

# Situating art history for meaningful learning

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## KEY WORDS

Situated learning; teaching art; history; project work; negotiating meaning; student attitudes; teaching strategies.

## ABSTRACT

*The present article is a report of a case study, which took place at the School of Education of a private university in Nicosia, Cyprus. The purpose of the study is to examine students' expectations and attitudes towards an introductory art history university course and a possible change of attitudes after the instructor's attempt to situate learning. After analyzing an initial questionnaire given to a group of thirty-seven third and fourth year students enrolled in an art history class, it was found that students' attitudes toward art history were negative, mainly due to the traditional teaching method used to teach art history, which caused a failure in students' to recognize the usefulness and everyday life applications of the material. During a period of one semester the presentation of art history was based on a situated, socioconstructivist approach to teaching and learning and a final questionnaire was distributed and analyzed to examine possible changes in students' attitude. Results indicated that the specific instructional approach affected students' attitudes toward art history positively.*

## CONCERNS ABOUT TEACHING ART AND ART HISTORY

The work of many contemporary artists is viewed as a meaning-making endeavor rather than creative self-expression and this notion has been translated into art making in the classroom (Walker 2001). The paradigms for teaching art history are also changing. Art educators are moving from lecturing about the Fine Arts of the western world to practices related, for example, to multiculturalism and interdisciplinary aesthetics, through inquiry methods for learning (Chanda 1998). Changing the instructional approaches used in art education to more accurately reflect the methods for art making is a critical problem. The increased emphasis on various new teaching approaches, however, creates serious dilemmas for the art history instructor who tries to identify what are the most appropriate approaches for teaching art history in specific classrooms.

A socioconstructivist approach of teaching and learning that discusses the importance of considering specific students' needs, interests, learning styles and physical and social context of the learning process for project work and negotiating learning is the situated educational approach (Pitri 2004). Based on this approach learning is in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) suggest that by ignoring the situated nature of cognition, education defeats its own goal of providing useable, robust knowledge. In depth applications of this approach, however, took place mainly in preschool environments and in fewer elementary school contexts (Edwards, Gandini and Forman 1998; Pitri 2002). No matter how successful situated learning has been for early childhood education, one point of criticism is the fact that it has not been applied in higher levels of education. Do high school or university students lose their ability to negotiate meaning or do teachers give up on making learning meaningful to older students for the sake of detailed pre-planning of courses, which would be meaningful to supervisors or ministries of education? Another concern is if all areas or fields of study leave opportunities for educators to develop situated learning how can an area such as art history; which by definition refers to the past, be made meaningful, for example, to a specific group of university students today?

Does it matter to an instructor what the students' attitudes are toward a subject matter? Would that affect his/her teaching practice? Jeffers (1997) emphasizes the importance of studying student attitudes in relation to teacher attitudes and specialization. In education, instruments designed to measure cognitive objectives have historically been emphasized over instruments that measure affective objectives (Krathwohl et al 1964). In the past, many educational researchers have failed to investigate the affective measures, such as motivation, because interests, attitudes and personality characteristics were assumed to develop relatively slowly and to be visible in appraisal techniques only over longer periods of time. Now it is thought that affective behaviors undergo far more sudden transformations than cognitive behaviors (Pophan 1994). According to Krathwohl et al (1964), it could be assumed that if students have a tendency to act positively toward a subject, then they will have more of an interest in that subject and will more likely be actively engaged in learning during and after instruction. Students' attitude toward a subject has an influence upon their achievement and it is, therefore, important to be studied.

This article describes the case study of attempting to make art history meaningful to a group of thirty-seven third and fourth year students of the School of Education at a private university in Nicosia Cyprus and to examine their attitude change toward an introductory art history course and art history in general. This attempt was based on applying situated teaching and learning methods in the classroom, specifically project work and negotiating meaning among members of small groups. What follows is a description of the research methods used to describe the research participants and their initial attitudes toward art history, a description of how the situated

approach for teaching art history was applied to the specific students, and an interpretation of the results of the process related to students' attitude change.

## **RESEARCH TOOLS AND PARTICIPANTS – STUDENTS WHO LEARN BECAUSE THEY "HAVE TO"**

Traditionally art history courses are based on lectures and requiring students to memorize large amounts of information. By moving historically from one artistic period of the western world to the next using lectures as the main teaching tool, educators fail to realize the role of context and specific students' needs and interests in planning educational experiences. As a result, undergraduate students may be skeptical about enrolling in art history elective courses, worrying that they would be wasting their time memorizing a lot of useless information. At the same time, they may feel that they have to enroll in such courses if they are included in the course schedule suggested by their academic advisors. An attempt to change the traditional teaching approach for an undergraduate elective art history course and help students make the material meaningful to themselves aimed at spreading a rumor among university student-teachers that they should enroll in art history courses not because they have to but because it would be meaningful and useful for them to do so.

The study described here took place at the beginning of spring semester. The thirty-seven students enrolled in an introductory art history elective course offered by the School of Education, were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which consisted of forty-three questions in two parts. The first part consisted of twenty-six statements constructed to measure attitudinal items on a Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4). Out of the twenty-six statements fifteen were referring to art history in general and eleven to the specific art history course. Additionally, sixteen statements were positively worded and ten negatively worded. An instrument for measuring students' attitudes specifically toward art history is not found in existing literature. The instrument for this study was developed after identifying the problem and defining the purpose and the hypothesis of the study. Attributes of situated learning were identified as factors related to student attitudes toward art history. The questionnaire was developed based on those domains and on empirical bases in relation to the concerns expressed by specific students. The items were related to the students' views of how interesting, useful and clear, art history was for them. More specifically, students' views on how interesting art history was were examined with questions directly asking them to state whether they agreed or disagreed that art history is an interesting domain (q1, q9). Other items related to this domain, referred to the degree the content of art history, such as artists' accomplishments encouraged students to attempt to learn more or created feelings of enjoyment for them towards studying art history (q5, q7, q13, q14). The items intended to examine the degree of how useful the students thought the art history content was, specifically referring to how applicable they found art history to be in their lives (q4, q12, q19, q 21) and how it related to their field of studies as well as its importance to their future as educators (q10, q17, q18, q23, q24). The items measuring students' attitudes regarding the degree of clarity they assigned to art history, included statements about the degree of confidence the students had in studying art history (q1, q3, q6, q8, q11, q15, q16, q20).

The second part of the questionnaire included questions concerning demographic and background information: age, status at the university, family background, art-related educational background, working hours, course schedule of the specific semester, ways of passing their free time, number of art history books at home, approximate number of times they visited a gallery or museum and why, reasons for enrolling in the art history course, and expected final grade for the course. Some of the reasons that the students gave for enrolling in the art history course were: the course seemed interesting, they liked art and would like to learn more about art

history, and the course was offered at a convenient day and time. The majority, however, expressed that they had to enroll in the specific course. One reason they gave for this was that they needed elective courses to cover the requirements of their program. Some of them further explained that they felt that the School of Education did not offer enough elective courses. The second reason the students expressed for feeling that they had to enroll in the art history course was the fact that the specific course was included in the pre-planned course schedule suggested by their advisor.

The hypothesis of the study was that an attempt to situate knowledge of art history would cause positive change in students' attitudes, regarding specifically the factor of usefulness of the material. Student behavior is influenced by their values, motivation, beliefs and attitudes they have formulated about school, art and life in general. The key to success in education often depends on how a student feels toward home, self and school. Studies documenting students' attitudes toward mathematics and statistics courses have shown that negative attitudes are associated with poor performance and can be considered as obstacles to learning (Wise 1985). A study conducted by Thorndike-Christ (1991) also showed that students' attitudes toward mathematics were predictive of final grades. It is, therefore, important for art instructors as well to develop and implement tools for assessing students' attitudes toward their courses in order to be able to develop teaching methods, which would lead to positive attitudes and facilitate student learning. Planning meaningful courses for the students, meant teaching with a focus on situated learning.

## **PREMISES OF SITUATING ART HISTORY**

The concept of situated learning is embedded in constructivism. According to Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), to situate learning means to place thought and action in a specific place and time; to involve other learners, the environment, and activities to create meaning, and to locate in a particular setting the thinking and doing processes used by experts to accomplish knowledge and skill tasks. In a situated learning approach, knowledge and skills are learned in contexts that reflect how knowledge is obtained and applied in everyday situations. Situated cognition theory conceives of learning as a sociocultural phenomenon rather than the action of an individual who acquires general information from a decontextualized body of knowledge (Anderson, Reder, and Simon 1996).

As Blandy and Hoffman (1993) point out, since the early 60s art educators had been introduced to a sociocultural view of art and art education, which identifies art as part of a shared environment and art education as a means of communicating values and beliefs as well as personal identity. Blandy and Hoffman (1993) note that numerous art educators have recognized and explored specific aspects of community-based art education, however, there is a continuous need for serious speculation on the relationship between community and art education. It is their belief that this speculation must broaden beyond its current sociocultural orientation in order for art educators to embrace community as including humans but also the natural environment. The situated learning approach is supported by what Blandy and Hoffman (1993) describe as a bioregional perspective for art education, emphasizing natural, cultural, and social environments towards a shared identity.

The situating learning approach is also supported by Blandy (2011) in his discussion of "participatory culture" as one of the ascendant sites that will inform research in art education, shape the art curriculum and provoke innovation. Jenkins and Bertozzi (2007) define participatory culture: "as one where there is strong support for

creating and sharing what one creates with others, and where there is some kind of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (p.174)

In order to facilitate participatory culture, Jenkins et al (2009) suggest that art educators should introduce skills such as play, performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed cognition, collective intelligence, judgement, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation. The skills and dispositions for facilitating participatory culture in relation with the four premises of situated learning described by Anderson, Reder and Simon (1996), guided the development of classroom activities and student evaluation for the specific art history course. What follows is a description of examples of how knowledge of art history was situated based on those premises.

***Learning was grounded in the actions of everyday situations.***

The study of the art of the ancient world, for example, began at the beginning of the semester after a short walk around the campus area where a lot of neo classical buildings were being built. The students observed the buildings, took photographs, compared and contrasted them, and made reference to the Parthenon. Upon returning to the classroom further analysis of ancient Greek art by the instructor led to the study of other contemporary habits in relation to ancient Greek culture as demonstrated in art (e.g. Minoan and Cycladic wall painting), such as fashion, jewellery-making, and eating habits. The students pointed out these topics and were given the chance and time to express their ideas and observations. Since the findings from analysing the second part of the initial questionnaire showed that the majority of students enjoyed watching movies and going to coffee shops with their friends, films about ancient Greek, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Celtic and Japanese art were played in the classroom. A visit to a local archaeological museum's coffee shop followed a study of the exhibited works in the museum in relation to what was discussed in the classroom, with emphasis on the statues and figurines. To review what they learned, the students were asked to work in small groups to create a two-dimensional imaginary figure that would combine as many characteristics from different types of art as possible and present it to the rest of the class.

Additionally, one of the written assignments for student evaluation was a research project for which the students were asked to choose a general, interdisciplinary, topic that interested them. They initially had to explain why studying that topic was considered useful to a future educator and study it further to develop and demonstrate deep understanding. They were then required to search through art historical resources in order to identify and compare art works from various cultures and artistic periods that were related to the specific topic. Some of the topics selected were: Flowers, water, landscape, atmosphere, facial expressions, play, fashion and jewellery, and homes. The above was an attempt to relate student evaluation to their interests and everyday lives. In situated learning not only the subject matter of the learning process but also the teaching tools are derived from everyday situations for the students.

***Knowledge was acquired situationally and transferred to other similar situations.***

Through a socioconstructivist teaching approach, focusing on students' needs and interests, the specific art history course was planned for making connections between the class material, the material of other courses that the specific students either took in the past or were taking that semester, and their everyday lives. During the period of the local carnival, for example, the students expressed an interest in masks. Class presentations described and analyzed the purpose and function of masks from various cultures and time periods (ancient

Greek drama, Chinese festivals, African and Native American rituals, contemporary theatre, sports, army etc). The students were then asked, to create their own masks, describe them in relation to what they had learned and use them to acquire roles for an improvised group performance. Another example of transfer of situationally acquired knowledge was a class project of studying landscape paintings from various periods in order to find images demonstrating the four seasons, which they would use in a project for a different course.

***Learning was the result of a social process that encompassed ways of thinking, perceiving, problem solving and interacting, in addition to declarative and procedural knowledge.***

The main learning process facilitated during the specific art history course was socioconstructivist project work. Projects are defined as interactive activities that develop a deeper understanding by offering multiple perspectives of a phenomenon (a) over an undetermined period of time (Fosnot 1996). The students had the chance to pose questions about any material from art history and in relation to early childhood education and work in small groups to answer their questions using inquiry methods. The project approach allows students to reflect on their own thinking and facilitates constructive conflicts between students to help them heighten the logic of their final solutions to problems. For example, a small group of students that expressed interest in Minimalism, decided to further investigate the topic and create their own examples of minimal art, since as they initially stated "anybody can be an excellent minimal artist". After individually studying the course notes and additional bibliography from the library and the World Wide Web, each student created their own minimal art work. Presenting the art works to the rest of the students and associating them with the work of well-known minimal artists, created conflict about what elements should be minimized and to what degree in order for an art work to be considered minimal art. The students, who believed that the answer to that question was subjective, suggested the next stage of the inquiry process: Studying a post-impressionist painting and minimizing what each student thought should be minimized in order for the painting to become minimalistic. Presenting, comparing and discussing their paintings led to the conclusion that what could be minimized even to the point of elimination in a painting are all elements and principles of design (line, color, shape, form, movement, composition, etc.) and that each specific artist decides the degree of minimization of each element. The project approach encouraged students to ask questions, seek answers and to collaborate with peers.

***Learning was not separated from the world of action but existed in robust, complex, social environments made up of actors, actions, and situations.***

The epistemology behind this study held that knowledge is gradually constructed by individuals becoming each other's students, by taking a reflective stance toward each other's constructs and by honouring the power of each other's initial perspective for negotiating a better understanding of subject matter. This theory of knowledge leads to practices described by Gardner (1999) as education that is based on helping students study their ways of making meaning and their negotiations with each other in a context of symbolization and communication. In the context of art history, an attempt was made to facilitate "negotiated learning", described by Forman and Fyfe (1998) as a dynamic system of causes, effects, and counter effect. They specify three components that define negotiated learning: design, documentation and discourse. Design refers to any activity in which students make records of their plans or intended solutions to problems. Discourse connotes a deep desire to study and understand each other, confront constructively, experience conflict and seek footing in a constant shift of perspectives. Documentation refers to any activity that renders recording of the performance with detail, to help others understand the behaviour and the reasons behind it.

To examine the hypothesis that situating art history would cause positive change in students' attitudes, especially regarding their views on how useful the material is to them, a second questionnaire was distributed at the end of the semester. The post-test included only the questions from the first part of the questionnaire given at the beginning of the semester.

#### **ATTITUDE CHANGE TOWARDS ART HISTORY – STUDENTS WHO LEARN BECAUSE THEY CHOOSE TO**

The data for this study was analyzed with the use of the statistical software SPSS 12.0 for windows. Table One presents the means and standard deviations of the responses of the students to the questionnaire. This includes the responses to the pretest and post-test administrations of the questionnaires. The questions to which the students had the most positive attitudes on the pretest were: question ten 'Art history is related to pre-primary education' ( $\bar{X}$  =3.11), question twelve "Topics and concepts from art history have applications in contemporary life" ( $\bar{X}$  =3.11), and question nineteen "I will benefit from the art history course" ( $\bar{X}$  =3.08). The questions to which the students had the most negative attitudes on the pretest were: question sixteen "In art history courses I am daunted by the idea of memorizing information" ( $\bar{X}$  =3.38), question twenty "Most students acquire knowledge which they forget after the end of the art history course" ( $\bar{X}$  =3.11), and question one "History courses are difficult" ( $\bar{X}$  =2.84). The majority of students expressed their concern about being asked to memorize information in the context of an art history course and agreed that historical art information from such a course is not stored in students' long-term memory. This finding justified the instructor's attempt to change the instructional methods and to consider students' learning styles in teaching.

Questions	Pretest		Posttest	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
q1 Art history courses are difficult	2.84	0.69	1.75	0.57
q2 Information about art history is interesting	2.78	0.79	3.34	0.70
q3 Art history is stressful	2.73	0.93	2.16	0.81
q4 Art history has no connection to my life	2.41	1.07	1.66	0.87
q5 I have a positive attitude toward in depth study of art history	2.76	0.89	2.97	0.97
q6 I feel nervous about learning information from the history of art	2.76	0.98	1.97	0.86
q7 I enjoy art history	2.51	0.93	3.28	0.68
q8 Art history is complex	2.81	0.88	1.91	0.86
q9 Art history is an area which interests me	2.57	0.96	3.00	0.88
q10 Art history is related to pre-primary education	3.11	0.84	3.63	0.71
q11 Art history is chaotic	2.41	0.86	1.81	1.06
q12 Topics and concepts from art history have applications in contemporary life	3.11	0.61	3.50	0.67
q13 Artists' accomplishments encourage me to learn more about art history	2.89	0.70	3.28	0.77
q14 I like browsing through art history books	2.78	1.03	3.16	0.63
q15 Studying art history is very easy for me	1.97	0.73	2.53	0.72
q16 In art history courses I am daunted by the idea of memorizing information	3.38	0.72	2.19	0.82
q17 The art history course is useful for me as a future educator	3.05	0.81	3.63	0.71
q18 The art history course should be mandatory for all students in the School of Education	2.30	0.94	3.13	0.79
q19 I will benefit from the art history course	3.08	0.76	3.50	0.62
q20 Most students acquire knowledge which they forget after the end of the art history course	3.11	0.88	2.13	0.83
q21 The art history course is important	2.84	0.83	3.34	0.70
q22 I have heard negative comments about the art history course from other students	2.51	1.04	2.25	0.84
q23 Knowledge acquired from an art history course contributes to students' future professional development	2.65	0.82	3.44	0.76
q24 Knowledge from the specific art history course will be useful for me in the future	2.92	0.83	3.66	0.55
q25 The comments of students who took the art history course are positive	2.06	0.86	2.53	0.80
q26 I have enrolled in the art history course because my friends have	1.38	0.83	1.25	0.44

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

On the post-test, the students expressed the most positive attitudes in question twenty-four 'Knowledge from the specific art history course will be useful for me in the future' ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.66), which was not among the questions that received the most positive responses in the pretest. This indicated that after the students' experience of situated art history, most of them recognized the interdisciplinary character of art history and its connection to their lives and future profession. Questions ten, twelve, and nineteen, which received students' most positive responses in the pretest, received relatively high means in the post-test as well. (q10  $\bar{X}$  = 3.63, q12  $\bar{X}$  = 3.50, q19  $\bar{X}$  = 3.50). The questions to which the students had the most negative attitudes on the post-test were: question four "Art history has no connection to my life" ( $\bar{X}$  = 1.66) and 'question one "History courses are difficult" ( $\bar{X}$  = 1.75). Whereas the class average means in the post-test continued to be high for questions ten, twelve and nineteen and low for questions four and one, those means were higher and lower respectively than the means from students' responses in the pretest. Therefore, in order to examine the overall attitude change that situated art



history caused, further analysis of the data was required for comparing the differences among the means from students' responses to each question between the pretest and post-test.

In order to compare whether there were differences in the responses of the students between the pretest and post-test administration of the questionnaire, a series of dependent sample t-tests were performed and summarized on Table 2. The results of the study indicated that there were significant differences in the attitudes of the students from the beginning to the end of the semester. More specifically, from the twenty-six questions that were examined, there were significant differences in the responses of the students in seventeen questions based on an  $\alpha$ -level  $< 0.01$ . These were questions: one, two, four, six, seven, eight, ten, eleven, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-three, twenty-four and twenty-five. The students expressed positive attitude changes in the majority of questions. There were only five questions to which there were no significant differences in the responses of the students from the beginning to the end of the semester (q3, q5, q14, q22, q26). The largest differences in the responses from the pretest to the post-test administration were related to their negative feelings derived from the idea of memorizing information in art history courses (q16), the difficulty level of art history courses (q1), the complexity level of art history (q8) and the idea that most students acquire knowledge on art history which they forget after the end of the course (q20). In question sixteen student responses in the pretest showed that the majority of students agreed that in art history courses they were daunted by the idea of memorizing information, whereas, in the post-test most students' responses indicated that they were not as daunted. After experiencing art history from the socioconstructivist perspective, students realized that learning does not necessarily require memorizing information. Situating art history also led to most students thinking that the art history material is not difficult or complex and that the knowledge they acquired in the art history course will be preserved even after the end of the course.

Question	Mean (pretest- posttest)	SD	SEM	t	df	p- value
q1 Art history courses are difficult	1.06250	.84003	.14850	7.155	31	.000
q2 Information about art history is interesting	-.50000	.87988	.15554	-3.215	31	.003
q3 Art history is stressful	.50000	1.41421	.25000	2.000	31	.054
q4 Art history has no connection to my life	.68750	.96512	.17061	4.030	31	.000
q5 I have a positive attitude toward in depth study of art history	-.18750	1.06066	.18750	-1.000	31	.325
q6 I feel nervous about learning information from the history of art	.75000	1.07763	.19050	3.937	31	.000
q7 I enjoy art history	-.68750	.93109	.16460	-4.177	31	.000
q8 Art history is complex	.90625	1.02735	.18161	4.990	31	.000
q9 Art history is an area which interests me	-.43750	1.07576	.19017	-2.301	31	.028
q10 Art history is related to pre-primary education	-.53125	.94985	.16791	-3.164	31	.003
q11 Art history is chaotic	.50000	.91581	.16189	3.088	31	.004
q12 Topics and concepts from art history have applications in contemporary life	-.40625	.94560	.16716	-2.430	31	.021
q13 Artists' accomplishments encourage me to learn more about art history	-.37500	.83280	.14722	-2.547	31	.016
q14 I like browsing through art history books	-.28125	.88843	.15705	-1.791	31	.083
q15 Studying art history is very easy for me	-.46875	.91526	.16180	-2.897	31	.007
q16 In art history courses I am daunted by the idea of memorizing information	1.15625	1.01947	.18022	6.416	31	.000
q17 The art history course is useful for me as a future educator	-.50000	.67202	.11880	-4.209	31	.000
q18 The art history course should be mandatory for all students in the School of Education	-.71875	.92403	.16335	-4.400	31	.000
q19 I will benefit from the art history course	-.34375	.74528	.13175	-2.609	31	.014
q20 Most students acquire knowledge on art history which they forget after the end of the course	.90625	1.20106	.21232	4.268	31	.000
q21 The art history course is important	-.43750	.80071	.14155	-3.091	31	.004
q22 I have heard negative comments about the art history course from other students	.28125	1.05446	.18640	1.509	31	.141
q23 Knowledge acquired from an art history course contributes to students' future professional development	-.68750	.78030	.13794	-4.984	31	.000
q24 Knowledge from the specific art history course will be useful for me in the future	-.65625	.86544	.15299	-4.289	31	.000
q25 The comments of students who took the art history course are positive	-.41935	.84751	.15222	-2.755	30	.010
q26 I have enrolled in the art history course because my friends have	.09375	.81752	.14452	.649	31	.521

Table 2: Paired samples correlations

## CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER THOUGHTS

There are numerous approaches and methods that instructors can use to deliver art history content to university students. However, the lack of standardized measures of art history knowledge makes it difficult to assess and compare various forms of instruction in art education. Examining students' attitudes toward art history and art history education provides insight into the teaching approaches which affect attitudes in a positive way. The attempt to situate learning in art history, caused students' positive attitude change and this motivates the educator to consider applying this method not only in the context of art history but possibly in other contexts as well.

A classroom is a complex system. Classroom participants, teachers and students, bring with them beliefs and meanings to the teaching and learning process that must be identified before a response can be made to meet the needs of students. A classroom's social context has an influence on attitudes toward learning art history. For example, students who have friends that had not enjoyed their art history courses would also most likely develop negative attitudes toward that area of study. In child education it is also important to find out what the role is that the parents or individuals in authority, within a social context, play in fostering particular beliefs and attitudes toward art history.

Factors that influence the affective domain include the cultural background and the social context of the classroom (Thorndike-Christ 1991). The students that participated in this study were all females of the same ethnic background, who shared the same educational experiences for three and four years at the university, were familiar with working in small groups for fulfilling classroom assignments and had already developed peer culture. They had also been enrolled in all the compulsory studio and art education courses of the program offered by the same instructor. What happens if the instructor has never met the students prior to the first meeting for his/her course? What would change in the teaching process if the students had never met each other before? Does an instructor have the luxury of time to allow students to develop peer culture and consider the needs and interests of students with differences in their field of studies, nationality, age and background? It could be possible but very difficult. The participants of this study were part of a very specific population of the university. An attempt to situate art history in one of the cross-gender, multi-age, multicultural groups of students from various fields of studies would have been a greater challenge. It is not suggested that educators should focus on homogenizing groups as much as possible for the sake of making situating knowledge easier because such an attempt denies respect for diversity. According to Lave and Wegner (1991) the conception that the theory of situated learning carries connotations of particularity is a misinterpretation and should not generate resistance against the theory. They point out that even so-called general knowledge has power only in specific circumstances. Generality, often associated with abstract representations and with decontextualization, is meaningless unless made specific to a particular situation. Additionally, the formation or acquisition of an abstract principle is itself a specific event in specific circumstances. What is called general knowledge is not privileged with respect to other kinds of knowledge. General knowledge can be gained only in specific circumstances. "The generality of any form of knowledge lies in the power to renegotiate the meaning of the past and future in constructing the meaning of present circumstances" (Lave and Wegner 199: 34). A successful strategy for situating art history is giving students choices and allowing and encouraging them to pose questions and seek answers. Students' small group project work and teachers' continuous action research proved to be successful strategies to help future teachers view the value of art history. Teachers who share positive attitudes toward art history would more likely show the appropriate enthusiasm while teaching art to children.

Due to the fact that students were allowed to make decisions about what to learn, that is, what art works, periods and themes to study, part of the content that would be included in a traditional introductory art history survey course was not included in the specific course of situating art history. Koroscik (1996) confirms that "if we intend to reduce or relinquish the use of 'transmission approaches to teaching' (such as art history lectures or other forms of teacher-dominated talk about art) in favour of interactive and open-ended approaches, then we will find ourselves devoting more time to teaching less content" (p. 17). Korosick (1996) wonders, what artworks will we choose to ignore? What should be emphasized is the development of students who would be informed sophisticated decision makers, especially at university level, in order to be self-motivated learners who would want to learn the new and understand the old and the role of the teacher to be that of a guide for the meaning-making and decision-making process.

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