

## BOOK REVIEWS

Courtney, R. (1997). *The quest: Research and inquiry in arts education*. 2nd Edition. Lanham, ML: University Press of America, 147pp. (Hardcover)

Richard Courtney is very clear about his target audience. He writes for those struggling with research issues in the area of Arts Education – graduate students, supervisors, and scholars in general. In this slim volume, Courtney boils down his lifetime quest for a research methodology which is appropriate, rigorous, and substantiated. His approach to the question, "What is research and inquiry in Arts Education?" is thorough, succinct, and systematic. Years of personal professional research combined with extensive experience with graduate students results in an interactive investigation of Arts Education research.

Throughout the text Courtney asks many questions asked by those beginning in the field, as well as questions they should be asking themselves as they embark on their research. These questions shape the structure of the book. He challenges the reader to consider questions about their approach to research and then provides background information for them to consider in the formulation of their responses. Some readers may find it beneficial to approach the text like a workbook which will help them define research questions and methods.

In his introduction, Courtney warns that choosing Arts Education as a research area is a perilous journey fraught with problems. He narrows the scope of the field by defining pertinent terminology and identifying common misconceptions about the field. He identifies the functions of artist, art teacher, and arts education researcher by illuminating the distinctive qualities and the necessarily shared overlap which helps to shape research approaches that are responsive to the arts.

Part One – Theory deals with the various historical and contemporary theoretical stances which support Arts Education research. In three short dense chapters Courtney takes a gymnastic approach to the history of inquiry through the ages. The reader is catapulted through a brief scan of ancient ways of knowing (tribal to medieval) through modern, romantic, and 19th century thinkers. It is a cavalcade of who's who in the

world of philosophical thought. All the big names are put in chronological order and the evolution of the various schools of thought are revealed through succinct descriptions of the social contexts. It is a useful sketch guiding the reader to more detailed readings provided in the extensive bibliography.

In the last chapter of the first section Courtney reviews contemporary approaches to Knowledge and Reason. The work of 20th century scholars is condensed to reveal the various types of knowledge sought and the methods through which it is obtained. Courtney carefully balances the inclusion of quantitative and qualitative ways of knowing which have evolved over time. He demonstrates how each form offers art educators valuable data and how the two may overlap and support one another. He concludes that effective Arts Education research requires that: a) researchers possess practical knowledge of the particular art form and its context, b) research questions must be matched with the appropriate research method, c) the question and the method be responsive to the type of knowledge sought by the researcher, and d) knowledge in arts education is gained through methods which result in substantiated reason.

Part 2 – Practice provides the what and how examples of arts education research undertaken in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australia in the past 20 years. Building on the theoretical underpinnings of Part One, Courtney defines the research approach that he practiced and evolved throughout his career. It's a soft sales pitch for a research methodology combining Grounded Theory and the Comparative-Emergent Qualitative Research Method (CEQRM). He champions the method praising the resulting "rich comparative data" but also admits the process is "arduous and time-consuming" (p. 59).

In the Preface Courtney states that, "Some pieces of this book consist of sections of papers and lectures given in various places of the world" that have been "edited and re-arranged" to fit into the book. Chapter 7 – The Thesis, is an uneasy fit with the book as a whole. It is a useful chapter defining the nature of a thesis and outlining how a student needs to prepare to write one. Its inclusion at that particular point in the book seems to break the train of thought. The author's carefully constructed style and content of this chapter suggest it might have been better to place this "thesis guide book" as an Appendix.

The remaining five short chapters offer the reader examples of various types of Arts Education research, much of it conducted by

Courtney over the last 25 years. He covers various types of program evaluations, research projects not tied to evaluation, arts and culture research, and research in creative art therapies. Each example includes country, type of research, funding agency, methodology, results, and degree of success. Courtney's concise style requires the reader to flip back and forth to the first section to reconnect with many of the references given in these examples. Courtney's honest reflection on these various projects supports his claims that research in the area of Arts Education is often underfunded and therefore limited in depth, quality, and results.

Courtney's conclusion is a call for researchers to embrace the exciting challenges of the underdeveloped field of arts education with rigour and respect. The concise energetic quality of Courtney's own "Quest" is a challenge and an inspiration to anyone interested in supporting Arts Education through research. This volume has particular value for those students, supervisors, and scholars beginning research in this field. Courtney's quest is our gift.

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Giroux, H. (1997). *Channel surfing: Race talk and the destruction of today's youth*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 248 pp. (Hardcover).

Henry Giroux's thesis in *Channel Surfing*, that young blacks and Hispanics are demonized in right wing films, advertisements, and talk shows, comes at an important juncture in the history of education in North America. In an era when several Canadian and American political leaders have been systematically slashing education funding, it is necessary for critical pedagogues to resist this neoconservative political and economic move. Giroux contends that the current attack upon social services, education funding, and affirmative action in the United States has in part been fueled by the media's manipulation of adult's fears over the emergence of cultural mobility and racial mixing in the younger