

BEGINNING ART TEACHERS NEGOTIATION OF THEIR BELIEFS AND IDENTITY WITHIN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This article is based on a chapter from dissertation research that explores the ways beginning art teachers negotiated their teaching identity and beliefs within the public educational system. Art teachers' beliefs and identities are partially constructed within and by the art communities to which the teachers are exposed during their studies of art and art education. In these art communities, art and artists are regarded highly. But art teachers' roles in the schools are defined mainly by an educational system with different discourses in which art and art teachers are often marginalized. The conflicts and the negotiations through which art teachers construct their teaching identities and their beliefs are my area of study. I wanted to study how the teachers' questions and answers why teach art and how to teach it changed in light of the transition into the public school environment.

Keywords

Teacher identity, Teacher's role, Art teacher education, Art teachers' preparation program

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Introduction

[As teachers] we construct not only our teaching practices and all the relationships this entails, but our teaching voices and identities.
(Britzman, 1991, p. 1)

This article is based on a chapter from my dissertation researching the ways art teachers negotiated their teaching identity and beliefs within the public educational system. In the normative discourse of teacher education, teacher's identity is usually viewed as synonymous with teacher's role (Britzman, 1992). But studies of teachers' identity argue differently. Using feminist poststructuralist theories, Britzman argues that teachers' identities are not an outcome of being in a teaching position or gaining experience in acting out their roles as a teacher in a classroom. She emphasizes the differences between these terms; "[R]ole speaks to function whereas identity voices investments and commitments. Function, or what one should do, and investments, or what one feels, are often at odds" (Britzman, 1992, p. 29). Thus, becoming a teacher is not just an outcome of providing student teachers with pedagogical skills and techniques and teaching experience. Rather, teachers' identities are constructed through an ongoing process of discourses and knowledge they employ to make sense of who they are, how they are not, and who they want to be (Britzman, 1992).

Art teachers' beliefs and identities are partially constructed within and by the art communities to which they are exposed during their studies of art and art education. In these art communities, art and artists are regarded highly. But art teachers' roles in the schools are defined mainly by an educational system with different discourses in which art and art teachers are often marginalized. The conflicts and the negotiations through which art teachers construct their teaching identities and their beliefs are my area of study. I wanted to study how the teachers' questions and answers why teach art and how to teach it changed in light of the transition into the public school environment.

The research consisted of four former art student teachers who graduated from the School of Art¹, Beit-Berl College in Israel. These art teachers had at least four years of teaching experience and worked within the public school system². On two of them I collected data over a period of three years (1999-2001), through interviews, school visits, class observations, letters, and E-mail. I collected data on the other two research participants over six years (1996-2001). I started to study their beliefs and the ways they constructed their teaching identity within and against the discourses of the School of Art as they became art teachers. I followed them after they became art teachers and had four years of teaching experience.

The four case studies were conducted at various public schools in Israel. I collected the art teachers' partial tales (Stuhr, Krug, and Scott, 1995) of the challenges, problems and satisfactions they encountered during their everyday work. My interpretations of the art teachers' narrations were then shared with them, as member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1981 in Lather 1986).

Although I perceived each of the art teachers I studied as a unique case, I was interested to find similarities and differences in their stories. In the first part of this chapter, I summarized the general changes I found that occurred in their answers to the questions about why teach art and how to teach in comparison to those they held as student teachers.

In the second part I relate to art teachers' beliefs and teaching identity in the light of the conflicts and the challenges they encountered in the public schools within which the changes described above occurred. I summaries how the teachers interpret the conflicts and the ways they negotiated their beliefs and teaching identity in light of their interpretation. In specifically I am interested in the ways they employed different discourses to make sense of their teaching role and its relation to who they are, and who they are not. In the last part of this chapter I drew some implications from this study.

¹ The School of Art is considered to be one of the best art schools in Israel and the main institute for art teacher preparation. The college was founded as Art Teachers Training College in 1946 in Tel-Aviv. In 1985, it became part of a larger college, Beit-Berl College. Most of the students at the college are between the ages of 20-30 years. After three years of study, students earned certification for teaching art at the elementary and middle school grade levels. If they chose, students could continue for a fourth year in order to earn high school level teaching license. Since 2000, the students earn a B.Ed in art education.

The Changes in Art Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

The stories I collected from the four art teachers present an array of answers to the questions about why to teach art and how to teach art. The teachers' goals and practices addressed the needs and the conditions in their specific school settings as interpreted by the teachers using various discourses to define them. Thus, in this section I will describe various characteristics found in examining their goals and practices across the cases.

Negotiating Within and Against Different Discourses

In the four cases I examined, the student teachers defined different goals in art education. Although each one of the student teachers came with different practical theories about what is art and what art education meant, their teaching experience was constructed mainly within and against the dominant discourses of the School of Art's art classes³. To a less extent of awareness, they also used the discourses of the art education courses. As art teachers, they constructed their goals and practices within and against a variety of discourses, or what Britzman called "cacophony of voices" (1991), including those consisted their schools discursive practices.⁴

Comparing in a general way their goals and practices as teachers, to those they held as student teachers, I found that only one of them shifted her beliefs. Although Ada, an art teacher at a vocational school, embraced her

² The public school system in Israel includes kindergartens, elementary, middle and high schools. Art is a mandatory subject only at the elementary schools, where the students (organized in classes of 40 students) are provided with a lesson of 45 minutes per week by a specialist art teacher. Although the art classes are mandatory in the elementary schools, it is one of the few subject areas that doesn't have a separate classroom in the building. Therefore, in most of the elementary schools art is taught in bomb shelters converted by the art teachers' own initiatives into temporary art classrooms. Principals have the authority to provide a classroom for art studies and to arrange the schedule that will offer art lessons for 20 students (half a class) for 90 minutes every second week.

Art lessons are not part of the required curriculum at the middle and high schools. Nevertheless in many of the middle schools art lessons are provided to the 7th and 8th grades. No art curriculum or guidelines are provided for art at the elementary and the middle school level, and art teachers are expected to develop their own curriculum.

At high school, art is an elective subject and students can add it to the core subjects for matriculation exams. High schools that offer their students an art program for the matriculation exams usually provide an art classroom. In some of the affluent high schools this program develops into an art department that includes several art teachers.

school's discourses in defining her goals, she was aware of other discourses and options concerning art and art education. The other three teachers I studied have developed their notions of art education they held as student teachers at the School of Art. A closer examination of the discourses they employed, reveals that each one of them developed a rich repertoire of practices that enhanced their goals using an array of voices to articulate them. Their complex positions consisted of a blur of different theories and paradigms that were typically presented in the literature as distinguished from each other.

For example, Noga, an elementary art teacher who portrayed herself as being part of a classroom teachers' team at her school, tried to establish meaningful relationships with her students. Her notions of child-centered approach,⁵ which she already held as a student teacher, were developed to art lessons based on free creation at the art workshop. Although her teaching practices can be perceived as a powerful example of a learner-centered paradigm, they also addressed goals from other paradigms associated with comprehensive art education. For example, she established an art gallery within her school. Noga also perceived art to be an integral part of life and therefore integrated the art studies with other study areas at her school. She believed that this integrative approach enhanced students' understanding of themselves of and the issues discussed. Thus, Noga worked within and against many discourses she was exposed to during her long studies of art and art education, as well as those held by her school.

Naomi, an art teacher who worked at middle and high schools from low-income families, was the only teacher in this study that was aware of working within and against different discourses. Naomi moved from living in a kibbutz⁶ to study at the School of Art, and then to a teaching position. While holding her teaching position she continued her studies at the university. In each of these places she was exposed to different discourses which added to her perceptions. As an art educator she had a clear radical political agen-

³ The School of Art's art classes were based on the approach Arnheim (1954; 1969) described as 'problem solving' and 'visual thinking'. The studio exercises were based on teaching art as a visual language, and aimed to bring the students to understand it and become aware of its uses (Lavi, 1976). The lessons themselves were dedicated to criticizing students' artworks.

da in order to develop her students as critical people. At the same time she wanted to transfer what she perceived to be basic important Western knowledge and to extend visual arts to include cultural studies. Naomi's case provides an example of constructing teaching identity through employing different, and even contradicted discourses. Incorporating these different voices, Naomi developed a clear view concerning her goals in art education which she perceived to be in opposition to the pragmatic society's values. Thus, her role as an art teacher was defined by this conflict as an agent of change, as a Don Quixote fighting against the windmills.

These findings of the complexity of the teachers' implicit theories enhanced the descriptions of teachers' practical knowledge as found in previous studies. These studies described teachers' implicit theories as tend to be not neat and complete reproductions of educational theories found in textbooks but an eclectic aggregation of propositions, and values, expressed in language of stories which is temporal, historical and specific (Clandinin & Connely, 1995; Fuller, 1994; Lux, 1999).

Using Various Practices to Teach Beyond Art as a Discipline

The four art teachers that participated in the study aimed to be meaningful art teachers. They wanted to do more than be "good" art teachers through fulfilling the goals that were promoted by the School of Art's discourses; to teach the disciplinary knowledge and art as a language with which students can appreciate and create artworks. Striving to be meaningful teachers they used a variety of teaching practices.

In this study Ada and Noga provided examples of teachers who constructed their primary goals opposing the School of Art's discourses. Ada worked at a vocational school with high school students who were labeled by

⁴ The term discursive practice "refers to particular ways of talking and writing about and doing or performing one's practice that are coupled with particular social setting in which those ways of talking are regarded as understandable and more or less valuable" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 31)

⁵ Burton (2000) suggests a new perception of the traditional Creative Self-Expressive paradigm of Lowenfeld, in what she calls 'Learner- Centered' approach. The Learner-Centered approach does not suggest a simplistic teaching like the traditional 'laissez-faire' practice, but still asks students to bring their own experiences into the art classroom where they are invited to reflect upon, to explore possibilities and engage their thinking through dialogue.

the society as failures and felt as outsiders. Noga was an art specialist at an elementary school. Both described their main goal as raising their students' self-image. Although they had a similar goal, each one of them used different and even contradicting practices. While Noga's learner-centered approach guided her constructing open workshops and limiting her role to provide a secure space for her students to express themselves, Ada used teaching practice associated with transferring knowledge. She wanted to provide her students with opportunities to achieve high scores in the matriculation exams as a means to raise their low self-esteem. She also wanted to teach them basic knowledge that is perceived by the society to be part of the culture. Both, Ada and Noga believed that listening to their students was a key practice in fulfilling their goals.

Less obvious examples for teaching beyond art as a discipline were provided by Tamar, who worked with middle and high school students at a boarding school. Like Naomi, she built her identity as an expert in art, and believed that her knowledge of the field was valuable to her students. Tamar's teaching practices were embedded in the problem-solving paradigm of the School of Art discourses. Working within these discourses she wanted to teach the students to develop their visual-thinking through understanding the connection between artistic decisions and their effects on the viewer. Although Tamar believed that she worked within the discourse of the School of Art and wanted to teach "purely art", the analysis of Tamar's stories also revealed another approach to art education. Striving to be a meaningful teacher, She provided her students with opportunities to use art language to relate to their reality and to provoke the students to question themselves as well as their values. Thus, when she designed art projects, she didn't limit her goals to enhancing her students' understanding of the language of art. She also disagreed with the limited evaluation of the students' outcomes to the formal criteria of "good" artworks.

Naomi tried to challenge her students' way of thinking about their life and their world. Using artworks as a means to reexamine things they took for

⁶ A kibbutz is a socialist community where its members have communal life and common properties.

granted, she wanted to reveal the deeper levels of various visual forms including films, TV shows and advertisements, buildings and paintings.

The answers the teachers provided relating to how they could become meaningful art teachers included practices that were not associated only with constructivist learning approach, or child-centered approach. They included transferring knowledge, integrating art with other study areas, providing the students with opportunities to examine their visual culture and reality, and giving the students 'a stage' to express their interests.

Using Dialogue and Reflection

In the variety of practices that enhanced different approaches to art education, I found a repeated method. Noga, Tamar and Naomi used dialogue and reflection as a means to evoke their students' awareness of their own ideas and the artistic means of expression. Ada, who worked with students at risk, referred to this method when she described her studio classes. She explained that many of her students interpret the process of dialogue and reflection as a form of critique. Therefore she was using this method only with those students who weren't threatened by it.

The dialogue and reflection was used as the main discursive practice during the student teaching experience. This process was also used in the studio classes in the School of Art, though the emphasis in the art lessons was on raising the awareness of the use of alternatives artistic means. The method of dialogue and reflection used by the art teachers in this study referred to both awareness of ideas or feelings one holds and the artistic means to express them.

The Ways the Art Teachers Negotiated the Conflicts and Challenges

The conflicts and the challenges that were described by the art teachers were specific to each of the schools' situation. But one can identify some patterns that emerged across the cases. These include the question of "Who needs art anyhow?" the feeling of 'being alone,' and the conflict between the art teachers' role as defined by the education system and the art teachers' identity.

"Who Needs Art Anyhow?"

Noga, who worked with elementary students in a middle-class neighborhood, felt that the parents and the principal appreciated art, and have their views about what art education should be. Her challenge wasn't to justify the need for art, but to justify her perception of art education as part of everyday life. Her crystallized position that art is a way to nurture each child increased the value of art in this community, guided her teaching practices, and helped her to create a situation where art became the core of her school. This perception of art education challenged her to provide to each of her 400 students the personal attention she believed they should have. (At the same time she related to the students as members of communities of learners, and felt that she should enlarge their art knowledge.)

Noga's story was in this aspect different than the other three art teachers and provided an opposite example to the findings of this research. The other teachers, who worked with middle and high-school students with different socio-economic backgrounds, had to face the question raised: Who needs art anyhow? For them, the question of why to teach art wasn't a curricula question or a theoretical one; rather, it was a question framed by a discursive conflict, which questioned the legitimacy of the study of art. However, each one of the three teachers interpreted the question differently.

Ada interpreted the question 'who needs art anyhow' as part of a broader problem. Her students, whom she believed the education system missed and failed, questioned the studying of any subject. Thus the question, 'who needs art anyhow' was interpreted as questioning the need of any kind of education or schooling. Ada then, understood the question as the way her students deal with the failure of the educational system, failure that has been put on their shoulders. She believed that by making her students successful in learning art, they might change their perception of themselves and reestablish their trust in the educational system. She also believed that as an art teacher and as an educator she should provide her students with an entrance to culture and society.

But through art I provide them academic achievements. These achievements raise their low self esteem...

If you want to be a person that is part of the culture, you have to know

something, some kind of general knowledge. (Ada's Interview, December 15, 1999).

Tamar and Naomi didn't perceive the devaluation of art as an area of study to be a problem of their students. They believed that it was a symptom of a conflict they, as agents of the art world, had with the values of the general pragmatic society, which the students and their parents were part of. Tamar perceived the matriculation exams as an opportunity to present art as a legitimate study area in the high school. The matriculation exams gave a practical answer to the question '*who needs art anyhow*'. Tamar did not think that this answer was satisfying in itself, and was frustrated by the efforts she had to put in order to justify the teaching of art. But, she could understand the "others" point of view, and felt the urge to educate the parents, the students and the teachers about the 'real' value of art.

But the parents influence their children to learn computers, physics, chemistry, etc. Art for them, although it is culture, doesn't seem to be serious. And I can understand them. In the competing business world there are certain demands so if they chose to study art they'll have to complete the subject areas they didn't study... I cannot tell a student that his parents are wrong because if you like art, they shouldn't send you to learn physics. (Interview, December 13, 1999)

Naomi felt that she had to deal constantly with the question '*who needs art anyhow*' because this question represented a discursive conflict she had with the society. She felt that dealing with that question took over her teaching. She had to fight for the honor of her profession and the values that art is associated with, instead of using the teaching methods and the content she wanted. She perceived the educational system, including the matriculation exams as tools that regulated the society's discourses and opposed the values associated with art.

The education system's orientation is in one direction that includes achievements, productions, computers, pragmatism, high-tech, and nothing creative, or critical thinking. To know, to analyze something, to map it, to think in a logical way, understanding related elements, tuning into your feelings, all these oppose this pragmatic approach. (Naomi's interview, December, 1999)

In this fight against the windmills, Naomi felt like an underdog that can

never win. She planned to teach in higher education, as a place she believed to hold different discourses than the public education system. In this dreamy place, she hoped she would not have to deal with the question '*who needs art anyhow*'.

One can summarize that the question of the need for art education and the various answers were interpreted through the different discourses the art teachers employed to understand their reality. Their negotiation with this question was a key to understand their teaching goals and practices as well as to understand how they gave meaning to their work and constructed their teaching identity.

"Being Alone"

Naomi, Tamar, and Noga described in this study that as art teachers they felt isolated. That feeling was expressed even in Noga's case, who portrayed herself as being part of a team of teachers at her elementary school. Still, she felt the lack of having other art teachers with whom she could discuss curricula questions and share her debates about the goals of art education. She felt that an art teachers' group was in particular necessary in a field that does not have an imposed curriculum and is heavily influenced by the teachers' deliberations.

While Noga described her need for a framework of art teachers as a desirable goal that would enhance her reflections and help her to develop herself as an art teacher, Tamar and Naomi described their isolation as an obstacle they were facing. They felt that no one could understand the problems they encountered, and that no one could appreciate their students' achievements beyond their grades in the matriculation exams.

In the teachers' lounge there is no point to talk about art or problems that are connected to art classes. (Naomi's interview, December 1999)

The feeling of isolation of Naomi and Tamar was enhanced by the School of Art's discourses which perceived art as an autonomic field. As art experts, their discourses were profoundly different from those of the other teachers in their building. Therefore, in order not to be alone, they believed that they needed other art teachers in their building. But Tamar felt that although her

isolated teaching situation was hard, it also provided her with freedom to create the art programs according to her beliefs. Naomi had no ambiguity toward her need to be able to share and get feedback from others. She pointed out, as one of the advantages of the new building to which she moved after leaving the middle school, the collaborative teamwork there (January 2001). Perhaps the team didn't threaten her creativity as a teacher because she could not feel she was shaping her role anyhow. It was defined by the expectations to prepare the mass of students for the matriculation exams.

Ada, who changed the way she perceived herself from being an art expert to being primarily an educator using art, didn't feel isolated. She felt that the discussions in the vocational teachers' lounge about students' problems as well as the teachers' problems were very important in creating an atmosphere of acceptance and sharing.

It seems that the art teachers' approach toward the School of Art's dominant discourses had a major influence on the ways the art teachers negotiated their places within their schools' discourses. Working within and against the School of Art's discourses, the teachers constructed their expectations from themselves as teachers, as well as their expectations from the school and their students. The specific art discourses connected the art teachers to the art world beyond the school and provided them with a deep understanding of their subject area and rich art teaching practices. Feeling part of the art world helped them to resist authorities that devaluated art studies and to voice their teaching positions. At the same time this perception of an autonomic world they belong to isolated them at their schools. The other teachers in their buildings had no access to the separate art world discourses.

But the isolated situation did not only occur because of the specific professional School of Art's dominant discourses. At least in the cases of Tamar and Naomi, the isolation was also an outcome of their schools' discursive practice. They worked in schools that didn't encourage the teachers to work collaboratively in finding common goals and values or share their problems. Therefore, they found themselves and their art studies not only isolated in separate discourses like the math or science teachers, but also limited in the marginal place of an unimportant area of study. As Tamar described it:

No one knows what is going on the art studio. If no one knows and sees –what you do is limited.

The Conflict Between Role and Identity

The art teachers' awareness of the conflicts between their role and their teaching identity varied. So were their interpretations of these conflicts. But I found that in all the four case studies the art teachers encountered with a conflict between what they believed they would like to do in order to be meaningful teachers and what they understood they have to do in order to fulfill their roles.

Noga believed that to be a meaningful art teacher meant to provide each of her students a stage to express themselves and to get her and their peers' attention. She believed that through art she could help her students accept themselves as well as to examine their world and their interpretations of it. When she had to face a conflict between her role as a school decorator and her beliefs, she found a way to interpret her role in a meaningful way for herself and her students. She opposed the notion of decorating the school through displaying 'nice things' that pleased her or others' taste, and turned the school's walls to another stage for the students' expressions. Noga's way to deal with this imposed challenge was another example of her way to use the space the principal gave her to shape her teaching role according to her beliefs while at the same time shaping her school. Noga was much more troubled by the conflicts she had between her beliefs and those held by the institutes where she studied. The School of Art and the Art History Department at Tel Aviv University discourses perceived art as a field of experts.

Although Noga felt that she could shape her teaching role according to her beliefs, it seemed that it didn't prevent a basic conflict that existed between her child-centered approach and the school's structure and mechanism. According to her role as a specialist teacher, she had to work with the whole population of her school. It meant to work with 400 different individual students, and at the same time, according to her beliefs she wanted to relate to each of them as if he or she was the only one. After five years of succeeding to reach many of them, she felt overwhelmed. I believe that this conflict

contributed to her decision not to return to her school after giving birth to her first baby.

Tamar, Naomi, and Ada were aware of the conflict they had between what they were expected to accomplish as art teachers, and what they believed they would like to do. Accepting the School of Art discourses, they all believed that as art teachers they would like to introduce the students to the language of art, with which they could create or appreciate artworks done by others. But each one of them interpreted this conflict and the ways to negotiate it in a different way.

Ada found that her goals and expectations she held as an art teacher who was expert in her field, did not fit the role of an art teacher in her vocational high school. After a few months of being at that school she questioned the relevance of her agenda and shifted her beliefs about what she would like to do as an art teacher. She found that her role, as defined by the discourses of the vocational school, more suited her identity as a teacher and as a person. She identified with her students' resistance and their 'outsiders' position, and found meaning in her work, using art as a tool to enhance their damaged self image.

Today, my identity is first as an educator and second as an art teacher, although they are very close to one another and completes one another. (Ada's E-Mail, February 26, 2000)

It was an outcome of a process that I understood that I enjoy the education part of the work, the interaction and the talks with them. I don't know how I would feel if the work would only be to repeat year after year the same material necessary for the art history test. Here there is a combination of things that make teaching really exciting and different. (Ada's interview, December 1999)

Tamar related to the conflicts that were created by her school's expectations versus her beliefs as a normal situation. She accepted it as part of being an art teacher in the educational system. Her way to negotiate the narrow perception of her role to transfer knowledge, or to decorate the school, was to accept it as part of her assignments. She tried to minimize her efforts in fulfilling these expectations in order to have more time and energy to add

things that suited her beliefs, and that made her feel creative and meaningful.

The conflict between her role as an art teacher and her identity caused Naomi to feel that her teaching was a terrible missed opportunity. Naomi's role to cover the material for the matriculation exams through lecturing to 40 students with diverse abilities, or to decorate the school for the holidays, opposed her beliefs of what she would like to do and could do as an expert in her field. While Naomi regarded herself as an intellectual that could enrich her students and help them to understand differently their world and their culture (or the Western culture), her role was defined by discursive practices that threatened her identity.

But when it turns you in to a machine that has to cover material, it is so frustrating and disappointing because it is meaningless.

I know that I can be a very good teacher, but in these conditions I am a mediocre teacher. (Naomi's interview, December 1999)

Feeling a mediocre and meaningless teacher, with rare occasions of satisfaction, Naomi debated time and again whether she would like to continue to be an art teacher at the public educational system.

The detailed descriptions of conflicts between the art teachers' roles and their teaching identity that were provided in this study enhanced the importance of the distinction Britzman (1992) made between these terms. The conflicts between the art teachers' roles and their identity were an outcome of their opposition to the discursive practices of schooling such as teaching a mass number of students to memorize facts. Thus, the art teachers acted as agents of change, through promoting the development of personal creative and critical thinking, becoming aware of oneself and others' feelings and opinion, or dealing with 'difficult knowledge' (Britzman, 1998).

Implications

There are several implications from studying the difficulties the art teachers encountered and the ways they negotiated their identities for the art teachers' preparation program as well as for the school system. The art teachers feeling of isolation was somewhat enhanced by the discourses of the art communities which perceived art as an autonomic field. These discourses con-

nected the art teachers to the art world beyond the schools and provided them with many benefits such as a deep understanding of their subject area, rich art practices, and power to resist authorities that devaluated art studies. But the perception of art as an autonomic world to which the art teachers belong isolated them from the other teachers at their schools. Therefore it seems that the art teachers' preparation program should emphasize the social aspects of the art world. The issues around which art is created and perceived can not be separated from the rest of the world. Teaching art around these issues can provide art educators experts in their field with realization that they have a common ground with the others. This understanding could be enhanced by schools' discursive practice that does not separate subject areas and teachers. In this study, the art teachers who worked at schools that worked collaboratively on common goals and shared problems felt that they were less isolated and not marginalized. Thus, I believe that further researches are needed to examine the influence of schools' collaborative policy on the place of the arts in them.

The discursive practices of teaching art at the schools were very different then those expected by the art teachers who graduated from the School of Art. Although the art teachers portrayed in this study held different conceptions of what they believe they should do as meaningful art teachers, they found it very difficult to pursue their ideas. The low status of arts in the schools and its marginal place created teaching situations that contrasted time and again with the basic conditions needed to feel meaningful art teachers. The art teachers felt that the misconception of the arts' role within the education system created pressures and conflicts with what they perceived to be necessary and important.

From the opposite examples in this study, one can learn that art teachers, who felt that the principals and the schools' system provided them with space to negotiate their role, found ways to cope with conflicting situations. They felt that they could influence and shape the way arts and their role as art teachers were perceived in their building and therefore they felt that they could be meaningful and creative.

The art teachers' partial tales of conflicts between their roles and their teaching identity provided in this study enhanced the importance of the dis-

inction Britzman (1992) made between these terms. The conflicts between the art teachers' roles and their identity were an outcome of their positions that opposed the discursive practices of schooling such as teaching a mass number of students to memorize facts.

These findings implies that in order to attract good art teachers that will continue to be critical and reflective teachers, and that will voice their teaching identity, schools and teachers preparation program need to perceive the teaching profession as an ongoing process of becoming. Perceiving teaching as a process of becoming opposes the notion of teaching as fulfilling a function, a pre-designed role, and gaining experience in classroom management. It emphasizes that being a teacher is a process formed within socially and historically specific discourses that the teachers act upon. It is a process of constructing identity through taking up or resisting the meanings and values that are proposed by different discourses the teachers encountered.

Understanding teaching as an on going process of becoming implies that the school system should empower the teachers. The art teachers, who felt that the principals and the school system provided them with space to negotiate their role, found ways to feel meaningful and creative as art teachers. Others, that felt that the role imposed on them a teaching identity that opposed their beliefs, perceived their teaching position as a temporary solution or a mistake. Thus, in order to incorporate teachers in the public schools who feel they can be meaningful art teachers, one has to provide them with necessary space to negotiate their teaching role and to voice their always changing teaching identity.

Understanding teaching as an on going process of becoming also implies that art teachers' preparation programs should view differently the training process of the student teachers. Implying the method of dialogue and reflection that according to this study, helped the student teachers become aware of the process of constructing their identity and expressing it during their student teaching, art teachers' preparation program should not perceive teachers as a product. Rather, they should provide experiences that question issues such as what does it mean for us to become art teachers? How do we build our identities as art teachers? What influences our teaching practices? How do we negotiate our positions and beliefs within the school's

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