. Dobbs (1992) argued that the four disciplines allow the student to have a broad and rich experience in art production, art criticism, art history, and aesthetics. It is valuable to use this theory to understand the requirements of designing substantive arts curricula.

Brief History of Arts Curricula

New curriculum theories and program development approaches have oftentimes made quick and dramatic entrances onto the academic stage only to be followed by unceremonious exits. Curriculum development is widely understood as an ever-changing process that more often than not has been molded to react to societal demands and changes (Clark, 1991; Lucas, 2006; Symcox, 2002). In the last century there have been numerous educational reforms, curriculum commissions, and national commissions that aimed to direct the course of curriculum design and development in the American educational system. According to Symcox (2002), these successive curricular reforms

follow a cyclical pattern that mirrors the intellectual, social, economic, and political changes of the nation.

In the case of arts education there have also been various advocates that presented arts curricula conceptions that were deemed to be fitting for their times. Three major curriculum orientations frequently referenced in literature point to (a) child or learner-oriented, (b) society-oriented, and (c) subject- or knowledge-oriented (Clark, 1991). According to Clark (1991), these three orientations most commonly characterize the swings in school policies and practices in response to the intellectual, social, economic, and political realities of the time. Around Clark's child-society-subject matter triumvirate, disparate philosophical and theoretical approaches converged and provided the background information to understand the arrival of discipline-based arts education.

The Child-Centered Orientation

In the child-centered orientation, the content and structure of the academic program was dictated by the expressed needs, interests, and goals of the student and thus, understanding the psychological, emotional, and intellectual development of the learner was the paramount focus (Clark, 1991). This orientation widely known as the "progressive education" or "child-centered education" was commonly associated with John Dewey. For Dewey (1897), "the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself" (p. 93). Dewey argued that the educational process has two sides—a psychological component and a sociological component. The child's own instincts and powers were the starting point of all education and knowledge of social conditions that were necessary to interpret the child's instincts, tendencies, and powers. These two sources were the key

components of child learning. The child-centered approach focused on the teacher–student interaction rather than the planning of determined content (Clark, 1991). Helping each student develop his or her personal abilities and capabilities in art expression was the goal of this art education construct. The child-centered orientation remained a highly popular approach for art educators to teach their subject area for many generations (Clark, 1991).

Society-Centered Orientation

In society-centered orientation, the focus of learning activities was dependent on the needs of local, regional, or national groups. Evidence of a society-centered curriculum can be seen in the mid-1700s when a young and emerging United States was in need of addressing political and industrial needs through the public school system (Clark, 1991). Addressing the group welfare or community needs took center stage. The values, assumptions, interests, and ideas held by the society were preplanned in flexible curriculum objectives. This orientation, “in several forms, has been favored in school programs at times when people’s attention has been focused upon significant local or national economic or social problems” (Clark, 1991, p. 3).

Arts education has traversed through several cyclical patterns of society-centered orientation. In the late 1800s, the emphasis on the “drawing” curricula had the intent to improve design qualities in the American product. More recent examples of society-centered arts construct can also be seen in the advocacy of multicultural or multiethnic art studies as well as environmentally or eco-conscious art projects (Clark, 1991).

Subject-Centered Orientation

In subject-centered orientation, the emphasis was placed on the organized disciplines of knowledge determined as the principal or fundamental knowledge needed for the education of a well-rounded citizen (Clark, 1991). Considered by many scholars to be the oldest form of curriculum organization, the learning activities focused on information, methods, and techniques of separate disciplines. Elements of subject-centered curricula orientation can be seen as far back as the colonial period (Lucas, 2006). However, an orientation toward disciplined-based curricula gained momentum following World War II and through the 1950s and the 1960s as a reaction to perceived geo-political threats (the Soviet Union and Japan) and a heightened sense that the United States was falling behind militarily, economically, and educationally (Clark, 1991; Symcox, 2002).

The DBAE framework, a contemporary arts education construct, included emphases on “perceptual and conceptual inquiry to develop students’ capacities for improving skills in art making activities and improved understanding of related studies including aesthetics, art criticism, and art history” (Clark, 1991, p. 4). This discipline-based orientation was congruent with fine arts studies in institutions of higher education and art schools where emphasis was placed on a systematic improvement of art making skills (Clark, 1991). The DBAE framework, supported by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts, gained acceptance as a conceptual model for arts education (Davis, 1999; Dobbs, 1992; Eisner, 1987; Geahigan, 1997; Hamblen, 1993; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Components of Arts Curriculum

Clark (1991) contended that emphasis on one arts education orientation does not necessarily preclude consideration for educational goals addressed by the other orientations. Furthermore, a well-rounded arts education curriculum should dedicate relatively equal aspects to addressing the child-, society-, and subject-centered orientation. In 1983, Clark and Zimmerman defined arts curriculum as:

a planned sequence of learning experiences about art content that includes art-related student and teacher tasks and outcomes that take place in environments designed for art learning. To construct and implement art curricula based on this definition, a complex of planned interrelationships among art content, student, and teacher tasks and outcomes about art, and supportive educational settings would be specified. (Clark, 1991, p. 6)

In addition, an arts curriculum should likewise address “teachers’ roles and methodologies related to specified learning experiences about art, students’ levels of development and readiness for art learning, and students’ art tasks and outcomes” (Clark, 1991, p. 7). The hallmarks of a comprehensive arts education curriculum, as advanced by Clark, should establish interrelationships between the three commonly identified educational orientations (child-centered, society-centered, and subject-centered) and the four curriculum components (student, teacher, content, and setting).

Discipline-Based Art Education

Clark (1991) expounded that arts education, as early as the 1940s, had diverged from the mainstream general education and moved toward a more content and structured-centered approach. In addition, arts education remained focused on child-centeredness while other subject areas were fast adopting discipline-centered curricula. Art educators and advocates needed to respond to the momentum that a discipline-centered curricula

model was gaining, thus the emergence of DBAE was perceived as right for its time (Clark, 1991).

The educational shift that was taking place was to move away from the child-centered or progressive construct to approaches that emphasized fields of study as disciplines. The theoretical underpinnings of the DBAE had already been set in the 1960s and 1970s in discussions about art instructional content and program organization and presentation in schools. The national need and mood in the 1980s was ripe for the emergence of the DBAE (Clark, 1991).

DBAE is a theoretical approach that derives content from four foundational areas of art that provide knowledge, skills, and understanding (Dobbs, 1992). The interrelation between the four disciplines allows the student to have a broad and rich experience in (a) art production, (b) art-criticism, (c) art history, and (d) aesthetics. The DBAE provided multiple perspectives from which to view art and it emphasized active involvement from the student and the teacher (Dobbs, 1992).

In 1987, the Getty Center of Education in the Arts commissioned an issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* to expound more extensively about the meaning of DBAE. Gilbert A. Clark, Michael D. Day, and W. Dwaine Greer, three prominent art educators, asserted in this key paper the characteristics of a DBAE program:

Rationale

1. The goal of discipline-based art education is to develop students' abilities to understand and appreciate art. This involves a knowledge of the theories and contexts of art and abilities to respond to as well as to create art.
2. Art is taught as an essential component of general education and as a foundation for specialized study.

Content

1. Content for instruction is derived primarily from the disciplines of aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production. These disciplines deal with (a)

conceptions of the nature of art, (b) bases for valuing and judging art, (c) contexts in which art has been created, and (d) processes and techniques for creating art.

2. Content for study is derived from broad range of the visual arts, including folk, applied, and fine arts from Western and non-Western cultures and from ancient to contemporary times.

Curricula

1. Curricula are written with sequentially organized and articulated content at all grade levels.

2. Works of art are central to the organization of curricula and the integration of content from the disciplines.

3. Curricula are structured to reflect comparable concern and respect for each of the four art disciplines.

4. Curricula are organized to increase student learning and understanding. This involves a recognition of appropriate development levels.

Context

1. Full implementation is marked by systematic, regular art instruction on a district-wide basis, art education expertise, administrative support, and adequate resources.

2. Student achievement and program effectiveness are confirmed by appropriate evaluation criteria and procedures. (Clark, 1991, pp. 8-9)

Through this paper, the authors affirmed not only the goals of art education and its subject content worthiness but also its importance in the overall educational construct.

DBAE and the Ensuing Years

Since the emergence of DBAE, a number of curricula have been used in arts education programs that can be viewed as containing expressions of DBAE curriculum construct (Clark, 1991).

Schwartz (1997) presented a study of the effects of using DBAE staff development in the teaching of art courses in the State of Alaska. The DBAE framework was used because it was consistent with the objectives of the National Art Education Association and the National Standards for Arts Education. The author also found that DBAE provided a framework to build on and expand art lessons. At the conclusion of the study, the author noted that an increasing number of arts educators were receptive to

developing a comprehensive art program using the DBAE framework for the Alaskan school districts. This study showed that art educators were making concerted efforts to promulgate the DBAE framework. It would be very informative to learn whether the implementation of DBAE has had any significant and long-lasting effect on the teachers that participated in this study.

McNeal (1997) presented a similar study on DBAE in a Canadian Arctic Fine Arts program for indigenous college students. In this study, the author used the DBAE framework to design the curriculum and to detail the teaching and learning process. The author concluded that the DBAE principles provided a systematic and structured dimension to the study. McNeal did not offer any discussion on how the arts program could be sustained and incorporated into the core curricula.

Hamblen (1993) argued that the DBAE theory and practice since its inception has already taken on a new form as a result of directional changes in policy-making and funding. Additionally, Hamblen contended that DBAE has evolved into a “Neo-DBAE.” The Neo-DBAE takes into account the increasingly multicultural aspect of the student population and is more responsive to the needs of teachers and students (Hamblen, 1993).

More recently, Christiansen (2007) studied a selected group of students who graduated from Florida State University (FSU) when the DBAE paradigm was used and taught. Her study looked into what were the most successful aspects and useful qualities of DBAE that art practitioners continue to use and whether the DBAE had any relevance in current arts programs. In her phenomenological research study she interviewed 11 art teachers who had been trained in the DBAE approach. Since graduating from FSU, these art teachers expressed overwhelming support for the continued use of DBAE in their art

programs from elementary to high school levels. From her study, Christiansen concluded that DBAE, at least aspects of DBAE, continue to be relevant in today's arts education.

It is important, however, to reveal that Christiansen's (2007) study had several limitations. The sample of her study was small and limited to students who studied at FSU. In addition, none of the art teachers she interviewed taught at the postsecondary level. This makes it difficult to assess whether all art teachers who received DBAE training would share similar experiences.

For two decades, the DBAE was well-received by many art educators for refocusing attention toward learning experiences in art that are based upon the study of the four foundational disciplines engaged by professional art scholars. However, it was precisely in this area that the DBAE was criticized by its opponents (Clark, 1991). Some critics contended that the overemphasis on rational and structured content can lead to fragmentation and a lack of integration in art experiences. Debates over what may constitute a holistic art education curricula continue to move side-by-side with the ever-changing expectations on how to help students develop personally, socially, and cognitively through the study of the arts (Clark, 1991).

Curricular Issues in the Arts in Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions typically determine the content, scope, and course objectives of their curriculum and other pedagogical matters (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). However, little information is available on how the arts are taught at the community college and university levels. There is no specific coordination across higher education institutions. As discipline experts, art instructors take into account a number of factors in the design of the curricula. Factors that exert influence over instructor's decision can

range from meeting their institution's general education requirements and the national accreditation standards to the availability of appropriate facilities (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

Another factor that art instructors take into account in the design of arts curriculum content and how they teach to the learning objectives is the audience, the students. Art instructors teach to a large population of students who take art courses out of self-interest or to meet the college's general education requirement. For these students, instructors design courses that have a minimum art production component (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Typically, non-majors take survey courses that cover a large span of history in a chronological way. Then, they may move on to take courses that focus on more specific areas.

Preparing Arts Majors

The focus of arts instruction in higher education is that of educating and training arts professionals—those who will go on to create, perform, teach, or prepare to be administrators in the arts, according to Zakaras and Lowell (2008). Zakaras and Lowell further contended that in the preparation of these professionals, particularly those whose aim is to be professional artists or specialists, instruction is typically weighted toward performance or production.

Zakaras and Lowell (2008) as well as Harris (1997) found that visual and performing art instructors tend to favor those students who exhibit the potential to become professional artists. The rationale behind this practice is not unique to the arts, but of most academic departments. The belief is that without students majoring in the

arts there will be no art major altogether (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Thus, much more formal and sequential learning of the arts is reserved for the art majors.

Accordingly, in preparing those who intend to be art majors, Zakaras and Lowell (2008) further found that art instructors do incorporate all the elements of a comprehensive art study. The four areas of art discipline—art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics—are present in the design of visual and performing arts curricula. In spite of the wide range of arts program emphasis, Zakaras and Lowell found that there continues to be a pronounced orientation toward DBAE.

Cultivating Arts Appreciators

Students who enroll in art classes in college as non-majors show a significantly higher rate of participation in art events throughout their lives. Data provided by the National Endowment of the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) for 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008 indicated that arts education in adults not only led to higher levels of arts participation but it was in itself a mode of arts participation (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Findings from the SPPA, the nation's largest and most nuanced periodic survey on arts participation, stated:

Nearly 70 percent of those who had any arts education as an adult attended a benchmark event in the years preceding each survey, while 28 percent of Americans who had no arts education as an adult attended a benchmark event. (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011, p. 13)

Adult art classes are closely associated to higher levels of arts participation. The analysis provided by SPPA also indicated that although it may appear that adult art lessons or classes have strong association with benchmark art attendance, it was likely that these adults had also received childhood arts education.

Students who have received arts education have a higher likelihood of pursuing personal creation or performance as well as seeking deeper engagement with the arts (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Arts participation is grounded in arts education. Participation in the arts requires an understanding and appreciation of the many modes of expression, aesthetics, cultural and historical contexts, and symbols contained in the arts (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). Arts education, at the very minimum, cultivates art appreciators and is the most promising pathway to develop and maintain an audience for the visual and performing arts. Without a growing arts audience, there would be little need for cultural infrastructure such as museums, theaters, concert halls, galleries, art festivals, and even more reduced opportunities for artists to receive the training and the education needed to produce the art to be consumed and appreciated by the audience (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011).

Teaching Artists

According to Thornton (2005), the terms “artist teacher” or “teaching artist” are frequently used to describe someone who produces, performs, and exhibits as an artist but also teaches the arts. Art instructors in the community colleges are often identified as teaching artists precisely because they are engaged and committed to both endeavors. It is important to examine the role of the teaching artist in order to understand how they negotiate the challenges and the tension they face in interrelating art, education, and art education (Thornton, 2005).

Teaching artists tend to receive their professional preparation from a college or university (Saraniero, 2009). Teaching artists who received college or university training were more effective at integrating teaching and their artistic pursuits (Saraniero, 2009).

This is not necessarily the case for teaching artists who received training from school districts. Teaching artists who were trained by their school districts tended to be less involved with their own artistic endeavors, spending more time on instructional development, classroom management, and meeting the state standards (Saraniero, 2009; Thornton, 2005).

As to the training teaching artists received to teach their subject area, Saraniero (2009) said they learned to teach by the “doing.” Teaching artists do not usually receive pedagogical training in the teaching of their art form. Teaching artists tended to follow the master–apprentice model of teaching that they received (Saraniero, 2009; Thornton, 2005). Thornton and Saraniero found that teaching artists often model their teaching styles after teachers or mentors they have studied or worked with as students. Teaching artists shared similar characteristics as those artists who historically engaged in an education and employment system that originated from the master–apprentice relationship (Thornton, 2005). The master–apprentice relationship is very much in practice today as it has been for generations.

In the teaching of visual and performing art classes, the traditional pedagogical approach that includes lecture, demonstrations, exams, and assignments does not necessarily contribute to the development of performance skills (Wagner & Smith, 1991). When the production or performance skill is unsatisfactory, the student needs to repeat the skill until it is completed satisfactorily. Even if the student failed, through repeated practice they receive additional instruction and continue to hone their skills until they have mastered it and can move on to the next level (Wagner & Smith, 1991).

Studio productions and live performances have historically been an integral part of art education as they provide a frame of reference for learning aesthetics, art critique, and art history (Sabol, 2004). There is little research that addresses the pedagogical issues surrounding the studio-oriented teaching of arts. Spicanovic (2000) explained that within the context of studio teaching at the university-level, art instructors need to teach beyond the presentation of form and content of the work. The teaching of color theory, brushwork, composition, size, scale, and space should contribute to the overall understanding of painting. The author noted that art instructors should engage students in extending their discussions beyond making connections between the medium and their ideas. In addition, discussions should include the raising of questions that promote critical evaluation and thinking.

While Spicanovic (2000) presented a more cohesive role of the teaching artists, Thornton (2005) argued that the role of the teaching artist can be problematic in practice. There is a general lack of understanding of the dual role of the teaching artists. Thornton argued that the value of the teacher as a practicing artist is not generally appreciated nor regarded as a valuable asset to student learning. Instead, the perception is that there is potentially a conflict of interest. He said, the artist's tendency to focus on students' art production may possibly lead to the neglect in the teacher to present general knowledge about art. In addition, there was a general perception that the teaching artist's own artistic interest or skill was often what was emphasized in the instructional content (Sabol, 2004).

Educational Reforms and the Diminishing Role of the Arts

In 1994, with the passage of *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, the importance of arts in education has been recognized by state and federal agencies as essential to a comprehensive education, and arts education has been accorded the echelon and acknowledged as a core subject (Davis, 1999; Goodwin, 1998, 2000; Hatfield, 1999). However, amid unsettled discussions about the aims of arts education and under the pressures of a results-driven educational environment, art educators have taken on state and national standards and scientific-rational assessment methods to evaluate arts education for fear of marginalizing the arts in times of shifting funding priorities (Eisner, 2000; Marché, 2002).

After the passage of NCLB, state departments of education have increasingly exercised a more prominent role in the governance of educational programs and funding in K-12, imposing spending restrictions and stipulating proficiency benchmarks (Goodwin, 1998; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008).

The position of the arts in education began to decline (Koff, 1999) as pressure for higher tests scores in non-arts subject areas rose. As Zakaras and Lowell (2008) contended, art instruction takes more resources and time to develop than the more narrowly focused subject areas and is considered the least cost-effective investment in the overall education of students (Koff, 1999). As funding was directed to subject areas that are more conducive to testing and in which test score results are much more accessible, the educational landscape became increasingly hostile to arts education and its importance as a core component of the general curriculum was significantly reduced. And, as Eisner (2000) explained, “since the arts are not tested, they can be neglected with

greater immunity than those fields that are” (p. 5). The results of a deficient arts education at the K-12 level became evident when students enrolled in visual and performing art courses at the postsecondary level.

In recent years in postsecondary education, there have been a number of educational reforms in the areas of content standards, curriculum, and assessment methods that have been implemented to better measure student achievement. Ironically, there is little information available to answer questions about what have been the general effects of reform on the arts (Sabol, 2004).

Goodwin (1998) and Sabol (2004) noted that visual and performing arts instructors are increasingly under significant pressure to implement measures of accountability often dictated by policymakers and educational reformers. At the same time, visual and performing arts instructors are perceived as the ones with the answers because they are responsible for the selection, design, development, implementation, interpretation, and assessment of learning objectives. However, as posited by Darlington (2008), successful implementation of a reform effort is not always the natural outcome. It takes concerted effort from educators to ensure that reform initiatives are carried out and sustained.

Flynn (2009) in her study of how teaching artists lead professional development in the arts found that in many instances, “even though they may work daily in schools, many teaching artists have never laid eyes on academic content standards, benchmarks, learning outcomes, and indicators, or other such curriculum documents” (p. 166). One of the recommendations that resulted from this study was to place more effort on

familiarizing teaching artists with learning standards so that connections can be made between curriculum and their art form.

Darlington (2008) argued that while education reformers and policymakers have a role to play in ensuring accountability and the attainment of broader educational goals, it is the classroom instructor who holds the most important position. It is the classroom instructor who exerts direct influence over students' learning. As such, they should be kept at the forefront of policy changes that impact their area of expertise (Darlington, 2008) rather than being recipients of reform policy in which they had no part in creating. Both Darlington and Flynn (2009) bring to light the rising trend of educational reform efforts jumping ahead of in-depth discussions on core curriculum and learning objectives. These calls for educational reforms and hasty implementations without adequate pedagogical preparation could result in changes that are not only unsustainable but potentially damaging to the overall educational context (Darlington, 2008).

Educational reforms have a better chance of having consequential and lasting impact if they are embedded in the curriculum (Darlington, 2008; Flynn, 2009). The curriculum is a valuable tool that has the means to transform (Darlington, 2008), to make adjustments in the learning objectives, assessments, teaching methods but most importantly, to impact students' learning. However, curriculum development is a resource and time-intensive enterprise and many educators would agree that instructors need time, consideration, and support in addressing the intricate aspects of curriculum development (Darlington, 2008).

Contemporary Dynamics of Education Policy and Implementation

Conceptions of Curricular Formation in Postsecondary Education

The rapidly escalating cost of postsecondary education has fueled discussions and raised questions at the state and national public policy arena about the value of various educational fields of study (Slaughter, 1997) as is currently the case with arts education. Cost-cutting discourse and restructuring narratives that were previously not principal to the discussions of postsecondary curricular formation are now shaping the curricula of disciplines and fields of study as cuts are made to specialized programs or departments (Slaughter 1997; Gumpert, 1993; Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993; Slaughter, 1993. Slaughter (1997) argued that postsecondary curricula formation is no longer an internal process and under the purview of colleges and universities. Further, the literature on curricula development has not taken into account organizations, associations, and other external groups to the academy who have other interests beyond the advancement of discipline knowledge (Slaughter, 1997).

Slaughter (1997) expounded that the conceptions of curricular formation in higher education is incomplete. There is an underlying assumption that curricula are under the sole and appropriate authority of faculty. Slaughter said:

Faculty experts are seen as generating curricula through research, scholarship, sometimes through service, and as disseminating it to students through teaching, Faculty are viewed as modifying or altering the curricula when student populations change, or perhaps when the structure of the labor market changes, although the processes and mechanisms of change are undefined (p. 493).

In the overall curricular formation, the unquestioned assumption is that faculty creates curricula. This conception of curricula development is problematic in the sense that higher education scholarship has not paid sufficient attention to other processes and

mechanisms that come to play. Slaughter posited that external pressures such as social movements, political imperatives of the professional class, and other external organizations are as much a part of the discourse on curricular scholarship.

The process of curricular formation is complex. Changes in demographics explained significantly the need for curricular changes in American universities (Slaughter, 1997). Many curricula scholars see curricula changes as a product of meeting the needs of new groups within the student population who have become stakeholders (Adelman, 1992; Conrad & Haworth, 1990; Levine, 1993; Slaughter, 1997). However, Slaughter argued that faculty and institutions of higher education are not keeping up with the curricular interests of students and community activists; instead, the impetus for changes in the curricula are brought on by social movements. Slaughter offered as examples of the formation of Black Studies and Women's Studies as originating from social movements that then made its way into the academy.

In the argument that curriculum change is a product of social movement, Slaughter (1997) further stated that current debates over the process of curriculum formation are being distorted in at least two ways. First, perceptions that the politicization of the curriculum is a new phenomenon, and secondly, the debates about curriculum focus are centered only on the humanities and the social sciences as if to suggest that the hard sciences are beyond reproach. Slaughter (1997) expounded that these perceptions are misguided as curriculum formation has always been contested.

To learn about the curriculum formation process, it is paramount to understand what visual and performing arts faculty consider as appropriate units or sequence of information and what they believe students need to know to be inducted into particular

fields (Slaughter, 1997). Slaughter stated the majority of curricula and teaching of a field are shaped by the requirements of the discipline and “the content of the discipline, which forms the basis of the curricula, is shaped by scholar-researchers, allegedly exploring the frontiers of knowledge, pushing back the boundaries of the unknown, and reporting their exploits in journals sanctioned by the discipline” (p. 499). The disciplines establish the boundaries of various fields and suggest habits of work. This discipline-based perspective is the source of faculty identity and expertise (Kuh and Whitt, 1998). This expertise or scholarship that defines the academic lives of faculty has increasingly become bureaucratic in nature and under the close scrutiny of local, state, and national agencies (Slaughter, 1997).

Education Policy Implementation

With education commanding large shares of local and state budgets, it is of no surprise that education policy demands are increasingly complex (Honig, 2006). The state-initiated policy on eliminating the course repetition option is an example of increasing state scrutiny and encroachment on discipline design as suggested by Slaughter (1997). It is thus critical to include in this literature review, research on educational policy implementation as a field of study. As expounded by Honig (2006), in educational policy:

“Implementability” and “success” are still essential policy outcomes, but they are not inherent properties of particular policies. Rather implementability and success are the product of interactions between policies, people, and places—the demands specific policies place on implementers; the participants in implementation and their starting beliefs, knowledge, and other orientations toward policy demands; and the places or contexts that help shape what people can and will do. (p. 2)

Implementation research helps to explain better implementation outcomes.

The education policy implementation process is taxing, unpredictable, difficult to control, and often prone to unintended consequences (Smylie & Evans, 2006). In a theoretical analysis of education policy implementation, Honig (2006) compiled contemporary education implementation studies to create a portrait of education policy implementation that aims to “build knowledge about what works for whom, where, when and why” (p. 4). In her analysis of education policy implementation research, Honig revealed that implementation research builds from lessons learned from the past but looks for much more nuanced, theory-based explanations of how implementation takes place.

For instance, in the early years of education policy implementation studies, researchers tended to focus on the strength of leadership and the robustness of the funding source as the two main pillars necessary to support a successful implementation. However, contemporary researchers of education policy implementation are taking a different look at such resources and instead arguing that “the importance of such resources varies depending on many factors, including what people already know and can do, the historical patterns of opportunity in particular jurisdictions, and the stakes associated with implementation outcomes” (Honig, 2006, p.19). Honig expounded that contemporary researchers are not after universal truths about implementation but rather they wish to uncover the complex interactions between particular policies, people, and places.

In general, scholarly reviews of education policy implementation research agree that the earliest policy designs of the Great Society period of the 1960s were largely top-down in orientation (Honig, 2006). In essence, policy makers developed policies to be carried out by the implementers. Policy designs during this period were mainly

distributive, categorical, and regulatory in nature (Honig, 2006). These policies are “aimed to help spread particular resources (generally funding) to groups or categories of students who met particular eligibility criteria and to ensure the appropriate use of resources as specified by policy makers” (Honig, 2006, p. 5). Remarkably, decades later, the state-initiated policy on eliminating course repetition in skill-based courses in the visual and performing arts continues to subscribe to this same policy implementation design.

Almost unanimously, researchers of the Great Society period found implementation failure across the board. Honig (2006) noted that schools and districts “tended not to put programs in place in ways that faithfully resembled policy designs or, in economic terms, that could be predicted by policy design” (p. 5). Several researchers argued that the reasons for the implementation failure can be attributed to conflicts between policy makers and implementers. New strategies such as coalition building among implementers, meaningful incentives, and clearer instructions were found to be important in bridging the gap between policy design and implementation (Honig, 2006).

Communities of Practice: Teacher Professional Community

Since the 1990s, researchers and scholars of education policy implementation have progressively contended that federal, state, and local policies require implementers to learn new ways of performing their work (Cohen & Barnes, 1993). Furthermore, state and district policy makers have put forth instruction plans that do not align with teachers’ existing practices (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Cohen & Hill, 2001; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). The result of poor alignment between education policy and pedagogical practices leads to “grafting” of new approaches onto existing practices without

meaningful changes to pedagogical principles (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Coburn, 2004; Cuban, 1993).

A growing body of studies suggests that the way teachers enact policy is interrelated to the strength of their professional communities (Coburn & Stein, 2006). Teachers from strong professional communities whose practices are incongruent with particular policies are more likely to deviate from policy makers' intentions (Gallucci, 2003). Coburn and Stein contend that when policy enters the instructional environment, it affects multiple and often overlapping existing communities that have defined norms of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and repertoires of practice. In many ways, policy seeks to disrupt or completely alter these existing practices. The communities are likely to respond by protecting and preserving their existing practices. How they respond to implementation policy depends on their history of practice (Coburn, 2001; Gallucci, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

The examination of community of practice in policy implementation is helpful in understanding the complex levels of interactions. Coburn and Stein (2006) examined two empirical studies to illustrate the community of practice perspective. In a 1998-1999 study of how teachers in an urban elementary school district in Northern California responded and implemented dramatic changes in state reading policy, Coburn and Stein found that the teachers' responses were critically linked to the nature of the relationship with their colleagues.

In this year-long ethnographic study, the researchers noted that the teachers came together in their own communities of practice with like-minded colleagues and jointly forged their practices. From the micro communities of teachers that were identified in

the study, some teachers agreed to incorporate the new texts into their lesson plans but essentially continued to maintain their existing practices. Others negotiated the changes and eventually shifted their practices to include some of the new strategies and framework from the state's new reading initiative. The researchers concluded that "ultimately neither community's practice was in alignment with the meaning reified in the text, or the approach promoted by policy makers" (Coburn & Stein, 2006, p. 36). The researchers further noted that the community of teachers had virtually no opportunity to connect, participate, or negotiate with the community of policy makers. The heavy reliance on boundary objects such as standards documents, subject area frameworks, and curricular materials (Coburn & Stein, 2006) led to poor alignment between policy and practice.

In the second empirical study, Coburn and Stein (2006) examined the system-wide implementation of the Balanced Literacy Program in a New York City school district. The researchers presented this 1996 study as an example of how an entire school district, which functions as complex and overlapping communities of practice, can align its practices with policy. District leaders created meaningful connections with the use of brokers, boundary objects, and boundary practices to align policy communities and school-level communities. The implementation of the Balanced Literacy Program went beyond the verbal sharing of pedagogical practices. During site visits, teachers could observe and talk to their professional counterparts and make meaningful connections to their own practices.

From this study, the researchers concluded that the Balanced Literacy Program framework was not used in the same exact way across the district rather, "it became a

point of focus around which meaning was negotiated” (p. 40). The district leadership acknowledged that the successful implementation of district policy was not a mere function of reaching full compliance instead, “local communities must, in the end, take responsibility for owning and negotiating the meaning of Balanced Literacy within their school” (p. 41). As the outcome of implementation was not to reach full compliance, this study underscored how new practices were seeded in this school district.

Coburn and Stein (2006) found that while policy makers may have the best intentions to design processes and accountability practices that look to make significant improvements to existing educational practices; ultimately, they do not and are not able to control how local communities’ response to changes. In other words, the existing practices are deeply entrenched, localized, and often tightly linked to previous practices (Coburn & Stein, 2006). This suggests that policy makers should not simply put forth changes to practices and expect them to be implemented. Instead, they should foster the conditions for communities of practice to develop their shift in practices (Coburn & Stein, 2006). The findings from this study further underscored Coburn and Stein’s assertion that in policy implementation local communities need to be given the opportunity to negotiate meaning in the alignment between policy and practice.

As argued by Coburn and Stein (2006), the strength of professional communities should not be underestimated. The processes and the dynamics between teacher communities and how they create and facilitate opportunities for implementation of new policies are essential if the hope is for the community to take ownership of the changes and incorporate them into their ongoing practices (Coburn & Stein, 2006). To introduce change to existing practices, policy makers need to include structures of participation

where negotiation of meaning can take place and allow the community to engage and construct their own understanding. Coburn and Stein cautioned however, that these structures of participation must be meaningful where participants can create a shared understanding and have some record of their work with others or else the shift in practices remains unsustainable.

Critical Approach to Education Policy Implementation

Dumas and Anyon (2006) contended that critical analyses must also be applied when exploring the dynamics of education policy implementation. The authors argued that the scholarship of educational policy implementation cannot be fully understood without considering the broader social and ideological discourses. In their study of the *Abbot v. Burke* (1981) case, Dumas and Anyon (2006) underscored the inextricable links between education policy implementation to the larger political, economic and cultural processes within specific communities.

In *Abbot v. Burke*, advocates for education finance equity made the following argument:

[The] life chances of urban poor children were limited by their lack of access to an education that would prepare them to compete with their more well-to-do suburban peers; the inequitable funding of education deprived poor people of the quality education and thereby relegated them to lives of poverty. (Anyon, 1997 in Dumas & Anyon, 2006, p. 158)

In the 1981 lawsuit on behalf of 20 plaintiffs, it was contended that the state's public education system relied too heavily on local property taxes and, as such, denied students from poor districts adequate education (Dumas & Anyon, 2006). For its part, the state claimed that "educational inequities result from sociopolitical factors, such as fiscal mismanagement, poor school leadership, and unstable home environments in which

children receive inadequate parental guidance” (Dumas & Anyon, 2006, p. 159).

Following several years of increased educational inequality, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in 1990 that the state failed to meet its constitutional requirement to provide educational funding for New Jersey’s urban districts and ordered equalization of funding between suburban and urban districts (Dumas & Anyon, 2006).

Following the court ruling, the state legislators failed every attempt to meet the equalization funding requirement. Several initiatives, such as raising taxes to improve curriculum standards, were proposed but each time the state failed to fully fund or implement parts of the law. Even though the state continues to be found at fault for failing to implement equalization of funding, there is little support from the middle to upper-class residents to implement the court decision (Dumas & Anyon, 2006).

Dumas and Anyon (2006) illuminated in their analysis of this case that several lessons can be learned about this education policy implementation. Through the Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, Dumas and Anyon (2006) made “visible the manifestations of race in everyday life, specifically the ways in which people of color remain subjugated” (p. 155). The authors expounded that legal decisions and their resulting policies do not need to explicitly refer to race to have direct effects on race as well as on socioeconomic status. Dumas and Anyon contended that oftentimes policies on curriculum, school funding, and teacher training are crafted in ways that do not make any reference to race and yet there are clear consequences on people who belong to communities of color.

Data collected in the early years of the *Abbot v. Burke* case showed that in New Jersey, in the mid-1990s, racial segregation correlated with poverty concentration and low school funding (Anyon, 1997 in Dumas & Anyon, 2006). The poor urban people of

color had little political capital and practically no recourse in the legislature. Dumas and Anyon (2006) expounded that without adequate funding and access to educational opportunities these urban centers were destined for further economic decline. The authors warned that such racist and classist representation of the urban space served to further enforce the perception that education is a commodity and, as such, the poor people of color who cannot afford it have to do without.

The critical perspective that Dumas and Anyon (2006) offered in the examination of the *Abbot v. Burke* case draws close parallel to the state-initiated changes on course repetition in visual and performing arts education. As Dumas and Anyon demonstrated in their study of this case, race and class issues need to be carefully considered in education policy implementation.

Framing the Problem in Education Policy Implementation

For years, implementation research scholars have studied the intricate relationships between policy, people, and places (Honig, 2006) to deepen their understanding of implementation and policy consequences in specific ways (McLaughlin, 2006). Early studies of policy implementation tended to focus on the technical aspects of the policy and the implementer's capacity to carry out the directives of the policy. More recently, contemporary policy implementation researchers maintained that understanding the norms, values, and beliefs of the individuals within an institution might in fact trump the technical aspects of the policy (McLaughlin, 2006). However, while both applications of research help build knowledge about policy implementation, McLaughlin (2006) argued that the framing of the policy problem is arguably the most critical decision in the development of a policy. The establishment of "the problem" sets the

pathway for policy development which then excludes alternative views or conceptualizations of the problem. In other words, assumptions “about the nature of the policy problem determine the policy solutions pursued and the logic of action advanced by a policy” (McLaughlin, 2006, p. 210). Implicitly, this means that ideas about preferred solutions have ways of shaping policy (McLaughlin, 2006).

In education, the framing of the problem is an area of particular contention. McLaughlin (2006) reasoned that disagreements on how the problem is framed are intrinsic in the education policy community because of the contested terrain of governance and the people-reliant processes. Furthermore, McLaughlin (2006) argued that policy problems in education change over time and create new issues. For instance, addressing teacher’s professional development to improve classroom instruction may in turn create new issues if the demand for resources exceeds the availability of supply. Similarly, the shift to high-stakes testing and accountability measures may show improvement in student achievement; however, along with the gains are the increases in the number of student dropouts (McLaughlin, 2006).

Education policy implementation researchers are starting to pay closer attention to the critical function of the local system (i.e. the schools and the districts) in how policies are implemented, carried out, and sustained (Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; McLaughlin, 2006; Spillane, 1996). McLaughlin (2006) argued that,

[research] into the actions, values, and thoughts of implementers shows that implementation is not about mindless compliance to a mandate or policy directive, and that implementation shortfalls are not just cases of individual resistance, incompetence, or capability. Rather, implementation involves a process of sense making that implicates an implementer’s knowledge base, prior understanding, and beliefs about the best course of action (p. 215).

Implementers' knowledge matters to implementation outcomes. Proper alignment between implementers' knowledge of and experience with policy goals decreases the chance of lethal mutations (McLaughlin, 2006) in the implementation outcome.

The critical perspective that McLaughlin (2006) offered on the implementation research speaks to the state-initiated changes on course repetition in visual and performing arts education. The framing of the policy problem in education policy implementation is seldom linear or uncomplicated as in the case of eliminating repetition for skill based courses in the arts. As McLaughlin explained, more attention needs to be given to the link between existing practices and policy processes.

Conclusion

To explore how visual and performing arts instructors experience the effects of state-initiated curricular changes, this literature review encompassed a body of research that included arts curricula components and design, the role of teaching artists, and the field study on education policy implementation.

Organized to offer a historical perspective of how art curricula evolved in response to societal changes, demands, and challenges, this literature review discussed the arrival of the DBAE as a dominant framework from which to understand the role of arts education as an academic discipline in its own right. To this backdrop, the role of visual and performing arts instructors was incorporated to shed light on how arts knowledge-building takes place in postsecondary education. Delving further into the role of teaching artists, focus was placed on how visual and performing instructors perceived their roles as discipline experts and curators of arts pedagogy and curricula.

Next, this literature review turned to explore the contemporary challenges in the construction of postsecondary curricula as it resides in highly contested political, social, and economic arenas. Lastly, the body of literature on education policy implementation is explored to shed light on the challenges of aligning policy and practice.

Exploration of the body of literature in anticipation for this dissertation underscores the limited research on how visual and performing arts instructors make meaning of their roles as discipline experts in an increasingly state-regulated academic environment. This dissertation intends to bring forth their voices so that they may be included as part of the larger discussion on arts educational goals that are hindered by resource constraints.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the arts discipline, repeated arts learning experiences not only increase the likelihood of arts engagement later on in life (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Zakaras & Lowell, 2008) but also build and enhance skill mastery in arts production (Wagner & Smith, 1991). With each art encounter, students become increasingly sophisticated as they move from simple to more complex processing of knowledge, skill, and understanding (Dobbs, 1992). The DBAE framework suggests that visual and performing art instructors, through the sharing of conceptual tools, materials, instruments, and methods of inquiry, help students become familiar with the outlook and experience of a seasoned practitioner of the arts (Dobbs, 1992). In this study, I presume that in the teaching of VAPA classes, the instructor encourages multiple repetition and building of skills. Through repeated practices students receive additional instruction and continue to hone their skills until they have mastered it to move on to the next level (Wagner & Smith, 1991). The traditional pedagogical approach that includes lecture, exams, and assignments does not necessarily contribute to the development of performance skills or arts production. Therefore, the state-initiated action to eliminate of course repetition very likely affects students' access to arts learning experiences particularly if they hope to

develop a set of skills and an acceptable level of mastery.

This study examines how state-initiated curriculum changes were likely to influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts. This study aims to give voice to VAPA instructors, to describe their experiences in addressing state-initiated curriculum changes, and to contribute to the limited research on understanding the challenges of sustaining the development and progression of arts education. The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How are arts instructors redesigning the arts curricula in light of new state educational policies on eliminating course repetition?
2. How do arts instructors see these state-initiated policy changes impacting their teaching practices?
3. How do arts instructors anticipate state-initiated curriculum changes impacting the access to arts learning for students with limited preparation in the arts?

General Methodological Design and Defense of Method Chosen

Qualitative research fosters particular ways of thinking about a problem through questions like why, how, or what, allowing the researcher to uncover the meaning people attribute to their shared experiences, situations, circumstances, or interactions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Qualitative studies are generally conducted from three main theoretical points of view: post-positivist, interpretive, and critical (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Examining the perceptions of VAPA instructors and how they experience state-initiated curriculum changes align well with the critical approach. Hesse-Biber and Leavy explained that the critical methodological approach of research views the world from a power-laden context and environment with an orientation toward social justice.

The legislative action to eliminate course repetition and its effects on arts teaching and curriculum is an educational issue that has ramifications on access to arts education in higher education. Given that the aim of this study was to understand how VAPA instructors perceived this regulatory action, their perspectives offer an invaluable insight and understanding of arts education and the constraints placed on the instructors and the students.

To understand how VAPA instructors construct their professional identity in relation to the political and instructional context, a social constructivist approach was used. In using a constructivist inquiry, the focus was placed on the participant's view, their setting and context, and the meaning they held about educational issues (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). In line with the hallmarks of social constructivist assumptions, this study used qualitative data collection methods and a thematic approach to describe the multiple perspectives VAPA instructors hold about state-initiated curriculum changes. It aims to bring to light, "the social meaning from the perspective of research participants who are enmeshed in their context" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 12).

The legislative action on eliminating course repetition has significant implications on how VAPA instructors teach and promote arts education. For VAPA instructors, the repeated practice of a skill is pivotal to the arts learning process as each arts encounter expands students' field of reference and experience (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008) in creating art. From the VAPA instructors' perspective, the legislative policy to eliminate course repetition infringes on their expertise and knowledge as the discipline experts.

Consequently, qualitative interviews would give voice to VAPA instructors and capture perceptions of their professional practices, collegial governance, and their knowledge of

the standards of effective teaching and performance. It allows them to tell their stories and how they might mitigate legislative action that does not take into account the unique nature of arts education.

In qualitative interviewing the researcher aims “to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee and to understand how and why he or she comes to have this particular perspective” (King, 1994, p. 14). Using this method the researcher can engage in a conversation that requires active asking and listening and that creates a partnership between the interviewer and interviewee as they engage in a meaning-making endeavor (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). This method of research serves well the goals of this study as it aims to understand how participants experience state-initiated curricula changes and the meaning they make from this experience.

The qualitative interview approach also allows the researcher to probe deeply into the subject matter and to look for patterns that emerge from “thick descriptions” provided by the participants through the use of open-ended questions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). These in-depth interviews can yield large amounts of data that can be analyzed and interpreted to yield knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) that is befitting of the context, and gives voice to individuals who have not been heard (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010 p. 252).

Site Descriptions

The participants for this study were recruited from four community colleges situated in the Southern California region. To protect their identities, pseudonyms were given to all four colleges.

La Cima Community College

La Cima Community College serves a little over 8,000 full-time equivalent students (FTES). The student race and ethnic distribution at La Cima College is as follows: 46% Hispanic, 30% White, 5.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% African American, 1% Filipino, and 13% unknown. The gender distribution is 39% females and 60% males. At 36%, the largest age bracket of its student population is 25-49 years old.

San Remo Community College

San Remo Community College serves close to 19,500 FTES. The student race and ethnic distribution at San Remo College is as follows: 54% Hispanic, 18% White, 7.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.4% African American, 0.8% Filipino, and 17% unknown. The gender distribution is 42% females and 58% males. The largest age bracket of its student population, at 52%, is 25-49 years old.

Fairview Community College

Fairview Community College serves a little over 17,500 FTES. The student race and ethnic distribution at Fairview College is as follows: 40% White, 28% Hispanic, 21% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.7% African American, 1.8% Filipino, and 3% unknown. The gender distribution is 47% females and 51% males. The three largest age brackets of its student population are 20-24 years old, at 40%; less than 20 years old, at 30%; and 25 to 49 years old, at 27%.

Colinas Community College

Colinas Community College serves over 17,000 FTES. The student race and ethnic distribution at Colinas College is as follows: 58% Hispanic, 12% White, 7.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 7.5% African American, 3% Filipino, and 10% unknown. The

gender distribution is 54% females and 45% males. The two largest age brackets of its student population are 20-24 years old, at 36% and 25-49 years old at 31%.

The Fine Arts Divisions

The structure and composition of the Fine Arts division at the four colleges are distinct. In each college, the Fine Art division generally houses the following visual and performing arts departments: Art, Graphic Design, Music, Dance and Theater.

In general, the Art Departments offer a wide range of visual arts courses, include Art History, Fundamentals of Art, 2D and 3D Design, Ceramics, Freehand Drawing, Life Drawing, Painting, and Illustration. The Theater Departments offer a range of classes, including acting, scene study, musical theater, and theater production courses. The Dance Departments have classes in ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, tap, hip hop, and ballroom dances. The Music Departments offer music theory courses, concert choir, voice, piano, guitar, and applied music programs.

Sample

In the selection of the sample, the logic of qualitative research is “to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 252). It is therefore critical that the participants selected for the study have directly experienced the central phenomenon being investigated. Thus, a more deliberate approach and focus was used in the selection of participants and sites. As this study seeks to understand the perceptions of VAPA instructors experiencing state-initiated curricula changes, the sample of participants sought were individuals who, through their experiences of this phenomenon, have the knowledge and information that could inform this study.

The study sample contained 13 participants from the Fine Arts divisions at the four colleges; nine participants were male and four, female. Purposeful sampling (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) was used for this study to solicit “information rich” (Patton, 2002) sources. As the intent of the study is to describe in-depth a subgroup who belong to a particular membership (visual and performing arts), the homogenous sampling strategy (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) was used to select a purposeful sample. To be included in the study, participants must meet several criteria. First, participants must be currently teaching skilled-based classes in the visual arts and performing arts discipline and have at least 5 years of teaching experience. Meeting these criteria ensures that participants have a prolonged and rich teaching experience to inform this study. Second, participants must have experience working with students who have taken visual and performing classes more than one time, even after successful completion. This criterion is meaningful to the study because instructors can then speak to the effects of eliminating course repetition. Lastly, participants must have a critique component or student portfolio requirement as part of the course work. This will allow participants to provide insight on students’ skill-building development and the prospects of pursuing the study of the arts as a major.

Table 1 provides information about the participants, including information about their pseudonym, gender, specific discipline, and years of teaching experience.

Procedures

The procedures followed in this study, which include recruitment, data collection methods, general methodological design, instruments used, data analysis, protection of subjects, positionality, and trustworthiness, are discussed in the following section.

TABLE 1. The 13 Individual Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	VAPA Discipline	Years of Teaching Experience
Anne	Female	Theater	17+
Karen	Female	Theater	23+
Jim	Male	Theater	5+
Kay	Female	Dance	15+
Sienna	Female	Dance	20+
Agape	Male	Music	5+
Francisco	Male	Music	20+
Neel	Male	Art	10+
Lee	Male	Art	7+
Max	Male	Art	20+
Paul	Male	Art	10+
Blue	Male	Art	30+
Clay	Male	Art	38+

Recruitment of Participants

The use of a gatekeeper (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) was required to gain access to the research site and to the participants for the study. An initial contact with the study's gatekeepers at all four colleges took place to explain the purpose of the study, the type of information being sought, the criteria to participate, the general timeline of the study, and the time commitment needed from the participants for this study. A recruitment letter was created to assist the gatekeeper in recruiting participants (see Appendix A).

All the participants were provided with the information about the purpose of the research, the reason they were selected for the study, and the time commitment that was

involved. They were also informed that this research was being conducted as part of a doctoral study and that they would need to contact the researcher to participate.

Participants who agreed to participate were interviewed at a location and time that was convenient and suitable for interviews. In addition, participants were given assurances that the information they provided was intended to inform the study and their privacy and confidentiality would be safeguarded.

Informed Consent

Before the interview process began, participants were given an informed consent form to read (see Appendix B). The consent form included a request to allow the researcher to audio record the interview. If the participant agreed to participate but did not want to be recorded then handwritten notes would be taken. The informed consent form also included an invitation for the participant to take part in the member-checking process that would take place once their interview was transcribed. Participants who expressed interest in the member-checking process were asked to provide their contact information. They were informed that they will be provided with a hard copy of their transcript to review for accuracy.

All participants were given time to review thoroughly the consent form. To ensure that the participant fully understood the form and were willing to participate, the researcher verbally reviewed and explained the purpose of the study and allowed for the participant to ask questions about the study. Once the consent form was signed and dated, the interview process began.

Data Collection Methods

In qualitative data collection the researcher uses “systematic procedures to develop descriptions and themes from text and image data about a central phenomenon” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 277). Data for this study were collected primarily through individual interviews as well as from fieldnotes and post-interview memoing. The data collection method is a process that is inductive, simultaneous, and iterative in form (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010).

In-Depth Interviews

To explore how state-initiated curriculum changes influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning of the VAPA instructors, 13 open-ended interviews were conducted. Interviews were approximately 60 minutes in length and they were taped, with the participant’s permission. This qualitative in-depth interview method was selected because it employs an active asking and listening component, can yield large amounts of data, and can provide “thick descriptions” of information pertaining to the issue that is being studied (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). In addition, “the degree of division and hierarchy between the two collaborators is low, as the researcher and the researched are placed on the same plane” (p. 94).

Fieldnotes were taken during the interview process. Fieldnotes served to remind the researcher to probe more fully areas that merit closer inspection, expansion, or clarification (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). In addition, immediately following each interview, memoing took place to capture insights and impressions that can be included and examined in the data analysis process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). As each interview was completed, the interview audio recording was sent to a professional

transcription service. Once the transcription was completed, those participants who agreed to take part in the member-checking process were sent a copy of their interview transcripts and they were asked to review the transcript for accuracy. Participants were asked to provide clarification in transcript areas that contained unintelligible sound, words, or phrases. Once participants verified the accuracy of their interview transcripts, each transcript was analyzed and uploaded to NVivo qualitative software program.

Instruments Used

Instrument: Interview Protocol

An interview protocol was developed to explore the perceptions of VAPA instructors on the state-initiated curriculum changes (see Appendix C). The interview questions were open-ended and arranged in a logical sequence. Questions were designed to elicit the following information from the participants:

1. The actions taken to address state-initiated curricula changes,
2. Visual or performing arts instructors' perception of state-initiated curricula changes, and
3. Effect of state educational policy on access to arts learning.

Interviews began with a rapport-building stage to allow the participants to become familiar and comfortable with the interview process. The rapport stage included broad questions about the participant's teaching experience and pedagogical style. More detailed questions about the influence of state-initiated curricula on their teaching followed to elicit more individualized and specific answers.

The interview protocol was designed to elicit responses specifically about changes to visual and performing arts curricula as well as the instructors' experiences and

perceptions on the effects of state-initiated policies on their teaching practices. Questions were designed to focus on specific components of arts curricula (Clark, 1991; Dobbs, 1992), the repeated practice of skills (Wagner & Smith, 1991), and gaps between policy design and implementation (Honig, 2006). The protocol was based on the DBAE framework and is guided by the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Table 2 presents the rationale behind the development of the qualitative instrument.

TABLE 2. Qualitative Instrument Development

What can be learned from the RQs?	What types of questions are asked?	What will such questions reveal?	Relevant Literature (theoretical, conceptual, and/or empirical)
RQ1: What do arts instructors do to the arts curricula in light of the elimination of repetition?	Have visual or performing arts instructors made changes to the curricula? What kind of changes?	Whether state-initiated changes actually accomplish what they set out to do	Discipline-Based Arts Education (DBAE) lens
RQ2: Do they make changes to their teaching practices?	How they currently teach arts courses? Will they change their teaching practices?	Whether there are significant changes to the way instructors teach the arts	DBAE lens
RQ3: How do arts instructors perceive policy changes affecting students with little arts preparation?	Who are the students who take art? What happens to these students when course repetition is eliminated?	Whether state-initiated curricula changes will impact access to arts education for those who have little arts preparation	DBAE lens Policy design and implementation

In addition, the interview protocol was piloted twice with content experts in the visual and performing arts discipline. The piloting of the interview protocol allowed for better understanding of how well the questions would be understood by the participants and whether they would generate the information that was sought. Following the pilot interviews, a few questions were revised for clarity and some additional questions were added to the original interview protocol following content expert consultation and input.

Data Analysis

In line with qualitative research, an inductive approach (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2010) was used in the analysis of the data collected. With the permission of the participants, interviews were taped. All participants were provided with the option to review the transcription of their audio recording. This member-checking process was an additional step to help validate the accuracy of the information collected. Once these steps were completed, the researcher looked for areas where instructors made meaning of their roles as discipline experts and arts education advocates and of their responses to state policies on repetition. Each transcript was reviewed several times. In addition, careful comparisons were made between the interview transcripts, the researcher's fieldnotes, and the post-interview memoing.

In keeping with qualitative inquiry methods, words or short phrases that have salient, summative, and essence-capturing attributes (Saldaña, 2009) were mined from the interview transcripts. These codes were loaded into the NVivo coding software. Following Saldaña's (2009) First Cycle Coding methods, each transcription was read in-depth and coded. The initial review was primarily centered on identifying the nuances and discrete parts of the data collected (Saldaña, 2009) as they relate to the theoretical

framework of this study. Next, upon further reflection of the content gathered from the Initial coding method (Saldaña, 2009), the analysis progressed to a preliminary clustering of codes. Following this first level of analysis, each transcript was thoroughly studied two additional times and the data corpus was reviewed using an amalgam of structural, values, versus, and evaluation coding methods (Saldaña, 2009). The fieldnotes and the post-interview memoing were also included in the initial analysis. The codes and initial categories that emerged were analyzed and reviewed across all the transcripts. These were then organized in files following multiple coding processes that link and group similarly coded data because of their shared characteristics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2009).

Next, progressing to the Second Cycle Coding Methods (Saldaña, 2009), the analysis involved further reducing and clustering of the data corpus by using the pattern and focused coding (Saldaña, 2009). Following further analytical reflection and the consolidation of clusters of subcategories and categories, larger themes were identified. Appendix D details the final organization of codes, categories and themes.

The NVivo software was used as the repository of the data corpus collected for this study. The NVivo software facilitated with the organization, management, and analysis of the results of the study. Finally, consultations with the dissertation chair and a peer-reviewer followed to ensure that the sense-making process was in step with the data collected. All the codes, categories, and themes were organized and compiled into a codebook.

Protection of Subjects

Because qualitative research seeks an in-depth description of experiences surrounding a central phenomenon and participants are often asked to disclose private details of their experiences (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010), the protection of the identity and confidentiality of the participants is paramount. The assignment of pseudonyms to participants is a common practice that serves to protect their identity. All participants in the study were asked to select a pseudonym at the start of the interview process. Participants were referred to by this pseudonym throughout the entire research process. All transcriptions as well as the member-checking process did not contain any personal information that could identify the participant. The consent forms the participants signed, which were the only document that could link the participants' real name to their pseudonym, were kept in a separate secure file. Only the researcher has access to the secure file. All interview recordings will be destroyed in 1-year period and all interview transcriptions, fieldnotes, and post-interview memos will be destroyed after a 3-year period in accord with the Institutional Research Board (IRB) process. Lastly, the researcher chose to redact information in any description that could potentially reveal the identity of a participant.

Positionality

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) emphasized that the acknowledgment of the difference in attitudes and values between the researcher and the participant in a qualitative research allows for the researcher to take into account the impact of this difference in all aspects of the research process. Harding (2004) expounded that there are no value-free questions and that the researcher needs to examine his or her own biases,

perspectives, and agendas. This acknowledgement enables the researcher to practice what Harding (1993) calls “strong objectivity” which is to take the difference into account to allow for a more complete representation of the participant’s voice.

Although I do not teach art courses, as the dean of the Fine Arts Division, my primary goal is to advocate on behalf of the VAPA faculty members. This means, I may have a strong professional interest in the needs and concerns of the VAPA faculty members. Thus, I remained mindful of this possibility and made the effort to keep my empathy in check.

Conversely, I also realized that there are existing political dynamics between administrators and faculty members. As the dean of the Fine Arts Division I have under my responsibility the general administrative, operational, and budgetary responsibilities of all visual and performing arts courses at my institution. I also have responsibility for the performance evaluation of all faculty members in the division. Although none of the participants in this study report to me, they may experience reservation and be less willing to share candidly their perspectives because of my professional position. Participants may be suspicious of my intentions and may feel that I have an “administrator’s agenda.” Thus, I have taken extra measures to communicate to my participants that their involvement in this research study is strictly voluntary. I explained clearly the purpose of my study and what I hope to gain from it. I reiterated that the information they provide can only be used within the scope of the study and that they can at any time request to skip a question, stop the interview, or even withdraw from the study. At their request, a transcript of their interview will be provided to confirm accuracy of the information. Moreover, participants were told if they feel that the use of

any information may put them at risk, I would work with the participant to minimize or eliminate the risk.

Trustworthiness

Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011) expounded that qualitative research accounts for how individuals make meaning of their lived experiences and therefore, the credibility of the research study is not achieved through a specific entity or end goal that the researcher easily attains; instead, it is achieved through the process. As such, in this study trustworthiness will be established through multiple means.

To promote data dependability, all the interviews will follow an Interview Protocol (see Appendix C). The interview questions were designed to be open-ended in order to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences. These questions were reviewed by two content experts as well as the dissertation chair for appropriateness, focus, and effectiveness. The protocol was piloted twice with participants that had expertise in this subject area. Following each pilot interview, the interviewer solicited comments from each participant about the effectiveness of the questions and the general flow of the questions. From the pilot, the protocol was then refined to include additional questions on specific areas that were not originally included.

Member-Checking

The accuracy of the data is another way to underscore the credibility of the study (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Through the member-checking process, participants had the opportunity to provide input on the accuracy of the data collected and further validate the completeness and credibility of the study.

Peer Debriefers

The use of a peer debriefer further enhanced the credibility of the study. This process ensured that the range of procedures performed on the data collected (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011) had been executed with integrity and credibility. The dissertation chair and a program faculty member who has expertise in qualitative research but not connected to the study served as peer debriefers. Each peer debriefer reviewed the study's codes, categories, and themes compiled in a codebook. They participated in the discussions on how the preliminary data analysis and the subsequent themes were connected to the participants' experiences. They also reviewed exemplary quotes that were selected to provide the appropriate context.

Negative or Contrary Evidence

As the goal of a qualitative inquiry is to capture the different dimensions of a situation, the presentation of information may at times include data that does not confirm or support the themes and may even provide contradictory information about a theme (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). This was anticipated as participants in the study brought their own voices and experiences that were not always congruent. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) expounded that the inclusion of negative or contrary evidence can add another dimension to the analysis of the data. They can strengthen the credibility of the initial theoretical claims. Therefore, contradictory or negative information was collected and has been reported in the findings.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology and the operational details used to explore how VAPA instructors experienced state-initiated curriculum

changes. A qualitative interview research method was used for this study and it was framed by research questions designed to give voice to VAPA instructors as they make meaning of this experience.

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants from four sites. The participants selected for the study had prolonged and rich teaching experience and could speak to the effects of eliminating course repetition. Description of the procedures followed in this study includes recruitment, data collection methods, data analysis, protection of participants, positionality, and trustworthiness.

The methodology used in this dissertation was intended to facilitate the inclusion of the voices of the VAPA instructors in the broader discussion on educational goals that should take into account the specific needs of arts education.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how VAPA instructors experienced state-initiated curricular changes and reconciled the requirements of their discipline with state educational policy. This study investigated how VAPA instructors experienced the elimination of course repetition and how they made meaning about their ability to teach according to their discipline and training. This qualitative study looked at the experiences of visual and performing arts instructors teaching skill-based courses and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are arts instructors redesigning the arts curricula in light of new state educational policies on eliminating course repetition?
2. How do arts instructors see these state-initiated policy changes impacting their teaching practices?
3. How do arts instructors anticipate state-initiated curriculum changes impacting the access to arts learning for students with limited preparation in the arts?

To explore how VAPA instructors construct their professional identity in relation to the political and instructional context, this study used a social constructivist. Following the hallmarks of social constructivist assumptions, this study employed qualitative interviews as the primary data collection method. This study used a thematic approach to

describe the multiple perspectives that VAPA instructors hold about state-initiated curriculum changes.

From the interviews, it was noted that there are many common perceptions and some differences in the way in which VAPA instructors experienced the state educational policy. Participants expressed a range of experiences that was primarily informed by their level of involvement with the design of VAPA curricula. Overall, three themes emerged from the data collected that have been organized and presented in relation to the research questions guiding this study: (a) involuntary curriculum changes create artificial instructional frameworks; (b) unsought input from discipline experts lead to negative perceptions and problematic implementation of state-initiated policy, and (c) limiting skill building leads to an undereducated class of VAPA students.

Interview Participants

Anne

Anne is a tenured faculty member with over 17 years of teaching experience in the Theater Department at Fairview College. She teaches technical theater and oversees the costumes program. She has extensive involvement in the college's student theater company, which includes overseeing and coordinating actors, directors, playwrights, stage managers, and theater technicians for a full season of performances. She is very knowledgeable in all aspects of the production component of the Theater Program and is responsible for the revisions and the updating of the technical theater curricula. Anne was informed by her dean about of the changes pertaining to the elimination of course repetition. She wrote four new courses to augment the existing Repertory class and submitted them for local curriculum approval. Although she met the curriculum approval

process deadline, she was informed by the college's curriculum committee that, due to the large volume of curriculum submissions, her courses would not be reviewed until the following year.

Karen

Karen is a tenured faculty member teaching technical theater at Colinas College. She has over 23 years of teaching experience. Her area of expertise includes theatrical sound and lighting, stagecraft, costuming, and hair and makeup. She feels strongly about the vocational aspect of the Technical Theater program of her college. From her teaching experience she noted that many of her students are not interested in degrees. Technical Theater students are primarily interested in seeking fulltime employment. She is part of the college's Technical Theater advisory committee, which also includes industry experts. She incorporates the feedback from industry experts in the planning and the setting of goals of the program. She is an advocate of training students to meet the demand of the industry. Karen was informed by the curriculum committee chair about the elimination of course repetition. She began to write 20 new courses in order to provide students the opportunity to address the multiple aspects of Technical Theater. The curriculum committee at her college informed her that she could not write so many courses in one semester. She was given a limit of 12 courses.

Jim

Jim is a tenure-track faculty member who has been teaching theater and camera performance classes for 2 years at San Remo College. Prior to his fulltime appointment, he taught Theater courses for several years at other community colleges. He is a personable and popular instructor in the Theater Department. Jim firmly believes that

“acting is about experimentation.” Jim strongly feels that the entertainment industry is at a critical junction. The industry is redefining itself to a large extent because of new entertainment focus such as Reality TV shows and YouTube. For Jim, the modern entertainment industry is changing the definition of what it means to be an actor. Although fairly new to the college, Jim has been involved extensively in the curriculum development process. Jim feels that eliminating repetition is moving VAPA education in the wrong direction. He is determined to do what it takes to give his students the necessary experience to be successful Theater majors. Jim received the information about the elimination of repetition from his dean and he wrote three new courses to augment the Theater Production Program.

Kay

Kay teaches Modern Dance, Jazz, Choreography, and Dance Composition for both majors and non-majors at San Remo College. She also teaches the production courses that provide the student performers for the dance concert at the end of each semester. She was recently elected Dance Department chair. Kay strongly feels that a large majority of students entering the Dance Program lack the necessary dance preparation and foundation. From her 15 years of teaching Dance, she feels that in order to develop sufficient skills to transfer to a 4-year university, students need to be on a 3-year Dance Program plan. Kay was informed by the former department chair of the changes on course repetition. The majority of the dance curricula were previously written as beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. She has written one new course to give her students more opportunity to practice and prepare for transfer.

Sienna

Sienna has been teaching at Fairview College as a tenured dance faculty for over 20 years. Her area of expertise is modern dance, advanced jazz, choreography, tap, methodology pedagogy, and dance and improvisation. She also oversees and coordinates the Student Dance Concert at the end of the semester. The majority of students in her beginning dance classes lack dance training and preparation as well as family approval and support to study dance. Sienna stated that Dance students would typically take a beginning level class up to four times and then progress to the intermediate level. At the intermediate level they were also allowed to repeat the class up to four times. Even though they may have enough preparation with eight semesters of dance classes, students progressing to the advanced level classes were still being challenged by the course work. Sienna described the process of becoming aware of the changes in course repetition as the unfurling of “rumors.” Sienna wrote 22 new courses. The Dance Department put forth the most number of courses for approval at her college. The curriculum committee eventually placed a limit on the number of new curriculum submissions they would review from the Dance Department.

Agape

Agape is a 2nd year tenure-track faculty member teaching music at La Cima College. However, he had been teaching at the college as an adjunct faculty for several years. Agape teaches Music Theory, Music Appreciation, multiple levels of voice classes and choir. In the last 5 years, the college made significant cuts in the vocal and choir classes. At the time of the interview, the Music Program had just started to offer choir classes as part of the music repertoire of courses. It was the second semester for choir

and the fourth semester for voice classes. Agape firmly believes that a successful choir has in part a large community membership. Those who have been part of the college choir experience for several years make invaluable contributions to the overall choir experience. The more experienced singers serve as models for the new members. With the elimination of course repetition, the experienced choir members are no longer able to enroll in the Choir Program at the college. Agape considers the loss of repetition to be detrimental to bridging the gap between different generations. He described his understanding of the elimination of repetition as a “little different each time.” The main sources of information were the dean and the chair of the curriculum committee. Agape feels that his immediate attention needs to be directed toward the rebuilding of the choir. At the time of the interview, he indicated that he had no plans to write new curriculum. He stated that he would address the curriculum but not immediately.

Francisco

Francisco is a seasoned tenured faculty member at San Remo College. He has been teaching music performance courses, Jazz History and Ethnic Studies for the past 21 years. He was recently elected Music Department chair. With the elimination of repetition, Francisco has found this experience unsettling as the community members that previously participated in the different ensembles courses are no longer able to enroll in these classes. The challenge for Francisco has been to bring a relatively inexperienced group of young students with little or inadequate musical skills together to produce a balanced, rhythmically accurate, and cohesive sound. Additionally, Francisco expressed constant anxiety over not having enough students for the advanced classes. Francisco explained that when the information on course repetition first emerged, the former Music

Department chair kept him informed of what was happening at the state level because he was a member of the Curriculum Counsel. Sensing an unfavorable outcome, the former department chair wrote two additional methods courses.

Neel

Neel is a tenure-track faculty member at La Cima College. He has been teaching at the college for 3 years. However, prior to his fulltime appointment, he had been an adjunct faculty teaching for several years in nearby community colleges. At La Cima College, Neel teaches Studio Art, Art History and Digital Media Art classes. Because the size of the Art Department is small, Neel is also the department chair. He oversees the arts curriculum as well as the direction of the program and the interdisciplinary relationships between the Art Department and other disciplines.

Neel recounted that, at his college, course repetition was officially eliminated in the Fall 2011 semester. In his first semester as fulltime faculty, the dean informed him that all the studio classes would no longer be repeatable. La Cima College was ahead of other community colleges in making this transition. Neel further explained that because of the size of the department and the college demographics, the elimination of repetition in studio classes has not been a problem. Neel stated that he is supportive of this change. He believes students should make progress, and not enroll in community colleges and take classes in the same discipline multiple times for several years. He firmly believes that if students are interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth, they need to move from the community colleges to the arts programs at 4-year universities. And, as long as he is able to continue to cross-list the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of a studio class (i.e., offer all three levels as a “combo” class) then, he

has no qualms with the elimination of repetition. The only concern he expressed was the inability to cross-list the three levels of classes because then, the intermediate and advanced levels by themselves would not have the required enrollment numbers and would likely be canceled or not offered.

Neel did not find the need to write new courses. The studio courses in his program were already “leveled” (i.e., set up as beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels). He did, however, revise each course to ensure that each level included a clearly distinct content.

Lee

Lee is a 2nd year tenure-track faculty member at Fairview College. His main area of expertise is sculpture but, he also teaches Drawing, Illustration, Watercolor, and Professional Studies. A large majority of students who take Sculpture class have little or no formal exposure to this medium. Lee also noted that, because sculpture is a physical medium, without the opportunity to explore its physical aspect, it is not possible to fully understand it. Thus, to have a studio space for students and members of the community to come together to work and to create art is essential for the art-making process. With the elimination of course repetition, Lee noted that community members who have been part of the art-making process are no longer able to return and take part in the “art community” in the studio space of the college. Lee recounted that the information he received on the elimination of repetition was confusing. He heard the information from a few colleagues and the dean of his division. He described the process as scuttlebutt and that no one appeared to know how to address the situation. At the time of the interview, Lee was in the process of revising his sculpture classes. He wrote a new level of the

Advanced Sculpture class in hopes to “slow it down.” This Applied Sculpture class would give students the opportunity to explore other sculpture areas. Lee also had plans to reintroduce a bronze casting class. Lee found the process of writing and revising curriculum to be tedious, confusing, and overwhelmingly frustrating.

Max

Max is a tenured faculty member teaching ceramics, 3D Design, and sculpture at Colinas College. Max has been at the college for over 23 years. At the time of the interview, Max stated that that semester the college was only offering beginning ceramics and no other levels of ceramics classes were being offered because of the elimination of repetition. Max explained that the Ceramics Program is comprised of seven courses. With the exception of beginning ceramics, which was a general education (GE) class, the remaining courses were previously repeatable. In the past, a student would be able to take each of the remaining six classes up to three times. Max explained that he was not in disagreement with the state. He was able to direct those students who had exhausted the repetition option to Directed Studies. He also worked with the college to set up a community education program for those community members who also exhausted the repetition option. Max stated that he has seen some positive effects from the elimination of repetition. All the beginning sections of ceramics classes were fully enrolled and they each had a healthy waitlist. The college was meeting enrollment demands by offering beginning ceramics classes only. Max expressed that the elimination of repetition made financial sense to him. He had heard from the dean of his division that course repetition was being discussed at the state level; he feels that this is a logical step. Max believes the

purpose of community colleges is to offer general education classes. As such, he has no plans to create new classes to “extend a student’s life in a discipline.”

Paul

Paul is a tenure-track faculty at San Remo College. He is the gallery director and he also teaches Art History and photography. He has over 10 years of teaching experience at the college and he is currently the Art Department chair. In considering the college’s student population, he believes that the elimination of repetition will have a significant impact on students’ skill building and portfolio development in preparation for transfer. Taking away the opportunity to build skills will devastate the studio classes. Paul also believes that the state’s action is an incursion into his area of expertise. He strongly believes that the state is out of touch with what is actually happening within the classroom environment. Paul recalls being informed by the vice president of instruction at a division meeting about the elimination of repetition. However, the Art Department has no plans to make any changes to their curriculum. Paul stated that the economic recession of recent years has drastically reduced their course offerings. They need time to assess and find ways for the program to recover.

Blue

Blue has over 30 years of teaching experience. Before becoming a tenured faculty member at Fairview College, Blue was an adjunct faculty member teaching in five other community colleges. He also has taught part-time in the University of California system and overseas. Blue’s expertise is in the Studio Arts area. He teaches all levels of drawing and painting. He has also taught Art History, photography, academic film courses, and film production. Blue describes himself as being a product of the California

educational system. He studied at a community college, as well as the California State University, and the University of California systems. And, he has continued with his education over the years. Blue strongly feels that funding for arts education has been decreasing since the 1980s. He believes students need to have the ability to stay with the program until they have the skills to move forward. Students should be given the opportunity to find their creative interest, to discover the kind of art they are going to dedicate their lives to exploring. Blue believes that students do find their way but not at the rate at which the state is establishing. Furthermore, Blue sees the push to establish the Transfer Model Curriculum (TMC) in Studio Arts as problematic as students are expedited through the educational pipeline without proper consideration for skill building and development. When budget is the driving force behind educational policy decisions, the expected outcome is a less qualified student that is underprepared to succeed at 4-year universities.

Blue recalls hearing about the elimination of course repetition from the “Student Success Task Force Report.” Since then, he feels there has been a plethora of work. Blue has been working on a 3rd-year certificate as a way to allow students to take additional courses beyond those in the TMC. He believes that with another year of courses, students will be better prepared to transfer. Blue is also contemplating retirement but he worries that he is leaving his program without a steward.

Clay

Clay has been teaching ceramics at San Remo College for the past 38 years. With such a long history at the college, Clay has seen limits placed on course repetition going back a few decades. He recounted a time when, in the process of converting to a new

registration system, a software glitch occurred that caused the tracking of the repeatability to be erased from the records. All the students who had repeated the ceramics courses multiple times got a second chance to start over. Clay has a large following of lifelong learners who constantly think of different ways to return to the program as they have exceeded the repetition limit. Oftentimes, the lifelong learners would ask to be failed so that they can repeat the class. In recent years he has seen the enrollment of lifelong learners decline sharply because of repetition limits. Because of this, Clay has created several specialized classes for the advanced student. There are many areas of ceramics in which students can continue their studies. Clay has created a battery of specialized classes throughout the years. By offering these specialized classes, Clay has been able to give his students many more opportunities to develop and build their skills.

Clay believes that in a few years all the lifelong learners will be gone completely from the community college, and he will be relegated to teaching only beginning ceramics classes. There will be very few opportunities to teach advanced levels. He is seriously contemplating retirement, so he has no plans to make any curriculum changes.

Findings

In the analysis of the data collected from the interviews, themes and subthemes emerged juxtaposed to a larger context of disconnect between educational policy and actual instructional objectives and practices. Participants reported experiences unique to their discipline area and yet the ongoing undercurrent across the identified themes and subthemes was the lack of understanding of the specific needs of the VAPA disciplines and the general sense that arts education was slowly being whittled away at the

community colleges. The following theme emerged in relation to the first research question: How are arts instructors redesigning the arts curricula in light of new state educational policies on eliminating course repetition?

Involuntary Curriculum Changes Create Artificial Instructional Frameworks

While a majority of the participants in the study reported experiencing similar challenges in reconciling their pedagogical practices with the state-initiated educational policy, each VAPA instructor underscored the many aspects of their discipline area that make them distinct for other arts disciplines. Participants expressed a range of thoughts about the educational policy on course repetition. Their attitudes on this matter, whether decisive or more contemplative, were primarily informed by their level of involvement and familiarity with the design of their arts curricula.

Changes to the Curriculum

All the participants in this study expressed a general understanding of the state policy on eliminating course repetition. They understood that in order to come in compliance with the state's requirements they would likely need to make changes to their curriculum. Anne summarized her understanding:

[Repetition] that it's not allowed anymore. And, if we want a class to be taken more than once so that a student can gain skills, we have to build levels and we can only build four. And I know there are a lot of rules about how to build that class and how to write [the class] because the curriculum committee has taught me that lesson very clearly over the past year. I think that's all that I really know.

When asked to explain what she meant by "lots of rules" to build the levels she stated,

To write the course outline, and how it has to be written, so that each level is very clearly different from the level before and has new clear goals. . . new clear course objectives. . . different SLOs. It has to be really very, very different from the class that came before so it's obvious that there is a different level of skill and learning going on, which is stupid.

Anne expressed a level of frustration that was shared by many other participants. She felt that the curriculum structure that was being imposed was counterproductive to her particular arts discipline—theater. Jim, also a theater instructor, not only concurred with Anne but also explained why creating levels of courses does not make sense for theater production courses:

Now, they're saying that, that's going away and it's going to be one-time Theater 150. So, now we're going to have to create a family of courses which is completely opposite of any type of vision or mission that could exist in the performing arts. Why would there be a family of production courses? Each production stands on its own. Each production is valuable on its own. It doesn't relate one to the other but it doesn't mean that it's not valuable for an actor to do this production and then, do this other production and then, do another production because they're all different experiences. There's no family relation to that but that's what they are. It looks like they're going to force us to do this. So, once again, like when we created Theater 250 and Theater 350 to get through the loophole, we'll have to find another way of doing it, we'll have to create more. . . We have to write multiple classes, so that they can repeat. But it doesn't add to the actual learning of. . . No, it just helps us have a loophole so that we can keep doing what is working. You know, instead all of that energy, could be spent writing all new classes. Now, that's productive. That's something. To create resources and new curriculum that expands what we're doing.

The majority of the participants described the curriculum changes as “busy work.” Karen stated that she initially took this approach, “rather than write a whole new class. I tried to split the class, they [curriculum committee] went crazy with that. They said, ‘no.’ I got maybe 10 of them written and they said ‘no.’ I did that for nothing.”

Participants did not feel that the curriculum changes added to the growth of their subject area or improved students' learning experiences; instead, the additional curriculum writing was likened to the proverbial “splitting hairs.” More strikingly, participants' initial shared-reaction was that they were compelled to level their curriculum to get around the elimination of course repetition. Anne explained,

There's a lot of fiction in those [new] course outlines for these leveled classes—the Repertory I, II, III and IV [classes]. Because the process is so creative and so varied and every student is so different and their needs are so different that making them hit these artificial goalposts that don't necessarily fit each student, even though they're learning and moving forward and growing and gaining skills. If they make me make “boxes,” I will make “boxes” and I will make it work on paper but, my goal is the students and their learning—what they need to learn.

Anne, Karen, and Jim, like others, shared the common view that the curriculum changes that they were making were not natural to the needs of their discipline area. As such, Jim said, “it will force me to find new ways to circumvent it so that I can still achieve what I think is right for the student.”

Max provided a more contemplative view on the matter:

My understanding is that the state has looked at things that they consider more of a personal enrichment at the community college than the academic side of things. Things like yoga, dance and the exercise classes, music, and art. . . they have looked at it and said “these will no longer be repeatable. We have limited funds and we want to use them for students entering the system and not for students who have been here for a while.” That's my understanding, so that's why all of the ceramics courses, as we've discussed, are no longer repeatable.

This broader view of what Max believes the state is trying to accomplish however, did not necessarily mean that he saw this approach to be well-planned and thought out:

So a student can take four ceramics classes and then they are done. They can then take four painting classes or any other, like four photography classes. But, once they've completed four courses in any one discipline they have two choices: one is to go to another school, which I think if the state is doing its job they should look into that because it doesn't make any sense. The students will just hop, if it's convenient, to another local community college and continue on. I didn't see that happen though I feared it might. I talked to some of my colleagues from other schools, who said "some of my longtime students are coming down to you to start the process over.”

The second choice for students, Max added, is to “go on to a 4-year school” provided they have enough skills. Max however, had no plans to add to his curriculum repertoire.

He stated,

No, I don't want to do that because I think that is dishonest. I know there are probably people doing that to try to extend a students' life in a discipline. But I don't see how that would work if there's only four per family. Writing a new course, they still only get four, that's it. You may as well only have four courses on the books.

For Max, the need for the state to address the financial reality of the educational system made sense. As Max explained,

There are all kinds of issues that I don't want to get involved in. So I sort of took the safer route and that was, OK, I know I can fulfill beginner classes, I can fill twice as many as what we have; we will do it that way and see. This may be a good happy medium for this college; to offer the intermediate level class once a year instead of once every semester.

Max was content to simply offer the beginning level of ceramics courses because he knows that the beginning level, as a GE course, always has the enrollment numbers for the class to make.

A few other participants, like Max, opted not to add more courses to their curriculum. However, the reasons they provided were varied. Neel and Clay declared that the curriculum within their respective disciplines were either originally designed as beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels or they had a battery of courses already written and they were satisfied with what they had. Whereas Paul and Agape explained that the budget cuts of recent years have practically decimated their programs. They were simply trying to rebuild, and it was not the time to create more courses within their discipline area. Still, for a large number of participants in this study, the changes to the curriculum were not voluntary; that is, the result of addressing the needs of their discipline area. The participants struggled to reconcile the state requirements with what

they believed would give their students the best opportunity to build the necessary skills to succeed in their chosen VAPA discipline.

“They Are All Over the Map. . . [It’s] a Mess!”

The participants who felt that they needed to make changes to their curriculum were still trying to make sense of what they needed to accomplish at the time of their interviews. Sienna made the most extensive changes to her program’s curriculum. She explained that in her dance Program, each dance style previously followed a level 1, level 2, and level 3 sequence. A student could, theoretically, take each level up to four times. This would allow a student to study a dance style for a total of 12 times. With the elimination of repetition and the implementation of four classes in any given family of courses, students would only be able to take each level one time and then move on to the next level. Because of this, Sienna explained that she wrote additional curriculum in an attempt to anticipate the needs of her students:

So now we’re down to four classes [per family]. So, we had to at least break apart our level three and create a level four. So that’s writing new courses. We did that. Then we thought, “But, you know, if students come in at level three, they can’t go any further. They can only go three and four and then they’re done.” So, we wrote a level five. Then, we went back and wrote a basic of level one. This is so that a student who really is truly a beginner can start on the basics. Then, they can go to level one, then, they can go to level two and, they might not be good enough to make it to level three but, at least they can get maybe three times.

Because the population of students that her program served had such disparate academic dance preparation, Sienna felt that it was necessary for her to provide dance students the broadest possible range of options.

Similarly, Karen and Anne also reported significant changes to their curriculum. Karen explained that previously the technical theater courses were structured in such a

way that they gave students multiple opportunities to study the many different areas of technical theater:

The costume, makeup, and the hair class were repeatable once. Then I wrote advanced classes. You could take beginning twice. You could take advanced twice. That's four times. Now, the stage crew activity and the technical production, they are each repeatable four times, so they could work backstage on a show four times for one unit or for two units, and the classes are together. We were doing five shows a year. Now we are doing four, but that gets them through. They can take it, work every show, and get through in two years.

However, with the elimination of repetition, Karen felt that her students would not be able to have enough experience to be employable and meet the demands of the industry:

We have a technical theater advisory committee of industry experts. Several of them have said, if they are going to hire a theater technician, they want them to be versed in all areas, so if there is a shortage here, they can pull this person—OK, you are going to work lights this time” or “no, now I need you to work sound or I need you to work backstage running crew, deck crew. OK, now I'm going to put you on wardrobe crew.” For the students to learn different areas, they need to have practical experience working in all of those areas. If you take away the repeatability, they are not going to get that. If you work a crew position once on a show, that does not make you employable yet. You have to do it more than once and every show is different. They are going to be learning different skill sets. They are not going to be employable if they can just take the class once or twice.

Karen first attempted to split the stage crew activities class by writing new curriculum.

She explained: “I even tried it by ‘position-wise’ because there are different positions.

In costume, it could be stage crew activity—wardrobe crew, stage crew activity—wardrobe head or wardrobe chief, stage crew activity—costumer, stage crew activity—costume technician. Stage crew activity. . .” Karen had written close to 12 new curricula.

However, her attempts to split the technical theater curriculum were blocked. Karen stated, “I started writing that and curriculum [the curriculum committee] said, ‘you can't do that. The goal was to reduce the number of classes, not split it.’”

The curriculum committee is generally comprised of faculty members from all disciplines areas. From Karen's perspective, the curriculum committee was not able to advise her properly on how to address her pedagogical concerns as they lacked the understanding of the content and scope of the VAPA courses.

For Anne, the changes to her curriculum were not as extensive. She reported receiving instructions to create levels of courses for her theater repertory class in anticipation of the elimination of repetition. She was able to write four new courses and submitted them to the curriculum approval process. Ironically, the curriculum committee did not approve the new courses in time for them to be active on the semester that the elimination of repetition was in effect. Anne clarified that it was due to the excessive volume of curriculum that had been submitted for review. Anne was forced to resort to offering a "directed studies" course in an attempt to retain the returning students. She stated that because her new courses were not approved on time, she lost a large group of the more experienced students.

In the scope of curriculum changes, Blue chose to mitigate the effects of eliminating repetition not only by creating new courses but by creating new certificates. As many participants have already noted, the sheer volume of curriculum that was being put forth through the curriculum approval process was extraordinary. In large part, many college programs were at the same time being encouraged to develop transfer pathways to the CSUs via the Transfer Model Curricula (TMC). Blue saw the importance that these TMCs were receiving and he felt that any courses outside the TMC would not be considered as valuable to increasing student training and skill building.

We're trying to save the courses beyond the TMC that we have. So we're creating certificates, we're. . . this isn't just based on saving courses that we like. . . this is understanding that it comes out of student need and student success. And that, in order for our students to have the proper training, we have to come up with new strategies. So right now, I'm working on. . . that's what these catalogs from other schools are. They're from like, Savannah Art Center. I've got a couple others in here. I'm working on a third-year certificate so that our students can take . . . let's say they complete . . . the fact the TMC is the prerequisite and then they can take a third Sculpture class, they can take another 12 units and they get a certificate. It means they're here another year but they take that and then they're better trained. And they could, in effect, they could get multiple certificates, maybe their painting and sculpture.

For Blue, the loss of repetition and the arrival of TMCs were not moving arts learning and preparation in the right direction. Students were not being better prepared for transfer or for employment. He perceived these changes as educational shortcuts designed to move students quickly through the system. Thus, he believed that the solution to mitigate this effect is to create more certificates so that students would have more opportunities to receive proper training.

Eight participants in the study, to varying degrees, made changes to their curriculum with the purpose to creating additional opportunities to increase students' skill levels. In Sienna's quote used to define this section, she noted that there is no uniformity in the approach among different colleges with the same arts programs. Many VAPA instructors relied on the understanding and the interpretation of their curriculum representatives to make sense of what the state policy allowed. In writing an extensive number of new courses, Sienna encountered the problem of course numbering and sequencing:

They're all over the map. The students can't find the courses. I said, "can we at least in the schedule put a note to send them [students] to a page on our website which then lists all of the courses according to level progression because the numbers are a mess." Our dean has suggested that we rename our program and

start all over once we finish up and get these courses all planned out and the last of the additions. We should then rename our Dance Department and start all over with new numbers and redo all the course outlines and the whole program.

Writing new curriculum and facing the prospect of having to “start all over” just to make sense of it all was daunting for Sienna. The emotional toll and frustration was palpable during the interview. Sienna stated “and we tell them [students] which classes will transfer, however, this is all changed again. Now we have to develop new articulation agreements because these courses that we’ve rewritten, the universities don’t know what these numbers are.” She received no guidance and Sienna worried about her students and the future of her program.

Similarly, Anne expounded that in leveling courses with very specific objectives as required by the state, she is creating a “really weird artificial framework” to course material that is not intended to be so structured. Students learn at different rates and in leveling the curriculum it does not necessarily address student’s preparedness. In fact, she explained that it may set unrealistic expectations:

It would be a bit of a lie perhaps. What if I had a student who was a slower learner and didn’t have the ability and in their third semester did not, as it states clearly in the class description and the course outline, get a leading role and lead the ensemble and do all the leading role things because they’re not there yet? They need more time to learn. They may never be a leading actor but on paper [course outline] because it’s their third semester it says they’re in a leading role in a production. Are we [instructors] going to be held to that? Is somebody going to come back to the dean or to the president of the college at some point in a few years and say, “It says in the course outline that I’m in a leading role and I’m not so, you need to put me in a leading role,” because it’s their third semester? Are we going to be held to that when it doesn’t serve the student and their specific situation?

Anne spoke about the new artificial framework that is now part of her course outlines.

She explained that she was told to include what she deemed as “specific, weirdly specific

wording” in her new courses that she herself did not design. She questioned the logic of the new artificial framework, she spoke with considerable frustration in her voice:

That’s exactly what it is and it’s ridiculous but, we were told to put it in and it’s there in our courses now. So, do we have to do what it says? Or are we going to do what we know the students need? Or are we going to have to hit all these weird little things that are on that piece of paper they told us to write? Does that make sense?”

The Family of Courses

The VAPA instructors in this study encountered a number of challenges as they made sense of the changes in the state policy pertaining to repetition. However, they all expressed a deep commitment to making sure that the needs of their students are kept in the forefront as they tackled the necessary structural changes to ensure the proper alignment of their curricula with state requirements. Neel, one of the few VAPA instructors who did not perceive the need to write any new curriculum, spoke positively about being allowed to have “families of courses.” In his college, the Art Department courses were already set up as beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. He stated that many of his peers in other colleges did not have this course structure thus, when the repetition was eliminated, they began to write multiple levels of a course to give students more options. According to Neel, “so then, the state comes down and says, ‘OK, you want to play that game? Now, we have to put everything in families and you get four experiences within a family.” For Neel, “the families” allow the arts to prove that they are no different from other disciplines in the college and that in each level of a course the content is very different:

I am not fudging anything. I am not faking. It’s a way for us in studio arts to tell the powers [that] be and the ignorant, “Look, this is what we are doing here.” I don’t put a flower in the middle of the room and just have a bunch of old people

sit around and paint it all semester. We go over techniques and information on perception, on perspective, on geometry. There is a whole breadth of information that we are giving at the college level. This is not community services. This is not your local art club. This is a college-level course and I think it's very important that students at these studio levels are understanding a tradition of where they are coming from and combining esthetic technique and critical thinking concepts in one.

Neel spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity to showcase the intricacies of the arts curriculum through these families of courses. Neel's views on this matter were unique among the VAPA instructors in this study.

The perspective of the majority of participants was that the families of courses were not adequate to address the specific needs of all VAPA disciplines. Even Neel acknowledged that the concept of families can be restrictive:

So, we set up the families and what the families basically are . . . let's say I get four experiences in painting. I am a painting major. I get four experiences. The problem is if I take the beginning class . . . OK, let's say the traditional beginning, intermediate, advance, and then I build my portfolio with the Studio Concepts class. During the beginning class, oh, my mother passes away and I need to get a job so I take care of it and I drop the class. I withdraw before the withdrawal date. Everything is fine. The problem is I have used up an experience so when I re-enroll, I re-enroll in the beginning level. Now, I only have three more experiences. I take the beginning, intermediate, and advanced. I can't take the portfolio class. I can't build my portfolio. I can't use that to transfer and that's the goal of the portfolio class . . . is that you are putting together your work for transfer or a job and so that's the biggest problem.

The example Neel provided is very much within the realm of experiences for the student population at the community colleges. Most VAPA instructors have voiced that many of their students are not the typical fulltime college student. They often have complicated life issues.

“Thank Goodness for the Cal States”

In trying to make sense of the state policy on repetition almost all VAPA instructors reported receiving confusing information, which fueled the level of frustration and uncertainty about the future of their programs. Francisco and Agape both spoke about their experiences in dealing with the ambiguity of information from the state as to which course will retain their repetition. Francisco summarized it this way, “the way that the State has been looking at this is, if the 4-year institutions that we transfer to, if they need that [repeated course] on the student’s transcripts, if they need multiple sections of concert band or jazz band, or performance ensembles then, we are allowed to keep those.” Francisco further added,

Thank goodness for the Cal States, maybe that’s the sacred cow. They don’t want to disrupt that program and that system too much, so they’ve allowed us to have course families because of the requirements at the Cal State level. So that’s been probably our saving grace. It makes absolutely zero sense to me. What they’re trying to do, I mean, like I mentioned earlier, the day that any of those performance ensembles cannot be repeated is the day that the classes end. So there will not be any of those performing ensembles.

Both Francisco and Agape gave a sigh of relief when they found out that the CSUs were requiring students to have multiple performing ensemble experiences. This gave them hope that they can continue with their performing ensembles classes as students can take a performing ensemble for each semester that they are in the program.

Sienna was also aware of some exceptions. However, her attempt to have the exception apply to the dance discipline was futile:

But there are some exceptions and that is if you can find a president at a university that requires it [repetition of courses]. And so far, we’ve only been able to get Cal State to say that “they encourage it” but they will not say “require” because they told us that they did not want to. . . . the dean did not want to deter any potential candidates coming in by saying that it is a requirement. So by the

state saying that we have to find some program that says it's required to have these repeats that's been an obstacle.

This inequality between disciplines seemed very unjust to Sienna. She did not understand who made these decisions and to her, these decisions appeared to be arbitrary.

Getting Around the Policy

While the findings above underscore the lack of uniformity in the approach to make sense of the loss of repetition, there was clear tension between VAPA instructors wanting to comply with state policy but not wanting to be told how to design their courses. There was a palpable level of frustration and a few participants, such as Jim, expressed a more defiant approach:

Recently, and I do this even though we're not supposed to...for some students who I know are really passionate about it . . . we're not supposed to allow anybody to be in a class that's not registered. There is a loophole that I found. That's one of the big reasons for that, if they're not registered in the class, then they're not covered by the insurance policy for the class. So, if they get injured, then we're in big trouble. However, the insurance policy doesn't necessarily state that it's a specific class they have to be in, they just have to be enrolled in a single class in the Theater Department. Like some students are now, who have moved on and are taking tech classes just for the experience, and I've allowed a few of them to come back and take the class again but they're not officially in there but, they're enrolled in somewhere else. So, if they do get hurt or something, we're covered. Technically, they don't like you to do that. Recently . . . the reason I bring that up is . . . recently, that is this semester.

Jim made a point to emphasize that this was not ever his practice. It was because of the loss of repetition that he now allows students to join his class without being enrolled. He said, "So, I will continue to do that until they lock me up," adding:

I'm going to do whatever it takes to get the experience for them regardless of what the state does. I'll find a way. Of course, we're not going to break it . . . we're going to bend it a little. If that's what it takes because we're not servicing them. It's different, I get it. I totally get what the state is doing completely. When you look at math and English, you're trying to get people to transfer and

motivate them. Absolutely, I get it, that works, do it. But just because it works for the majority, doesn't mean it works for everything.

Jim was the only participant who openly talked about this matter while being audio taped. A few other participants shared similar transgressions but, they did not want to have their information audio recorded.

VAPA instructors shared little uniformity and commonality in their approach to reconcile the pedagogical practices of their discipline with the state-initiated curricular changes. However, general frustration and a deep concern for student preparation and success was an undercurrent to everything they voiced. A majority of VAPA instructors worried about the artificiality of the changes they were required to make to their curriculum in order to come into compliance. Many remained troubled at the possible repercussions to student learning.

Unsought Input from Discipline Experts Lead to Negative Perceptions and Problematic Implementation of State-Initiated Policy

In general, VAPA instructors viewed themselves as contributors to the overall appreciation and understanding of the arts. All participants of this study recognized that the majority of their students are not going to transfer as Arts-majors or make a living as artists. A large number of students took arts classes because they had some interest in the subject matter and they needed to complete a GE requirement. Others were looking for employment in areas such as graphic design and advertising, iPhone apps and website building, technical theater and thus, they were looking to gain skills in these areas. This view was commonly shared by all the participants who worked with a student population that spanned from high school graduates to the lifelong learners of the community.

The desire to promote arts appreciation and understanding is in no way diminished because the majority of students are non-arts majors; on the contrary, this desire is heightened. All participants dedicated extensive time and energy in making arts education accessible, tangible, and meaningful to students. Without exception and regardless of their discipline area, all participants repeatedly shared this attitude with students, “Tell yourself ‘you can do this,’ you build slowly, there’s struggle, you make decisions all the way through.” They also discouraged students from giving up too quickly. In describing their teaching philosophy they spoke of confidence, perseverance, and discipline. These were key attributes that participants were keen on instilling onto their students. Promoting appreciation and understanding of the arts was a commonly shared goal.

It is therefore of no surprise that the findings in relation to the second research question of how arts instructors see policy changes impacting their teaching practices point to a problematic reconciliation between prevalent teaching practices and educational policy change. Particularly, when the overwhelming sense among the participants in this study was that the elimination of repetition goes against the grain of arts pedagogy and no apparent attempts were made to seek input from the discipline experts or to understand the needs of their discipline.

The Teaching of the Arts

Participants commonly expressed that addressing the “fundamentals” was critical in the teaching of VAPA. Max, who teaches ceramics, spoke about what fundamentals means when he stated,

It's to give the students, to help the students get the basic understanding of the visual language. So that they understand what the formal aspects of art making are, what art design is about, the very, very fundamental things. It's the beginning of critical thinking and critical analysis of artwork. Things like line, plane, form, color, balance proportion, economy, harmony—all of those things, which the elementary side of it, the line, plane, form are very tangible and easy to identify; the other things are much more abstract and much harder.

For Max and other visual arts instructors, teaching the fundamentals, the basic concepts—principles—theories to students allowed not only for understanding but it enabled the development of communication using the correct language to observe and describe the arts. Neel conveyed similar belief when he stated, “we've learned to ignore the visual information and that doesn't get us to where we are going. My job is to get people to see again, to notice reflections and highlights and shadows and all of these things that they've never seen and then their eyes open up. Then, I have them not only see it, but then dissect it because another tool I teach them is geometric shapes.” Neel expounded:

I tell them, “you can draw a cube, a sphere, a cone, a pyramid . . . but, if you can draw all five geometric shapes, you can draw anything in the world” and so when you look at objects if you can break them down into those geometric shapes and you know how to draw those three-dimensional shapes on a two-dimensional plane and make them appear three-dimensional then, you can draw absolutely anything and that has everything to do with geometry and physics. We get big into one- and two-point linear perspective and we break down how to draw linear perspective and in my class I had one student in a drawing class that said, “I didn't think there was going to be so much geometry in here” and I said, “You know what's funny? The geometry class is saying, ‘I didn't know we were going to do so much drawing in here.’” So, my biggest goal in the studio arts is to basically open the students' eyes to perception.

Along the same lines, Blue explained that throughout the course of the semester students progressively build upon the information they have learned:

I get them to kind of break out of what they think drawing is. What they do is, they learn to use materials and technique for most of the semester and very structured assignments in terms of subject and skill building. So they, somewhere around the tenth, eleventh week, I've kind of gotten through all of the basics. And

then the last 5 weeks of class, we delve into realistic rendering and I have, I think, I hate to ring my own bell here, but I think, “cause I've heard students say, I heard one student say not too long ago, ‘Blue could teach a monkey to draw.’”

Among the myriad of foundational skills visual arts instructors identified as essential, teaching students to see and to communicate were most frequently emphasized in the study of the visual arts.

Congruently, the performing arts instructors also highlighted several foundational skills critical to their discipline. Agape affirmed that for the performing arts, “first, they [students] need to understand what they have and second, they need to know the tools to use, and then; they use them to express themselves—fully express themselves.” By this, the performing arts instructors in this study collectively refer to “the moment of performance.” For the Theater Program, Jim explained,

At the end of the day I’m looking that they have been able to access a piece of themselves that they can apply to a character a little bit more than they did yesterday. So, maybe a little bit deeper into their emotional life, maybe a little bit more focused into their line delivery, maybe a little bit more determined on that one aspect that they’re struggling with, maybe a little bit more passionate about why they wanted to be an actor in the first place, maybe getting a little bit more discipline to make sure they know those lines quicker, to make sure they’ve done their homework to prepare for the moment of performance.

The goals of the course are directed solely toward that moment when the curtain goes up and everything must come together both on stage and back stage. Students prepare, practice, and rehearse for that performance. Likewise in music, Francisco spoke about building skills and preparing for the performance moment as the objective throughout the course.

As each week passes, there’s a little less [music] reading and little more refining. Sometimes it’s terrible but, rather than beat it up and nitpick it, I’ll just say, “let’s run it. . . . and let’s run it again!” because a lot of it is getting the sound of whatever song you’re playing into their ears because they’re really talented in that

area. They just don't know how to address it. So the next week, we might break that piece down and work on all the little things that aren't working. As the semester continues, as we get closer and closer to the performance date, we start working on reading through the songs completely without stopping, and rehearsing, and rehearsing throughout the course of the semester, we're trying to develop. I'm always thinking, "OK, we got a program."

As students learn the techniques and learn to work together, the emphasis continues to be on increasing the language of performance. Sienna and Kay explained that fluency in the language of performance is when students demonstrate comprehension of the material by fully connecting movements, by showing self-awareness and the awareness of their surroundings, and by capturing the subtleties of expression in a fully integrated way.

These exemplars captured how participants felt about their purpose as VAPA instructors. Providing students with a solid foundation of the basic principles is one objective. Teaching students to see the world through an arts lens and to become fluent in its language are other critical functions of teaching the arts.

Repetition Is Pivotal for Skill-Based Courses

In the teaching of VAPA classes, all participants recognized skill building as inherent to the process of arts learning and they spoke of repetition as the agent of this process. All participants described students who have had the opportunity to add layers of learning as more aware, more refined, more employable and more university-transferable. Lee gave the following description of his more experienced students:

They can hit the ground running. The other thing is that they are more . . . after learning basic skills for a semester, it is easier for them to understand the aesthetics of what they're looking at, because they have used a medium once, and now this time, they can look at their own work more critically. So the quality of their work, the way they interact in a studio, and their understanding of how a studio works, is increased.

As evidenced by Lee's description, with repetition, students exhibit growth in practically all four foundational areas of the arts – history, critique, aesthetics, and production. Kay, who teaches dance, also described her students as having similar attributes:

More refined. Refined in their skills, refined in their performance skills, their ability to partner in an ensemble, their skills as a soloist performer, and their maturity in understanding to go deeper into what a teacher or a choreographer is asking them to do. I think, from the aesthetic technical dancer point, there is a sense of wholeness that they look completely integrated to me.

On the production side, Francisco spoke of his students reaching a level of awareness in their performance:

They start playing with awareness. They realize they need to blend with another instrument across the room because he's playing the same part and then they realize another set of instruments is playing another part and they have to complement and fill out. They learn that from this kind of exposure. I feel like they do learn a lot and there is quite a difference in the students that have been around.

Students who "have been around" contribute to the cohesiveness and the balance of the performing group.

This sense of awareness is not only important to the success of the production or performance component of the arts; in areas such as dance, developing awareness is also critical in preventing injury. Sienna explained that students may have a good sense of form, balance, musicality, and alignment but to know how to protect their knees and back with proper shifting of their weight, "that's a concept that only comes with repetition. You have to repeat that and you have to repeat all of those experiences." For Sienna repetition is a critical component of dance, there is simply no other way around it:

Strength and flexibility are not things that could be checked off the list like "yes I memorized the facts for this history test." You know they have to have strength and this has to be achieved over a period of time with repetition. Flexibility is

achieved over time in combination with strength exercise and stamina exercises and there's just no way to cut corners and do it faster.

Repetition builds the layers of skills. Agape spoke of the disadvantage of not having the chance to build on technique. He felt strongly that just having time to process the information is not enough. Students receive a lot of information during their time in class in preparation for performance. Knowing and doing are two entirely different things. Agape further explained that even if “they [students] know it but they don’t do it well” that would be a problem. Lee used humor to summarize the importance of repetition:

The old joke about the guy walking down the street in New York and says to somebody, "Excuse me buddy, can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?" And the guy answers, "Practice, practice, practice." It's just the same with any [arts] media.

Building a Fellowship —The Experienced Train the New

Many VAPA instructors spoke of the physicality of their discipline going hand-in-hand with a busy exhibition or performance schedule. Having students who have been around and who are familiar with the process is indispensable. Sienna spoke to the experience of teaching an intermediate–advance dance class where there is a range of abilities:

I rely heavily on the people who are there at least a second or a third time to help anchor the class, otherwise we would not get very far. The people who are new to a degree . . . I can’t stop and explain everything over and over and over. So they get used to kind of learning on the fly and not . . . how should I say this, not slowing the pace of the class down on a daily basis on every exercise.

The idea of experienced students serving as “anchor” is a common denominator among all VAPA instructors. Agape used the term “the backbone” of his choir when he talked about his lifelong-leaners and the benefits of having them sing side-by-side with the new

students. It's a synergy that creates cohesion. For Anne, this synergy was transformative in her technical theater class:

The students are mentoring and teaching each other and so by the second, third, and fourth semesters they're doing higher-level skills and organization and scheduling and budgeting and planning and training of the newer students. They grow so much. It's wonderful in that class to watch them grow over the course of four semesters from this squeaky little freshman who's just this little squirrel running around to somebody who's like, "All right. This is what you're doing and this is the schedule," and, "Do that," and, "You're not doing it." It's great. I love to watch them grow.

The attributes Anne highlighted—growth, maturity, and taking charge—are part of the transformation process that VAPA instructors see in those who have been around for a while; their experienced students. Anne spoke about them with pride:

It's this little social group as well. They live in this building and this becomes their circle. We can't get them out at the end of the evening. We have to shove them out the doors and lock them. So a part of it is that as well, they're growing as people and gaining a whole social circle.

Students naturally create their own fellowship, which is of great benefit to the students and the instructors. Neel explained:

They start to build a community of their peers and they motivate each other and they push each other. The intro students feed off of them and I get so many students who take it and say, "Look, I just wanted to learn how to draw and I was interested in the subject and now I am going to be an art major" or "I am going to switch my major and I'm really excited about this stuff" and a lot of that is from seeing where they can go, is by seeing those intermediate and advance and studio concepts students. They see that they want to be a part of that and they want to grow with that.

Karen also appreciated what experienced students add to the mix: "It's really good for us. We are running around crazy trying to get the show up on time, to have somebody who is reliable, they know what it is like to be a crew person." Having the experienced student in class was a win-win arrangement for both students and instructors.

The Disconnect: Eliminating Course Repetition

When participants were asked about how they saw the loss of repetition impacting their teaching practices, a majority of them spoke of the many barriers that now stood in the way of their program's success. Aside from eroding the quality of their programs, participants expressed tremendous concern that these factors in fact were whittling away at the arts programs in general in the community colleges.

Keeping the Standard

Many participants spoke with pride of the reputation of their programs and how they had helped build it over the years. Participants spoke of what worked well in their programs as a way to underscore the difference between then and now. Their perspective on the loss of repetition was that it was taking their programs in the wrong direction. Kay spoke about the success her students had in transferring to 4-year institutions, knowing she was on the right track:

They [4-year institutions] know stylistically, they go "oh, that is a dancer who trained with Kay." Yes, I have a reputation for that and they have said that. I would say, "OK, I know I'm onto something that is good." Now, if we can't [have repetition] . . . how am I going to do that in 2 years? I don't know if they're going to be "the Kay Babies." They [4-year institutions] might go, "hum, what were you doing there Kay? You sent this student to us, not good." That reputation will be gone . . . or "they'll say, send them back!" But then, they [students] can't come back.

She struggled with how to make her program work for students in a shorter timeline.

Speeding up the skill-building process was something she was unsure how it would work.

Along the same lines, Blue spoke with pride about the success of his program:

So many of the art schools and even university art departments require portfolio entrances. Our students always do well. They usually, depending on their emphasis, let's just say it's fine art; they walk in with a portfolio of paintings and drawings, maybe prints, that always gets them in the class.

Then, his tone turned somber as he reflected on the changes. He worried about maintaining the standards of his program and how the loss of repetition was not only going to impact his program but that of the 4-year institution as well.

One Cal State [faculty member] sought me out recently, and said, “We really have trouble with this repeatability.” They are suffering from it too. But they said, “The quality of student is not as good” and obviously, I agreed. And they were saying to me, they wanted me to put a meeting together between my faculty and their faculty because we turn out consistently very qualified students. They want to make sure with this lack of repeatability that we can maintain that standard. And of course, we can't. We can do our best, but we can't. But I thought it was interesting, that they would come forward and say, “We've always respected the students that come out of your school. How can we keep that connection? Because if the tide is low for everybody, you guys are still going to be a bit better.”

The above exemplars highlight the deep concern VAPA instructors have about undoing what has been working. The loss of repetition may start by tarnishing well-established program reputations but, it also creates what Blue described as “the cookie-cutter education” where everybody studying the arts gets the minimum set of courses.

Look for training elsewhere. All participants touched on the need for students to obtain more training irrespective of their area of interest in the arts. An in-depth study of the arts is a lifelong pursuit. However, with the loss of repetition, the majority of participants said students at the community colleges pursuing the study of the arts will need to look for other means or go elsewhere for their education. Sienna saw the loss of repetition as devastating to her program:

Now what we're going to be forced to do is . . . they're [students are] going to have to get that training some other way if their goal is to transfer to a university or to have their own studio one day or to have a job on Broadway or any kind of life—dance, theater, musical performance. They really can't expect . . . our program was really one of the best in the nation for many years and I just see how this [loss of repetition] is just dismantling our program and I don't see why

students are going to be drawn to come study at our program when they can't get what they need.

Similarly, Lee added that ironically community colleges VAPA students, who perhaps can least afford private classes, will need to look elsewhere to complete their education:

If you are interested in making art, you're going to have to find a way to do it. It may not be supplied to you. There are places you can go. If you have the money, you can take different kinds of workshops. You can go to like a life drawing workshops. Find ways outside of the traditional educational system in order to make this happen. That it's going to be more on you [the student]. We cannot supply you with as much as we used to be able to. So if you're not getting, if your portfolio is not up to snuff, if you want to transfer then, you've got to find a way outside of school to make it happen.

This sentiment of an undereducated population of VAPA students resonated with many participants. Even Neel, who expressed no objection to the elimination of repetition, spoke to the fact that students make progress at different rates.

It's a problem and it may contradict a lot of what I just said but, it is a true problem. Because, you will have a student who takes the beginning [level] and who passes the beginning because they do all the work. They do all the projects but, their skill attainment isn't the same as others. Some people just aren't going to get that skill or that technique down and they take the intermediate and then, they go through and they are just not progressing at the same level.

If students are not receiving the opportunity to build their skill level they will need to find ways to augment their education and training in order to remain competitive and to make progress in their educational path. The alternative is that they may be forced to stop or give it up.

Anne contextualized the problem, saying:

When they [students] leave here they will be less prepared than they have been in the past because they [have] been forced to stop taking some of these skill classes. That means they won't do as well at a 4-year university probably. And if they try to go out into the [work] force they will be less prepared than other people they're in competition with for work and it will affect their careers. That's what we look for when we hire people in the industry—people who have experience and skills.

Where are they [students] going to get those experience and skills if we're cutting them off here?

“Keep Doing What We Have Been Doing”

Almost all participants shared the common belief the state policy on eliminating course repetition does impact their existing teaching practices. Interestingly, when asked if they would make substantial changes to the way they teach their courses, most of the participants indicated that they had no intentions of making any major changes to the way they usually present the course material. Kay stated, “I’m going to still keep doing what I’m doing because I believe in what I do.” Jim also affirmed that he had no plans to make any significant change to his teaching:

So, yes we have written additional curriculum to . . . in essence what we have done is written additional curriculum so that the state will be happy and so we can keep doing what we have been doing and accomplishing the goals that we’ve been accomplishing. So we basically have done extra work just to do the same thing.

As participants spoke on this topic there was an undertone of defiance in their voices coupled with a hint of frustration depending on the amount of work they put in to make their curriculum changes. Two participants spoke candidly about how they had to lessen the content load of their classes and make them easier.

A lot of my classes are easier now. I have had to make them easier. I know I’m not the only professor that’s done that. With all of this push towards student success, student success . . . A lot of them [students], in my lecture class even, I would say a good 30% of them don’t even take notes during the lecture.

For Karen, it was apparent that the demands placed upon her were taking a toll. She had written 12 new curricula, she continues to shoulder all the responsibility for the technical theater program, and she still has to worry about her students and how they are retaining

the course material. There was only so much she could do. Many participants agreed that those who are going to feel the most impact are the students.

Sienna summarized the sentiment shared by many participants, saying: “The philosophy right now seems to be ‘get them in, get them out.’” Neel felt that students were not getting a well-rounded education because oftentimes they are not able to take the classes they want and instead, they are taking the classes they have to take. Sienna provided one troubling example of the effects of the new system:

And our counselors are falling right in suit. So our dance majors have come back to us and said, “you know, I’m really confused. I had, in order to get in the college, I had to have an education plan now to get the priority registration.” So, they [students] are all coming in, they have to get an education plan. They must meet with a counselor. The counselors are telling them “don’t take dance.” And one student told me, she said “well, I’m [a] dance major, that’s what I’m doing.” The counselor said “but you can do that once you get to the university. Just focus on your academics in these 2 years and wait to dance.” What the counselors do not understand is these kids will not be able to be dance majors in the university because they haven’t trained sufficiently to go in as a junior.

The disruption and the impact of the loss of repetition on the participants range widely.

However, the ramification many not be immediately apparent until years later.

“Happy Middle Ground”

It is important to note that not all participants responded negatively to the elimination of repetition. Max sympathized with what the state was trying to accomplish. He was in agreement with the direction the state was taking in addressing the limited resources to fund the educational programs at the community colleges.

Well, I agree with them, and I think the state has said we want to put our money into students who are entering the system for the first time and those that are working toward job training, transfer, all of those things. From my understanding, that’s where the primary emphasis has to be and other things are going to have to take a back seat or they’re going to not exist. Those things like somebody taking unlimited yoga classes at a community college, there are other ways to deal with that.

For Max, the loss of repetition is a “happy middle ground.” In ceramics, he has seen many lifelong students enroll semester after semester because they simply loved working in that arts medium:

One of the things I think the state was getting at was trying to eliminate those people who have been here forever, 10-15 years. So what I did for the first time and I finally got this approved was set up a community education class of intermediate ceramics. So all of those people who had maxed out and were no longer eligible, they’d had more than four semesters of ceramics, so their options were to go to another school, go to one of the Cal States, and most of them are not interested in that. So I set up this program through Community Education.

Max believed that it was not financially feasible to continue down the path of unrestricted enrollment for those who had no intention of transferring or completing certificates for job training. He was able to set up a Community Education program for the lifelong learners in ceramics.

Most of the students who have been here forever don’t care about credits, or grade point average, none of that matters, they want to hone their skills in craft and develop their arts. They’re probably happier that there’s no grade involved.

Max felt that this was a good compromise. He explained that for the first time in 22 years he was only teaching Beginning Ceramics and would only teach one section of intermediate level next semester. This has changed his job fundamentally in that he is mainly teaching lower level GE courses. He added, “It opened up a spot [room] for 30 more students needing to fulfill a general education requirement. Our job at community college is to teach lower division classes and some of what we were doing, prior to this with the repeatable courses . . . it was inevitable.”

Similarly, Neel spoke to the need of moving students along in their educational path:

If I ever saw a student more than four times, it's time to move on. I mean, to be honest I think if I see a student more than two or three times they need to get some information from someone else. I can only give you so much information that I've accumulated. You need to get a little bit more variety so, I think once you do three or four times—I'd say four times, I think you really need to move on to another experience.

For Neel, students who wish to focus on a subject area need to transfer to a 4-year institution to obtain a more in-depth study. Like Max, Neel's perspective was that the elimination of repetition was the right approach:

I think they are very positive for the student. OK, like I said, what they say is the definition of insanity? Is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. If you have someone who's taking the same class over and over again but they think they're going to grow. Skill attainment, yes, you do something over and over and you're going to get better at it. But you deserve more knowledge. You deserve a variety of information so I think it benefits the student greatly. I really do.

Although Neel had no objections to the loss of repetition and even argued that pedagogically it made sense in his discipline, with a look of bewilderment he spoke of the lack of understanding of the real intent behind the elimination of repetition. Neel contextualized what he believed was happening, saying:

It seems like that new student coming in is worth more money than the one that has been here for a long time or is of more value in some way or another because it seems like they're trying to keep getting the new, fresh students in. One of the things that has come up that I've heard a lot is that if you have repeatability, it clogs the classes, so these new students can't get in. Well, that just proves my point. Obviously, you're focused more on the new student than this student that has been there for a while, supposedly clogging the classes. So, I'm under the assumption that a new student somehow brings in more money.

All participants cited money as the driving force behind this state-initiated policy, specifically, the privation of it. However, the most evident disconnect for participants was how to reconcile their focus on the holistic progress of all students with what they perceived as an apparent distinction the state was making between new and continuing

students. Students' progress and growth was an undercurrent for all participants in everything they said. Whether they were new or continuing students, the principal focus was still the student's learning. To most participants of this study, a student is a student and should be accorded the same considerations regardless of how long they have been studying the visual and performing arts.

Limiting Skill-Building Leads to an Undereducated Class of VAPA Students

When asked to describe the student population in the VAPA classes, participants in this study said that they were "from all over" and "a hodgepodge of people." Not only were the students a reflection of the diverse community college population but also, they were taking VAPA classes for a wide range of reasons. Many participants stated that the diversity of this student population oftentimes proved to be very challenging at the instructional level but also in terms of helping students reach broader educational goals. Working largely with underprepared students with little formal arts education under their belts and who often come with complicated life issues is a challenge. Adding to this mix, the elimination of repetition on disciplines that are largely predicated on building skills makes the teaching and the learning of the arts an even more formidable endeavor. It was a continuous balancing act for the participants to educate, to motivate, and to prepare their students. Participants largely expressed a deep concern for their students' ability to have a meaningful engagement in their studies of the arts. A theme emerged in relation to the third research question: How do arts instructors anticipate state-initiated curriculum changes impacting the access to arts learning for students with limited preparation in the arts?

The Community College VAPA Students

All participants spoke of the diverse composition of students in their classrooms. Lee described them as “all the way from students who have just come out of high school to students who are returning veterans, students who are older and want to come back to school for whatever—either personal or professional reasons.” Many participants also talked about working with a significant population of students with disabilities and the challenges they experienced. Neel spoke about his drawing class and described the challenges these students faced:

In the studio arts, I get a lot of people with mental disorders. I get students on the autism spectrum. I get students that their parents want them to “mainstream.” They are of college age and they think the best way to “mainstream” them is to put them in a drawing class because they think . . . Now, a lot of them are shocked once they realize the type of information that is given in there [the drawing class] but that’s where they start and then they move along and then, they move to the intermediate [level] and they move to the advanced [level] but they are just barely passing each one.

Neel’s experience matched that of Blue, who also teaches drawing classes. Blue said, “I would say, you know, we try and hold our standard but we also try and work with them. We have some students with disabilities, sometimes severe.” Many participants indicated that they had difficulty in discerning the type of disability their students had and oftentimes struggled to find the right approach to help these students make progress in their class. Max explained that it was not easy to work with a student population that faced so many challenges:

That’s just it, they [students] have very complicated lives, I can tell you the stories I’ve heard. I had three students in one class, there were two deaths, one her sister died in a car accident, another her uncle died from drug overdose and another had a horrific experience as a child and was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Then, you add the veterans to that who have all kinds of issues with concentration because of the brain injuries and trauma. It’s, you know, there are

plenty who think teaching at a community college or teaching is a walk in the park. But this is hard work if you take it seriously, if you are conscientious about it.

All participants spoke of the effort they continuously make to work with their students, to keep them focused on their educational goals and to encourage them to rise above their circumstances. For Jim, many of his students faced incredible odds: “I mean there’s no money, there’s no food sometimes, there’s no parental support of any kind. They live in appalling conditions. It’s one step above living on the street sometimes.”

When asked to describe the profile of their student population, participants were in agreement that they were the atypical college student. Whether this description is representative of the entire community college student body regardless of the area of study is difficult to say. All participants concurred that in general their students have complicated life issues.

Lack of Academic Preparation

Another characteristic that was highly intertwined with the diversity of the student body was the lack of academic preparation in the visual and performing arts. Even Blue, whose college is in a unified school district that has a strong commitment to the arts, spoke of the lack of focus in the high school arts curricula.

The high school teachers that teach art, they're very good at what they do, and they do have at least some resources. But, the way in which they teach is not focused. And maybe it shouldn't be. You know, in an art class, they might cover a lot of different media in a year, and so there's no focus—it's more like just dipping your toe in the lake but not diving in. So when they [students] get here [community college], we have to instill in them a work ethic and a quality of performance level that we want our students to achieve. And we help them build discipline and be self-motivated in these areas. This is rarely evident in a new student.

Blue is fortunate to be part of a school district that supports the arts. However, even in this situation, Blue still needed to help his high school students build the foundation information that they lacked. Blue described the information presented at the high school level as cursory. Francisco exemplified the problem:

So they get here and they have three hours of rehearsal and then they have to go home and decipher what we dealt with. A lot of them have a lot of trouble. They don't know how to practice or they don't have enough time or they don't feel it's important. So they come back for a few weeks and then they realize that it's a lot different than it was in high school.

Similarly, Sienna explained that the lack of a solid understanding of the fundamentals often led to additional work and sometimes even corrections in the techniques that the students had previously learned by rote:

So I literally had students in my class several years ago, one young woman who was very upset that she had never learned how to do a tendu plié and I said "what's so interesting to me because you can do turns and you leap." And she said "I just copied. They just showed me what the skill is and I just copied but I never had any of the preparation or the fundamentals or the background." So, we had a lot of catching up to do because when [they're] young, [their] bones, joints, muscles will do these highly physical activities and [they] might not get injured.

The transition from high school to college arts program is often not seamless. The more focused approach of the college VAPA courses is frequently an unfamiliar pedagogical style to the incoming college student. Jim's assessment was more direct: "In my experience here, they [high school students] come in, on average, not knowing anything about what this [theater] is about." He explained that students might have been part of high school theater productions however, when reviewing basic concepts that a beginning actor in training should know, frequently they did not know the information.

A second characteristic that participants noted in their students is the initial lack of discipline and perseverance. Sienna spoke of having to adjust to the community college student:

They [students] would sign up and maybe they would just drop within 3 or 4 weeks. That was kind of hard for me to get used to and then I understood that it was a different population, the community college. They weren't necessarily coming in with the same discipline and focus that a university student would have. And so over the years I've realized it takes a little extra nurturing to kind of keep them on track and to help them learn the material, master the material and get their lives in order.

Sienna was not alone in having to spend additional time nurturing her students. Many participants spoke explicitly about the fact that many of their students frequently do not have a clear educational objective. Lee stated that many students "want to explore something different and they want to learn what sculpture is about. The rest are just trying to, like I said, fulfill an arts requirement and this class was open." Not only do the incoming college students not have a clear educational objective but even if they knew that they wanted to study the arts, there is still a lot of discovery that students needed to do. Blue spoke to this need:

Not every artist is going to be a painter and a lot of these students come in and they don't know what kind of creative person they're going to be. They just know they're creative. And so they test the waters.

Along the same lines, Sienna commented:

Some of them do take it [dance class] as an elective and once they get in there they find out that it really is something that they're passionately drawn to. Some of them maybe would have liked to dance but their family didn't have the money, couldn't afford it, or the family's philosophy was that this was not a serious major that they could pursue. But then, once they get in there [class], they start taking a few more dance classes, and as long as they still keep up with their academics, so it takes them a while . . . and then, they realize they want to be a dance major.

Many participants spoke of the need to allow students the time to explore and to discover their own interests in the many areas within the arts discipline. It is a process that often takes multiple trials and rarely can it be rushed.

“They Just Don’t Fill Out the Paperwork”

A common source of frustration reported by all participants is described in the title of this subtheme. Neel, like many other participants, could not explain why a large number of VAPA students do not usually file for degree completion:

The biggest problem is they just don’t fill out the paperwork and that’s an issue that I’ve been trying to change. ‘Specially, if we are going to go into performance-based funding and it’s important to show the viability of these programs by people earning degrees. Some students in the art classes, I have talked to them, they have all the credits to earn the degree and they know they are going to transfer to Cal State Long Beach or something but, they don’t even get the degree. They don’t walk [graduation]. They don’t do anything. They just transfer and then, the problem with our school . . . the powers-that-be look at us and say, “Why are there not that many people receiving degrees?” and if you explain that to them, it’s not really a viable answer for them.

Like Neel, Karen lamented that in her program: “We don’t show a lot of majors. I think a lot of them are undeclared and some of them don’t get around to declaring the major.”

VAPA students’ not declaring a major is a source of great concern for the participants.

Many expressed fear that the lack of degree completion in their discipline was detrimental to the funding of their program. Sienna explained that it was not for the lack of tracking her students:

We knew which ones were serious about dance and when we . . . I always give an assignment where they have to do a personal evaluation and they have to tell me their three short-term goals, long-term goals, and what steps they’re taking and I make notes and I track them. But half of these people had never . . . most of them had not ever committed, you know, in their files to be dance majors.

VAPA students generally were not in the habit of filing paperwork to show degree

completion. Most participants, as Blue did, reported that they are now taking direct action:

In the past we would just say “if you want to get your AA degree before you transfer, if you want that piece of paper you have to go get the application.” Now we literally get it to them, offer to turn it in for them.

For Blue, collecting the actual applications from his students was the only way he could make sure that they would file for degree completion. Although the VAPA students did not see the importance of this process, this was a step that many participants were willing to take as a way to ensure the viability of their programs.

Consequences of Eliminating Course Repetition

Along with the challenges that VAPA students face that are external to their studies of the arts, many participants spoke of the elimination of course repetition as yet another barrier that will have significant impact to arts learning for their students. Many participants expressed that the budget cuts in recent years have significantly reduced the number of academic courses in many community colleges. And, the number of course reductions has, in many cases, resulted in loss of enrollment due to schedule conflict.

Sienna spoke about how she saw this change take place:

One thing that has definitely impacted our students is their ability to take more dance classes. With all the state budget problems we have fewer sections in the academic courses available and what I’m finding more and more is . . . it started a couple of years ago, dancers who want to be in a particular dance class are saying, “You know, I can’t fit it in my schedule because I can only take this academic class that I have to have in order to graduate. I can only take it at this time. So therefore, I won’t be able to take my dance technique class.”

With less technique classes available to the students, coupled with the loss of repetition, the opportunities to build the necessary skills and to receive proper training are significantly diminished. Several participants shared this concern for their students. Kay

feared that “people would think that it’s meaningless [to study dance]. Like, why even bother if I can’t get the training.” Given the difficulties that students would need to overcome to take VAPA courses, participants worried that students were less likely to persevere and may simply choose to give up. Lee summarized his concerns on a system that is increasing student unfriendly:

What, of course, has happened that I've seen, is that by the time a structure like that gets down to the actual level of us, down here, at the bottom of the food chain, is now suddenly limiting the ability of people to take classes. Not only eliminating the repeatability but making, I would say, punishing people for having too many units. We make it harder and the message is “we don't really want you here.” By cutting classes, we had then a huge drop of course enrollment. Everybody is having a huge drop of enrollment and now everybody's scrambling to get students in the doors because, with repeatability gone and all the things they put in place, they have made it so there are fewer students coming in the doors.

Many participants agreed that when it is this difficult for students to get what they want, they will likely lose them.

Not Good Enough to Transfer—A Second-Class Degree

In conjunction with the diminished access to VAPA courses is the concern of inadequate preparation and training for transfer. Many participants spoke explicitly of being urged “to move students through the system as fast as possible.” With a clearly defined family of courses, students are limited to taking a specific number of courses within an area or discipline. To many participants, this notion is more likely to hinder the transfer of VAPA students than to facilitate the process. The elevated level of frustration was palpable when Sienna spoke about how difficult it is going to be for her program:

I mean, that’s the main problem I see. If we’re being tracked, as we are now, by how many students we have going for credential programs, how many we have that are graduating? . . . If we’re being tracked for all of this, what’s our success rate with transferring them? Well, our success rate for transferring them as dance

majors will just be a moot point because they're not going to be good enough to get in to the universities.

She was not alone in her concern. Several other participants, particularly those who have a longstanding reputation of transferring quality students, had great concerns that their students were not going to pass auditions or have strong portfolios to be accepted in to the program.

Blue underscored the importance of building skills and experience, explaining that in his discipline area, regardless of the college degree, when employers look to hire an illustrator or a graphic designer they are looking for talent and experience. They want someone with a “killer portfolio,” someone with a well-rounded experience. By completing a set number of courses, “we wind up with a culture that's undereducated, the cookie-cutter, everybody you know gets just this and no more.” For Blue, this approach only produces “second-class” degrees. Students are being pushed from the community colleges to the 4-year institutions without the necessary level of preparation to succeed at that level or to be employable. Sienna's perception was that slowly the arts will almost inevitably fall by the wayside:

Well, you can't have majors with this system. This system does not allow you to have dance major—legitimate dance majors. Because dance majors suggest they're doing in-depth study in dance. So you can't truly . . . I don't think any college that you're speaking to can truly consider that they have majors unless they've done some really in-depth maneuvering to train these students.

Without in-depth training, her program would not have any dance majors. And, without the dance majors, she would not have any transfers. Sienna feared that she would be hard-pressed to justify the existence of her program.

The majority of the participants in this study anticipate that the state-initiated

changes on course repetition will have a long-term impact to arts learning even though the extent of this impact may not be immediately evident. Participants described the VAPA student population as often having a precarious hold on their educational goals and often having to overcome an array of obstacles to succeed in their chosen educational path. Thus, as stewards of VAPA programs, the majority of participants voiced the need to take action beyond those prescribed by the state to ensure that arts education remains a viable and worthy pursuit for the community college student. Almost all participants of this study perceived the loss of repetition as a harbinger of changes to come that can significantly threaten the value and place of arts education. Lee summarized the importance of keeping a place for the arts among the core subjects in postsecondary education and explored the dangers of eliminating it:

The more access to arts education people have, the more they understand the purpose of art and the purpose of art is not as quantifiable as a lot of other things. And so, how art functions in our society is often not understood as you're growing up. Some people, all they know is that some things are cool. And so having less access to that, the long-term effect, to me, is that you graduate people who have not had the opportunity to explore these things, the value of the arts. It's an unknown, so it is not as valued.

And, those are the people who are going to be making the decisions in the future and if we do not give them the opportunity to explore and to be a part of an arts community, then it's going to be foreign to them and they will then not fund the arts and will not see the purpose of it.

Conclusion

Through the interviews, VAPA instructors in this study shared their unique approach to addressing state-initiated curricular changes. To varying degrees, participants struggled to make sense of these changes. There was little uniformity in the way participants chose to reconcile their pedagogical practices with the state requirements. Participants underscored the artificiality of the framework that was given

to them and expressed concerns of the many barriers that now stood in the way of their program's success and their ability to provide students with a holistic arts education.

The findings of this study served as the basis for understanding the implications and provided the foundation from which to make recommendations for policy and practice that could help future policy makers design systems of change that take into account the needs of those who will be impacted by it.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS

A summary of the study, its methodology, and its findings are provided in this final chapter. Discussions on the findings presented in Chapter 4 are interpreted in response to the three main research questions. The Discipline-Based Arts Education framework is used in providing a critical examination of the findings and, thereafter, assists in reframing discussions about VAPA education in the community colleges. Conclusions, recommendations for policy and practice as well as recommendations for future study are also offered in this chapter.

Summary of the Study

As the cost of education continues to rise in challenging economic times, state legislators express concerns about providing enrollment opportunities at the CCC for specific populations such as recent high school graduates. Meanwhile, continuing students, particularly those with high-unit count, are not progressing fast enough through the system to reach their educational goals. This bottleneck effect is adversely affecting the open access goal of the CCC.

In 2011, the Legislative Analyst's Office recommended placing a cap on state-supported instruction rather than continuing to subsidize community college students with high-unit count (LAO, 2011). The resulting legislative action was primarily directed at eliminating course repetition in skill-based courses, which included the visual and

performing arts. The CCC began working on aligning their curricula in anticipation of the Title 5 changes. Their efforts were met with difficulty, as they did not have finalized guidelines on how to adopt procedures pertaining to the repetition of courses. The comprehensive explanation of the Title 5 regulations governing when a student may repeat a credit course was finally approved and released by the CCCCCO in November 2013.

This legislative action has had significant implications on the VAPA disciplines and the development of the overall progression of arts education. This new state-initiated action poses significant challenges for the VAPA instructors as they look to sustain the unique character of their VAPA discipline. Because the repeated practice of a skill is pivotal to the VAPA learning process (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008), the elimination of course repetition has significant implications for the teaching and the promotion of the visual and performing arts.

The purpose of this study was to explore how VAPA instructors reconciled the requirements of their discipline with state educational policy. In particular, how VAPA instructors experienced the elimination of course repetition and how state-initiated curriculum changes are likely to influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning.

The primary questions framing this study are:

1. How are arts instructors redesigning the arts curricula in light of new state educational policies on eliminating course repetition?
2. How do arts instructors see these state-initiated policy changes impacting their teaching practices?

3. How do arts instructors anticipate state-initiated curriculum changes impacting the access to arts learning for students with limited preparation in the arts?

Because this study sought to understand how VAPA instructors construct their professional identity in relation to the political and instructional context, a qualitative approach of inquiry was used. Qualitative interviews capture in more tangible ways the voices and perceptions of VAPA instructors as they relate their professional practices and their knowledge of the standards of effective teaching and performance to the state-initiated curriculum changes. As the primary data collection instrument for this study was interviews, the interview protocol was piloted and each time careful adjustments were made to ensure that the questions were clear and effective in soliciting in-depth information rich in detail and knowledge.

As the aim of this study was to understand the perceptions of VAPA instructors, a more deliberate approach and focus was used in the selection of participants.

Participants had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study: (a) currently teaching skilled-based classes in the visual arts and performing arts discipline and have at least 5 years of teaching experience; (b) have experience working with students who have taken visual or performing classes more than one time, even after successful completion; (c) have a critique component or student portfolio requirement as part of the course work.

This qualitative interview study used a thematic approach to describe the multiple perspectives that VAPA instructors hold about state-initiated curriculum changes.

Thereafter, the next step was to identify a gatekeeper (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) at each research site who would help facilitate the research approval process and access to the participants for this study. Although the request to conduct research was

made at eight community colleges, after following their respective institutional requirements for research, approval was granted at four. Of these four sites, 14 VAPA instructors responded expressing interest in participating in this research study. However, one participant eventually dropped out of the study prior to his scheduled interview.

The participants in this study were discipline experts in the four major VAPA disciplines: visual arts, music, theater, and dance. All participants were fulltime tenure-track or tenured VAPA instructors. The majority of participants had between 10-20 years of teaching experience in their subject area. Two participants had over 30 years of teaching experience while two participants had less than 10 years of teaching experience. Four of the 13 participants interviewed were female.

All interviews were conducted at a location specified by the participant. Participants were provided with the Informed Consent Form detailing the purpose and scope of the study prior to the interview. All 13 interviews were recorded with the permission of the participant. Before each interview, participants were provided with the option of receiving a hard copy of their interview transcription as well as the option to participate in the member-checking process. Only seven participants accepted both options.

Upon completion of each interview, the digital recording was sent to a professional transcription service. All transcriptions were reviewed multiple times for accuracy and subsequently uploaded to NVivo qualitative software program. Using Saldaña's (2009) first cycle coding methods, each transcription was read in-depth and coded. Beginning with the data that related specifically to the theoretical framework of

this study, the initial review was primarily centered on identifying the nuances and discrete parts of the data collected (Saldaña, 2009). After the initial coding method (Saldaña, 2009) and upon further reflection of the content, the analysis progressed to a preliminary grouping of data and the initial clustering of codes. Following this first level of analysis, each transcript was read a second and a third time and each time the data corpus was reviewed using an amalgam of structural, values, versus, and evaluation coding methods (Saldaña, 2009). This process was repeated with all 13 interview transcripts. Next, progressing to the second cycle coding methods (Saldaña, 2009), the analysis consisted of reduction and further clustering of the data corpus by using the pattern and focused coding (Saldaña, 2009). Upon completion of the second cycle coding, the clusters of codes were categorized. In reviewing the categories that emerged and following further analytical reflection and consolidation of categories, larger themes were identified.

Findings

Findings from the study point to three primary themes: (a) involuntary curriculum changes create artificial instructional frameworks, (b) unsought input from discipline experts lead to negative perceptions and problematic implementation of state-initiated policy, (a) limiting skill building leads to an undereducated class of VAPA students. This section offers a summary of the findings presented in Chapter 4.

VAPA instructors' approach to curriculum design for art production presupposes the notion that repeated practice of a skill is pivotal to the learning process. The state-initiated curriculum changes pertaining to course repetition created significant challenges for the VAPA instructors. With the elimination of repetition, a large number of

participants in the study looked to remedying the situation by creating new VAPA curricula. Their desired goals were twofold: come in compliance with the state policy, and give VAPA students additional opportunities to increase their skill levels. However, findings from this study revealed that in trying to sustain the unique character and the needs of their VAPA discipline, there was little uniformity and commonality in the approach participants took to reconcile the pedagogical practices of their discipline with the state-initiated curricular changes. Some participants resorted to introducing an inordinate number of new curricula while a few chose to make no changes.

A large number of participants in this study expressed a general sense of frustration as they felt pressured to tinker with their curriculum to meet state requirements. In following the state requirements, many stated that the new curriculum that they introduced had an artificial framework. The new curriculum did not necessarily address students' preparedness nor was it in line with existing pedagogical practices. Many participants stated that their curriculum representatives provided them with very specific wording for the new curricula in order to establish very distinct objectives of each course within a family of courses. Several participants were troubled that they might be held accountable for meeting artificial objectives that they believed were setting unrealistic expectations. Conversely, a small number of participants expressed that they circumvented the state requirements and resorted to transgressions that they believed to be justifiable because it gave their students the necessary preparation to study the arts.

Findings from the study indicated many participants relied on the understanding and the interpretation of their curriculum representatives to make sense of the state policy. In writing additional new courses, participants encountered course numbering

and sequencing problems. The new courses created as part of the family of courses oftentimes did not follow a sequential course progression because the next course number was already taken by another course. Thus, many of the new courses were simply assigned the next available number. For participants, the non-sequential course numbering of the family of courses was an area of concern, as they believed it would only make the course level progression confusing for the VAPA students.

The study also found the reconciliation between prevalent teaching practices and state-initiated curriculum changes was problematic for many participants. Participants in the study spoke of instilling confidence, perseverance, and discipline as key attributes of their pedagogical practice. They discouraged VAPA students from giving up too quickly. All participants recognized skill-building as inherent to the process of arts learning and making. Giving students the opportunity to add layers of learning increased and developed awareness and refinement. Students were better prepared to meet industry demands and thus were more likely to find and retain employment. In the same way, students were better prepared and more competitive in their application for scholarships and transfer to 4-year programs.

Many participants affirmed that with repetition and opportunities to build their skill levels, students exhibited growth in all four foundational areas of the arts. Students acquired a broader understanding of the arts, its history and value. They were able to give much more in-depth critique and evaluation of their own work as well as the work of others. They developed a more refined aesthetic sense. And lastly, they were able to enhance and expand their knowledge of the processes and techniques for creating art.

Repetition helped students build layers of skills. It was also the synergy that transformed the new, inexperienced students to the mature, take-charge, experienced one.

For the most part, findings indicated that the majority of the participants expressed a deep sense of disconnect between state requirements and their goal to provide a holistic arts education. With the elimination of repetition, students had fewer opportunities to build skills and would need to look elsewhere to augment their learning. Participants felt that students were going to be underprepared for employment and undereducated for transfer to 4-year institutions. To this end, several participants expressed grave concerns about the future of their programs and the likely loss of their program's reputation. Many expressed doubt that they would be able to maintain the existing standards of their programs.

The study also found that many participants believed that the elimination of course repetition did impact their existing teaching practices. However, participants continued to believe that their teaching practices had been very effective and had contributed to their students' success. Thus, not surprisingly, participants said they had no intentions of changing their teaching methods. Perhaps what was surprising was that no participant offered any discussions on how they might reexamine their teaching practices in light of the state's regulatory action. Very possibly, it might have been too early in the process for the participants to have a full grasp of the impact of these changes.

Notwithstanding, a small number of participants admitted they had reduced the content of their courses and had made their classes "easier." These participants indicated

that they were overwhelmed by the increasing administrative demands and the added workload outside their teaching assignments.

It is important to note that not all participants in the study responded negatively to the elimination of repetition. The study found that a small number of participants sympathized with the state's actions. These participants believed that it was no longer financially feasible to allow for unrestricted enrollment for those students who had no intentions of transferring to 4-year institution or completing certificates to pursue employment.

The third thematic finding of this study addressed the anticipated effects of eliminating repetition on the VAPA students. All the participants described the VAPA student population as very diverse and, more often than not, burdened by complicated life issues and circumstances. The study found that VAPA students shared several common characteristics. First, a large majority of students entering the community college arts program lacked proper academic preparation in the arts. Participants indicated that many students had little or no understanding of the fundamental concepts and techniques. Second, VAPA students frequently did not have a clear educational objective. Many students needed the time to explore and to discover their own interests in the many areas within the arts discipline. And third, VAPA students often did not take the time to file for degree completion. Given these challenges, the majority of the participants indicated that the state-initiated policy on eliminating course repetition would whittle away at the access to arts education.

Discussion

Research Question #1: How Are Arts Instructors Redesigning the Arts Curricula in Light of New State Educational Policies on Eliminating Course Repetition?

Findings suggested that there was little uniformity and commonality in the approach participants took to reconcile the pedagogical practices of their discipline with the state-initiated curricular changes. Most participants had a general understanding of the state requirements; however, many perceived these requirements to be an artificial framework superimposed on their discipline area. Many participants felt pressured to reaffirm their hold over their discipline domain by making curriculum changes. These findings are in alignment with the literature in that educational policy changes seek to disrupt or alter existing practices and professional communities will respond by protecting or preserving their current practices (Coburn, 2001; Gallucci, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the DBAE framework that suggests arts curricula involves recognizing the appropriate development level and should be organized to increase students learning and understanding (Clark, 1991). Participants often underscored the tenets of this framework. As such, the findings showed that many participants made changes to their curricula in response to what they perceived were the developmental levels of their VAPA student population. And, the perception of the VAPA students' development levels varied significantly among participants and thus, their approach to making changes to their curricula was also highly divergent.

From the findings, the changes were widespread. Participant Sienna, for instance, resorted to creating more than 20 new courses, Blue made changes to his certificates, and still others opted not to take any action. As noted in the literature, the implementation of

an education policy is taxing, unpredictable, difficult to control, and often prone to unintended consequences (Smylie & Evans, 2006). As posited by Coburn and Stein (2006), when there is no opportunity to connect, participate, or negotiate with the community of policy makers, the outcome between policy and practice is problematic and often fragmented.

This study found that many participants felt that the state's requirements appeared to hold little regard to the skill-building process that is intrinsic to the VAPA discipline. Many participants responded in kind by leveling and creating more courses. This is consistent with Goodwin (1998) and Sabol (2004) who noted that VAPA arts instructors are increasingly under significant pressure to implement measures of accountability often dictated by policymakers and educational reformers. However, as many curriculum scholars have noted in the literature, the curriculum development process is a time-intensive enterprise that requires analytical reflection, consideration, and support (Darlington, 2008). Without the rigorous examination of the connections between the curriculum and the art form (Flynn, 2009), the resulting curriculum development is likely to be a poor alignment between policy goals and discipline expert's knowledge and experience (McLaughlin, 2006). The result may well lead to "grafting" of new approaches onto existing practices without meaningful changes to pedagogical principles (Coburn & Stein, 2006; Coburn, 2004; Cuban, 1993). Such curricular misalignment is likely to do more harm than good to the overall arts educational context (Darlington, 2008).

Research Question #2: How Do Arts Instructors See These State-Initiated Policy Changes Impacting Their Teaching Practices?

Findings showed that the reconciliation between teaching practices and educational policy changes was problematic. Participants reported that their teaching practices remained centered on giving VAPA students a solid foundation on concepts, methods of inquiry, and techniques. This was consistent with the DBAE tenets in which the content for VAPA instruction is derived from the disciplines of aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and art production (Clark, 1991). All participants affirmed that they incorporated, either in part or in its entirety, the DBAE principles into their teaching practices. However, almost all participants placed most emphasis on the production aspects of the arts. Participants in the visual arts focused on teaching students to develop the methods and techniques to achieve fluency in the visual language of the arts, whereas the performing arts participants focused on teaching students to prepare for the moment of performance. In both discipline areas, repetition was pivotal to skill building and skill building was inherent to the process of arts production.

The findings in this study suggested that the emphasis on the production aspects of the arts were significantly more prevalent when the arts discipline included a vocational component. Participants expressed most concern over the elimination of repetition and its effects on training students for employment. To fulfill the vocational goals of their programs, students needed opportunities to build their skills. Karen and Anne, for instance, structured their courses to give students multiple opportunities to study the different areas of technical theater. With reduced production participation, technical theater students were not able to learn the different skill sets and acquire the

experience required by employers. This noteworthy finding underscores a separate dimension of arts education that is often overlooked in the literature. The study of the arts, aside from its preeminent academic aspirations, is also relatively pragmatic. The state-initiated policy change on course repetition is a barrier that hinders the progress of the vocational goals of the arts education.

All participants stated that the state policy on eliminating course repetition did impact their teaching practices. However, interestingly, most participants indicated that they had no intentions of making significant changes to their teaching practices. Consistent with Coburn and Stein (2006) ethnographic study on how teachers implemented dramatic state reading policy, many participants in this study also did not fully align with the approach promoted by the state policy makers. This study supports Coburn and Stein's arguments that in order for the participants to make meaningful connections to their own teaching practices, there needs to be more exchange and connection with their professional counterparts; VAPA instructors should be given the opportunity to negotiate meaning in the alignment between policy and practice. Findings in this study are consistent with Clark (1991) who expressed that the debate over what is holistic arts education remains unsettled, and expectations on how to help students develop personally, cognitively, and socially in their study of the arts continue to be contested.

Research Question #3: How Do Arts Instructors Anticipate State-Initiated Curriculum Changes Impacting the Access to Arts Learning for Students with Limited Preparation in the Arts?

Participants consistently reported that working with a very diverse VAPA student population oftentimes proves to be very challenging at the classroom level as a large

number of students lack formal academic preparation in the arts. Furthermore, participants also reported that many of their students either do not have clear educational objectives or do not take the time to complete the paperwork to show completion of a VAPA degree or certificate. For the majority of participants, adding state policy that hinders the skill-building process to this complex arrangement of barriers will only push arts education further out of reach for many students.

The concerns expressed by participants are very much in line with Marché's (2002) argument that attitudes toward arts education are very different among teachers, administrators, and policymakers. And, the struggle to define a place for the arts among other core subjects competing for limited funding dollars continues to be an uphill battle. Findings showed that participants perceived the elimination of repetition as the first step to making arts education less access-friendly to the VAPA student population. Participants indicated that VAPA students are already experiencing more difficulty enrolling in arts classes because of course reductions brought on by recent budget cuts. With less number of arts classes coupled with the loss of repetition, participants in this study argued that VAPA students would find the pursuit of arts studies to be cursory and insignificant, and may likely choose to simply give up.

Although the study did not collect specific demographic data of the VAPA students, many participants offered a general description of their students' socio-economic background.

With elimination of course repetition the majority of VAPA students needed to look elsewhere to complete their training for employment or to prepare for transfer to 4-year institutions. The large majority however, did not have the luxury of such an option.

A large number of VAPA students simply cannot afford private classes. Many participants stressed that their VAPA students would be significantly underprepared and undereducated. This sentiment is in line with Dumas and Anyon (2006) critical analysis of the *Abbot v. Burke* 1981 case. The authors warned against further enforcement focusing on education as a commodity. And that the poor, urban people of color with little political capital and who cannot afford it, would simply do without (Dumas & Anyon, 2006). The majority of participants anticipated long-term impact to arts learning. Participants expressed concerns that the days of providing students with a solid foundation and preparation in their study of the arts are likely to be numbered.

Conclusions

As is often the case in the public educational system, challenging economic times inevitably herald changes to existing practices. In 2011, with ongoing concerns over state budget shortfalls and a continually increasing educational cost structure, California state legislators focused their attention on measures that could lead to access, added productivity, and value in order to sustain the current educational system. One of the recommendations provided by the Legislative Analyst's Office was to eliminate state support for course repetition in the area of visual and performing arts (LAO, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to explore how state-initiated curriculum changes would likely influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning. In the course of this study on the effects of state-initiated curriculum changes, the VAPA instructors' pedagogical practices, and the anticipated impact to VAPA students, three main themes emerged as central to this study. On the first theme—involuntary curriculum changes producing artificial frameworks—the study found that there was little

uniformity and commonality in the approach participants took to reconcile the pedagogical practices of their discipline with the state-initiated curricular changes. The premise of this study was that the unique character and the needs of the VAPA discipline may not align well with the intended objectives of the state policy. The study findings supported this premise as some participants resorted to introducing an inordinate number of new curricula while others chose to make no changes. The findings indicated that VAPA instructors had very different perceptions of their students' developmental levels. Consequently, their approach at making changes to their curricula varied significantly.

On the second theme, study findings suggested that the reconciliation between prevalent teaching practices with the state-initiated curriculum changes was problematic for many participants. Findings indicated that the majority of the participants expressed a deep sense of disconnect between state requirements and their goal to provide a holistic arts education. VAPA instructors continue to incorporate, either in part or in its entirety, the DBAE principles in their teaching practices. Most prominence was given to the production aspects of the arts. As repetition is pivotal to skill building and skill building is inherent to the process of arts production, the elimination of course repetition threatens one of the core tenets of the VAPA discipline. The findings also indicated that the state-initiated policy change hindered the progress of the vocational goals of the arts education.

The third theme of the study was the anticipated impact to the VAPA students. The study findings suggested that participants perceived the elimination of repetition as making arts education less access-friendly to the VAPA student population. With the elimination of course repetition in addition to several course reductions due to budget

cuts, VAPA students were more likely to be underprepared and undereducated. And, given these barriers, VAPA students were less likely to persist in their study of the arts.

Lastly, it can be argued that this is a critical time to bring to the forefront discussions on the place of arts education in the community colleges if the intent is to provide a holistic education that includes the study of the arts. This study underscores the continued lack of a well-conceived plan to carve a place for the arts. The state-initiated actions have, for most part, triggered a reactionary response from the VAPA instructors who are deeply concerned with the diminished access to a meaningful and sustainable arts education. It would be much more encouraging if such actions were followed by an invitation to dialogue with those who must live with the consequences and to offer continued dialogue to revisit the actions taken.

Implications

In addressing state budget shortfalls, legislators have sought to address issues of overcrowding by limiting the participation of those who are currently benefiting from the system. As resources are scarce, there is an increasing sense and willingness to make decisions that aim to benefit a greater number of college-bound students. At first glance, the call to eliminate course repetition appears to be driven by the need to make room for new students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to attend college. This call appears justified under the CCC open access policy. However, on closer inspection, the elimination of repetition significantly impacts existing teaching practices as well as the students taking skill-based courses in the VAPA disciplines.

As McLaughlin (2006) stated, the framing of the policy problem is arguably the most critical decision in the development of a policy. Findings suggested that this state

action was perceived as a top-down imposition with little consideration for the specific needs of the VAPA disciplines. The changes to the VAPA curricula were made for different reasons. VAPA instructors expressed feeling pressured to meet the state policy requirements while struggling with their own perception and assessment of students' needs. The reconciliation between policy and practice remained problematic for many VAPA instructors.

Contemporary policy implementation researchers maintained that understanding the norms, values, and beliefs of the individuals within an institution might in fact trump the technical aspects of the policy (McLaughlin, 2006). State legislators must expect implementation challenges from VAPA instructors who will both challenge the requirements and seek assistance to come into compliance. Keeping an open door for such dialogue requires careful planning and strategy. While it is an area of contention, it is the state legislators' responsibility to engage in this dialogue. Without this opportunity, the unintended consequences could prove to be far more harmful than the good it is to achieve.

VAPA instructors' knowledge and experience is integral to the policy implementation outcomes. McLaughlin (2006) expounded that proper alignment between implementers' knowledge and experience to policy goals decreases the chance of lethal mutations in the implementation outcome. The findings suggested that there was a misalignment between policy and the VAPA instructors' teaching practices. Many participants reported that they did not make any meaningful connections between the state requirements and their own teaching practices. The findings revealed that some VAPA instructors were overwhelmed and resorted to easing their workload by reducing

the course content and by committing other transgressions in hopes to circumvent the state policy.

Participants in the study reported that they relied primarily on their local curriculum processes to inform them of the changes to their curricula. They had discipline knowledge but, they did not necessarily know how to align the discipline needs in the framework provided by the state. Having someone who would help them make sense of their specific curricula changes and who has the knowledge and capacity to direct them in the right direction would have been invaluable.

Findings also suggested that the VAPA students at the community colleges often lacked the academic preparation and the foundational knowledge because their opportunities to study the arts were diminished in the K-12 system due to budgetary cuts (Cohen, 1987; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Viglione, 2009). VAPA instructors looked to provide students with a holistic approach to the study of the arts by deriving content from the four foundational areas of the arts: art history, art critique, aesthetics, and art production (Dobbs, 1992). Art production remained a key focus and objective for the VAPA discipline. It is, then, necessary to provide students opportunities to build and enhance their skills. In this way, VAPA instructors are also training students for the vocational opportunities in the arts. With fewer opportunities to build skills, VAPA instructors had concerns that students would be seriously underprepared and undereducated. And in due course, arts education will become less meaningful and less relevant.

VAPA instructors are not equipped to address all the needs of their students through changes in the curricula. As the findings suggested, many VAPA students face

challenges that are external to their studies of the arts. The VAPA curriculum should not be used as the means to provide or to limit access to arts education. It is the responsibility of policy makers, administrators, and educators to engage in this conversation outside of the scope and content of the VAPA curricula.

The findings of this study point to the state of VAPA programs at the community colleges. With increasing interest in making decisions that can benefit a majority of college-bound students, the focus on the depth of learning in the VAPA programs is considerably reduced. Such decisions will likely lead to the diminution of arts preparation particularly for those students from the lower socioeconomic strata who come from school districts that have limited arts programs. Limiting these students' ability and opportunity to expand their study of the arts will slowly diminish their participation. It will also lead to the erosion of the arts programs at the community colleges as they become insignificant and thus unnecessary.

These findings and implications beckon a closer examination of this legislative action. The need to make room for new students should not be at the expense of others. In the final analysis, it may simply be a zero-sum game.

Recommendation for Policy and Practice

The community colleges are comprehensive institutions that provide a wide range of academic and occupational training preparations. If the mission of the community colleges is to remain so explicitly open to its community then, it is the responsibility of legislators to ensure that all students have access to such a wide set of educational and occupational opportunities.

As legislators consider educational reforms, having understanding of the place of arts education as a core subject is critical. VAPA instructors remain committed to the open access mission and strive to respond to the needs of their students. As the study findings suggest, arts production and occupational training are central to arts curricula. This actuality makes it difficult for VAPA instructors to reconcile state requirements that threaten to change the goals of arts learning. The first recommendation to the state legislators is that they provide a venue to engage VAPA instructors in dialogue about fulfilling the educational mission. Whether the focus is to narrow to fewer areas or to continue to offer a wide range of program options to the community college students, discussions need to take place prior to making any policy changes. Without this dialogue, it remains unclear, even confusing, to most VAPA instructors regarding how they should approach and establish their program goals. VAPA instructors need to first understand how the decision-making process takes place and what information is used to build the case for implementing educational policies. It would also be helpful to solicit information from the VAPA instructors on how they may contribute to finding solutions to the challenge of providing access to new students who would otherwise be unable to participate in postsecondary education. To engage in such large scale dialogue requires the planning, coordination, and involvement of multiple stakeholders, including educators, students, administrators, and legislators. Creating a forum to facilitate ongoing discussions and to identify ways of channeling recommendations would make the decision-making process more meaningful and transparent.

Some key questions that can contribute to the needed dialogue prior to changing educational policies include:

1. What is the current status of arts education in the K-12?
2. How do high school VAPA instructors teach to their discipline?
3. Are there regular collaborations between high school teachers and community college instructors in looking at standards for college-level work?
4. Are there existing VAPA curriculum alignments between high school and the community colleges?
5. How is arts education being designed and taught to foster cross-discipline, social, cultural, economic, political, global understanding?
6. How should educational policies enhance VAPA instructors' ability to practice their profession effectively?

The second recommendation based on the findings of this study is the need to provide the VAPA instructors with resources and funding support to offer a holistic study of the arts. If the commitment of the community colleges remains to provide the public with access to a comprehensive set of academic and occupational programs, then VAPA instructors need to have assurances that their programs will not be the first ones the chopping block during difficult economic times.

VAPA instructors often feel overtaxed in trying to find a middle ground for meeting the course standards, their institution's requirements, employment demands, and the cultivation and development of the arts in the community at large. As the findings suggest, they work with a diverse student population that often face challenges that are external to the studies of the arts. Students with deficient arts preparation, students with complicated life issues, veterans, students with disabilities, and low income students are well-represented in the VAPA classrooms. And yet, the VAPA instructors' goals are to

meet these needs while ensuring a viable and successful pursuit of arts education as well as employment. Legislators and college administrators need to be sensitive to the challenges that the VAPA instructors face.

The VAPA programs need the commitment of policy makers and college administrators that the progression of arts studies in the community colleges is essential and valued. Establishing a funding framework that outlines the progression of arts education for students capable of benefiting from VAPA instruction can be beneficial to the VAPA course planning process. VAPA instructors would have the confidence that their students would be able to complete the repertoire of courses particularly in the advanced levels. Making the funding of the VAPA programs more transparent will dispel the fear that arts education will fall by the wayside and discourage the introduction of arts curricula that is disjointed, inconsistent, and incompatible with state educational institutions.

The third recommendation of this study is for the VAPA instructors. Participants in this study had affirmed that they had no intentions of changing their teaching methods in spite of the state's regulatory action. It is the responsibility of the VAPA instructors to continue to monitor and assess the effectiveness of their pedagogy within the parameters provided by the state. A large number of participants in this study depended entirely on their curriculum committee to advise them on the changes to their curriculum. More collaboration and exchange between VAPA instructors statewide can lead to the development of innovative approaches and new models in arts pedagogy. A collective and cohesive approach in formulating a comprehensive VAPA program for the community colleges can strengthen the purpose and the mission of arts education.

Lastly, based on the findings that arts production remains at the core of arts education, the fourth recommendation is to recognize the VAPA programs, exhibitions, and performances at the community colleges as serving a critical role for the community. The VAPA programs at the community colleges offer various arts venues for artistic and cultural exchanges for areas that may otherwise have little arts engagement options. They do a remarkable job in providing access and opportunity for arts encounters not only for students but for the community at large. All VAPA exhibits and performances at the community colleges are open to the public at little cost or no cost. The community college VAPA programs continue to draw and to develop local audience for the arts. Each time a student or a community member attends an arts exhibition or a performance, the participation in the arts expands and becomes more relevant and part of the cultural growth and development of the community. This function remains vital to sustaining arts education today and in the future. For without an arts audience, there would be little need for the arts (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011).

It is therefore important for policy makers to see the VAPA programs at the community college as more than educational programs. VAPA programs are venues to keep culture alive and thriving in the community. Thus, when curricular changes in arts education at the community colleges are considered, equal thought and consideration need to be given to its effect on the community.

Recommendation for Further Study

The findings of this study should be considered within the limited context in which this study was conducted. The participants' experience and perspectives are not necessarily representative of all VAPA instructors. This study was done on a selective

group of art instructors and as such, the findings are not intended to draw generalizations that would be transferable or are representative of all such instructors. The information derived from this study is intended to provoke additional consideration and thinking about the ramifications of educational policies.

A future researcher should consider expanding this study to include the experience and perspective of VAPA-majors as well as those students enrolled in the VAPA vocational courses. They are clearly the ones who will live with the outcome of this educational policy. The VAPA students' perspective will help complete the picture. In addition, research is encouraged to continue to track the progress and the long-term effects of the implementation of this educational policy. A quantitative study approach that looks to analyze and establish the correlation between previous VAPA students' enrollment patterns and those students with high-unit count will help affirm or dispel assumptions that the bottleneck effect is adversely affecting open access to community colleges.

In this study, a majority of participants affirmed that they had no intentions of changing their teaching practices. Further exploration of the pedagogical practices of VAPA instructors is merited. It would be informative to find out if they continue to maintain their position of making no changes to their teaching practices or if they eventually change their approaches to adapt to the state-initiated educational requirements. Of even more importance is to learn if any changes benefit or harm the progression of arts education.

Researchers of education policies have frequently noted that encouraging buy-in, offering meaningful incentives, and providing clear instructions (Honig, 2006) are

essential strategies for bridging the gap between policy makers and implementers. This study provided a snapshot of the early stages of an education policy implementation. At this early stage, it is exhibiting signs of implementation stress. It is critical that policy makers and educators work together to establish the ideal calibration of arts programs at the community colleges in order to create the necessary conditions for the healthy development of arts education.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RECRUITMENT

Introductory Letter for Recruitment

Fall 2013

Dear Colleague,

My name is Ting-Pi Joyce Carrigan and I am doctoral candidate at the College of Education at CSULB. I am writing to solicit your help and invite you to participate in my dissertation research study.

For my dissertation, I am studying the experiences and perceptions of 20-25 visual or performing arts tenure-track and tenured faculty who are experiencing the effects of the elimination of course repetition. The purpose of this research study is to examine how state-initiated curriculum changes are likely to influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning. This study intends to describe arts instructors' perceptions and experiences in addressing state-initiated curriculum changes and contribute to the limited research on understanding the challenges of sustaining the development and progression of arts education.

Participants in this study should be fulltime faculty members at a community college with at least 5 years of teaching experience in visual or performing arts courses.

It is my hope to have a solid pool of participants that represents wide range of visual and performing arts discipline but also in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and background. Your involvement in the study would include:

- Participation in 1 interview. The interview is approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour in length.

If you are interested in participating in my study, or if you have further questions, please contact me at [email](#).

Thank you in advance for your consideration, time, and support.

Sincerely,

Ting-Pi Joyce Carrigan

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

A Zero Sum Game?

Eliminating Course Repetition and Its Effects on Arts Education

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by **Ting-Pi Joyce Carrigan**, doctoral candidate, from the College of Education at California State University, Long Beach. This study is part of her doctoral dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a fulltime faculty member teaching visual or performing arts courses with at least 5 years of teaching experience.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to examine how state-initiated curriculum changes are likely to influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning. This study intends to describe art instructors' perceptions and experiences in addressing state-initiated curriculum changes and contribute to the limited research on understanding the challenges of sustaining the development and progression of arts education.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

You and the investigator will jointly determine a convenient time and location to conduct the interview. A quiet, disruption-free and private location is desired.

You will review and sign this Informed Consent Form before beginning the interview. As part of this consent form, you will be asked to give permission to audio record this interview.

Select a pseudonym to be used throughout the interview and in subsequent communication.

Take part in forty-five (45) minutes to one (1) hour interview.

The interview questions will focus on your experience as a visual or performing arts instructor

- You will be asked to share your perception and experience pertaining to curriculum design.
- You will be asked to share your perception and experience pertaining to the elimination of course repetition.

- You will be asked to share your perception and experience working with art major and non-majors.
- You will be asked to share your perception and experience addressing state initiated curriculum changes.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Some reasonable foreseeable risks, discomforts, inconveniences include:

1. Harm to reputation:

You may feel that the information collected will be linked to you, and this may have adverse implications to your reputation. In the most extreme case, you may feel that it would result in the loss of your professional standing or even strain your relationships with other colleagues. To minimize this risk, you are asked to select a pseudonym before the interview begins. This pseudonym will be used during the interview and on all following communication. The transcriptionist will only be provided with pseudonyms. The one document that links the pseudonym to you, the signed consent forms, and the transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet off campus. All email communication, which may include email addresses, will be transferred to a Word document. These emails will be deleted shortly after.

2. Discomfort in answering interview questions:

You may feel that some of the questions are intrusive to your professional practices. You may feel that some questions may be used to critique your instructional preparation or your pedagogical style. In most extreme cases, you may feel that you are being judged or evaluated against other instructors within the same discipline. To minimize this risk, you can, at any time, skip questions in the interview, stop the interview or withdraw from the study without any consequences. The information that is collected from the interview can only be used in the context of this study. You may request to review the transcript of the interview to confirm accuracy and if there are areas of concern you may discuss it with investigator. The investigator will work with you to minimize or eliminate the risk.

3. Investigator's positionality:

You may feel that because the investigator is the dean of Fine Arts Division, your responses may lead to an adverse impression of your professional performance and in extreme case you may feel that your responses may be linked to your performance evaluation. To minimize this risk, the investigator will openly address with you her positionality and explain the purpose of her study and what she hopes to gain from this study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you can at any time request to skip a question, to stop the interview or even to withdraw from the study without consequences at any time. If desired, you can request a transcript of their interview to confirm accuracy. Moreover, if you feel that the use of any information may put you at

risk, the investigator will work with you to minimize or eliminate the risk. The information generated in this study can only be used within the scope of this study. The investigator may not use the information generated from the interviews or apply the findings to any other area outside the scope of this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This research will add to the literature on understanding and validating art instructors' experiences as the authors of curricula and the discipline experts. It will also broaden our understanding on how state-initiated curriculum changes affect their teaching practices. Findings from this research have implications on how arts education is sustained for the next generation of students particularly those who lack arts preparation.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participants will not receive payment for their involvement in this research study; however, they will each receive a \$10 gift card from Starbucks coffee store as a token of appreciation for their time.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Your information will not be released to any other party for any reason.

If you grant permission to audio record the interview, you may request to review the transcript of the interview once transcription is completed. All audio-recordings will be destroyed after three (3) years from the day of the recording.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or non-participation will not affect your professional relationship or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which in the opinion of the researcher warrant doing so.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Ting-Pi Joyce Carrigan, Principal Investigator
email

Dr. William M. Vega, Faculty Advisor
email

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of University Research, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840; Telephone: (562) 985-5314 or email to irb@csulb.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE [Note: Use “and” when both are required.]

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject or Legal Representative

Date

PERMISSION TO AUDIO RECORD THIS INTERVIEW: (Please check below)

I give permission

I do not give permission

Signature of Subject or Legal Representative

Date

STATEMENT and SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR [Note: The IRB will normally require that the investigator sign the following statement when the risk to subjects is greater than minimal or when physically invasive procedures will be used or when there is a probability* of some subjects being of diminished autonomy.

*Probability in this situation means at least one standard deviation greater than mean statistical possibility]

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**A Zero Sum Game?
Eliminating Course Repetition and Its Effects on Arts Education**

Name of Subject

The pseudonym I have selected is: _____

Transcript of interview:

I wish / I do not wish to have a copy of the interview transcript

Participation in Member-Checking: You have the opportunity to provide input on the accuracy of the initial data collected. You will be asked to review your interview transcript and offer additional input on the data collected. Please indicate whether you are interested in participating in the member-checking process.

I wish to participate

I do not wish to participate

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions Protocol

Name:

Date:

Purpose: To solicit feedback from instructors who teach visual or performing arts classes on their perception of state policy changes on course repetition. This interview aims to collect information on how state-initiated curriculum changes are likely to influence the teaching and promotion of access to arts learning.

Start: Rapport building stage

Thank you for meeting with me today. I really appreciate your willingness to let me interview you. May I use a recorder to help me remember the information you share with me? I want to reassure you that the information you share will remain confidential and you will have the opportunity to review the transcript if you wish.

So, how is your day going? Did you just finish teaching a class? How was it?

What skill-based classes are you teaching this semester?

How long have you been teaching these skill-based classes?

Are these skill-based courses repeatable? If so, how many times can a student repeat the class?

About the students

1. Please describe the student body composition of your skill-based class. Who enrolls in your class?
2. In your assessment, how much arts study/preparation/participation or knowledge do your students bring to your class?
3. What would you say are the primary reasons students take your class?

4. Do you currently have any students that have taken this class once before (with you or another instructor? [If yes (go to questions a-f) (Tell me about them)] [If no or don't know (go to questions e-f)]
 - a. How can you tell that a student has taken this class before?
 - b. How would you describe these students?
 - c. How do these "repeaters" compare with other students that have not taken this class before?
 - d. How has the course repetition option benefited the students taking a skill-based class?
 - e. Is it advantageous for the students to have taken any art classes before taking your class? Why?
 - f. Would you ever encourage or have you ever encouraged a student (that has passed the class) to take the same class again? If yes, what are the benefits of re-taking a skill-based class? If no, why not?

About the instructor

5. How would you describe your teaching style?
6. What factors have been most influential in shaping your teaching methods?
7. With your current lesson plans/preparation,
 - a. What are your course objectives? At the end of each class, at the end of the semester.
 - b. Please share how you go about completing your course objectives.
 - c. How do you assess the level of completion of your course objectives with your students?

d. What are some of the challenges in completing your course objectives?

About state policy

8. Do you know what are the current state policies pertaining to course repetition?
 - a) What do you know about them?
 - b) Where did you hear about them?
9. How does the elimination of course repetition affect the students pursuing and completing a degree in the [visual] or [performing] arts? And how does it affect the non-majors?
 - a) What does this state policy mean to you as an art educator?
 - b) Will this state policy change your methods of teaching your skilled-based courses? If yes, how? / If no, why?
 - c) Have you made any changes to the curriculum to address the state policy on eliminating course repetition? What steps have you taken?
 - a. What do you hope your actions will accomplish?
 - b. How will your actions affect your students' learning?
 - c. How much time have you spent on addressing this issue?
- 10) Are you in agreement with the actions taken by the state pertaining to course repetition?
- 11) What do you think are the state's objectives? And will the state meet these objectives?
- 12) What might be some of the long term effects of this state policy?

Is there anything I didn't ask you that you would like to add?

End of Interview:

Thank you so much for your time. This was very helpful.

I would like to make sure I have captured correctly what you shared with me,
would it be okay if I email you a transcript or have your review it?

APPENDIX D
CODE LIST

Code List

Changes to Arts Curricula

- “Really weird artificial framework”
- New courses at odds with learning rate
 - “Hamstrung our curriculum”
- Writing new courses
 - “It’s a mess”
 - Like splitting hairs
 - “There is a lot of fiction in the new course outlines”
 - “Our curriculum committee didn’t get to it”
- Extra work
- The Family of Courses
- Who is representing the arts teachers?
 - “We are being attacked”
 - “Doesn’t make sense, doesn’t work”
- I don’t understand how decisions are made
- Getting around the policy

Teaching Practices

- Teaching to individuals
 - Identify the learning gaps
 - “Discover what kind of artist they are”
- Holistic approach
 - To see art more thoughtfully
 - “A lifelong thing”
 - Skills are transferrable to other disciplines
- Building a fellowship of artists
 - Collaborative effort
- Give them the foundational tools
- Time consuming field
 - Multitude of elements and components

Repetition

- Mastering the technique
 - “Each repeat – new set of skills”
 - “In the arts you need source”
- The experienced train the new
- Repetition needed to transfer
- Increase employability
 - “No way to cut corners”
- Build confidence
 - “They feel empowered”
 - Share knowledge

Provide input and critique

Access to Arts Learning

VAPA students

Poor academic preparations

“All kinds of levels”

They don't fill out paperwork

Take whatever classes they can get

Students with “life issues”

Students with special needs

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