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Mentor's Introduction

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When graduate students in art education encounter the possibilities of research, an expected question and/or concern will be: What is good research and how do I do it?

The multi-disciplinary aspects of art education, coupled with an array of research methodologies, put the student in a quandary. Various writers have suggested priorities for research and preference for styles of inquiry. Such information can give limited guidance to the student, however, not necessarily the insights and personal motivation that are central to the question.

Vincent Lanier, in his paper, "Conception and priority in art education research," listed several popular areas of research--creativity, perception, artistic behavior and curriculum. He also suggested possible problem topics for research--weakness in judgmental procedures, errors in the selection of population, matching of research design to research strategy. However his major concern is found in his summary:

The most acutely critical and virtually unnoted problem of art education research is that the theoretical frameworks of our studies are largely either improperly conceived or inadequately ordered as to priority. Until these two aspects of this problem are appropriately dealt with, art education research is and will be, for the most part, unnecessarily wasteful and inadequate for our education needs, no matter how precise its procedure or elegant its design. (Lanier, '74-'75, p. 30)

Given this concern, educators must consider the most appropriate means for working with students as they confront the dilemma of research.

I am of the opinion that in order to develop the necessary theoretical framework, a student must first be encouraged to assimilate her or his experience through readings and dialogues. In this way the student will be able to come to grips with the inconsistencies, knots and tie-ups involved, and provide the personal connections that are meaningful to the individual. What will emerge is an integrated personal myth of research--a binding of experiences and beliefs. For the student, the personal value obtained is the prime factor in being involved in the research. Student researchers should be provided the opportunity to make their own connections, to search out writers and researchers who validate and extend what the student feels and believes. As a student of mine stated: "... I would like to think that it (the research) might confirm things other people are thinking and perhaps help me to understand our commonalities of 'wiring'."

The two papers that follow represent the on-going endeavors of two students and their "re-searching."

Lanier, Vincent, Conception and priority in art education research,
STUDIES IN ART EDUCATION, 1974-75, 16 (1), pp. 26-30.