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# Arts in education and creativity: a literature review

2nd Edition

Mike Fleming

## **Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) Literature Reviews**

These reports have been commissioned to introduce readers to the main principles, theories, research and debates in the field. They aim to introduce the major themes and writing pertaining to each area of study and to outline key trends and arguments.

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Mike Fleming is the Director of Postgraduate Division at Durham University. His writing on drama and aesthetics has been extremely influential both nationally and internationally in integrating competing traditions from drama in education and theatre. He has published on the relationship between drama and intercultural education. His research is currently focused on the implications for teaching of the 'high art' and low art' debate.

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## About the Creativity, Culture and Education Literature Review Series

Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) is a national organisation which aims to transform the lives of children and families by harnessing the potential of creative learning and cultural opportunity to enhance their aspirations, achievements and skills.

Creativity, Culture and Education is about making a difference to the lives of children and families and their experiences are at the heart of what we do. We promote the value of creative learning and cultural opportunities by building a strong evidence base, stimulating debate amongst policy makers and opinion formers and through the delivery of high quality programmes which achieve this on the ground. We promote a systemic approach to creative and cultural initiatives and one which builds on the excellent practice which already exists to make opportunity consistent, to ensure that all children and young people are included and to place quality at the core of any creative or cultural experience.

We deliver two flagship programmes – Creative Partnerships and Find Your Talent.

- **Creative Partnerships** - the Government's creative learning programme fosters long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals to inspire, open minds and harness the potential of creative learning.
- **Find Your Talent** - the Government's pilot cultural offer for all children and young people which aims to ensure they have access to the wide range of quality cultural experiences essential to unlocking their talent and realising their potential.

Fostering creativity is fundamentally important because creativity brings with it the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve, communicate, collaborate and to reflect critically. These are all skills demanded by contemporary employers and will be vital for young people to play their part in a rapidly changing world.

Our programmes can have maximum impact if teachers, parents, children, young people and practitioners themselves learn from the experience and activities delivered through the programmes. For this reason, one of the most significant legacies will be the product of our research and evaluation and how that is effectively communicated to stakeholders.

However, because Creativity, Culture and Education works by creating partnerships drawn from the widest fields of endeavour, the different stakeholders recognise that there is often a 'knowledge gap' between reflection, analysis and learning. In addition, the wide focus of approach – which is fundamental to the nature of creativity – means that people are often working at the limit of their disciplines.

For these reasons we have commissioned a series of literature reviews exploring the key issues in current literature and summarising the history and latest developments in each subject. Each review is written by an experienced and respected author in their field. They aim to be accessible, clearly referenced and to act as 'stepping-stone' resources to underpin the research conducted by and for Creativity, Culture and Education.

# Foreword

This literature review offers an historical and theoretical overview of arts education and its place in the English curriculum. It was originally published two years ago, by the Creative Partnerships team at Arts Council England. The programme and team have since been transferred to a new organisation, Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE) and, the report (though the content remains unchanged) is now being republished in the new CCE format and circulated to new partners and participants in its programmes.

It centres on official policy discourse and attempts to outline key moments and movements in the history of arts education over the last 120 years. This topic is central to the ambitions, scope and reach of CCE and Mike Fleming helps us further in this aim by beginning the process of articulating the relationship of creative learning and creativity education with arts education. One of his key messages is that we should not lump all the arts together and short synopses of four discrete arts disciplines in section 2 make this argument very clearly.

The Creative Partnerships programme, managed by CCE, is absolutely committed to a project exploring how forms of creative education can transform pedagogy, curriculum and indeed the institutions of schooling. Mike Fleming's work shows us that this ambition is not new and explains the histories we have inherited and the philosophical arguments we are still working through.

We hope that the report will be useful for those interested in arts and creative education. It offers a serious and sophisticated review of the concept of arts education and should be of use to all of us with ambitions to act in this arena. If CCE wants to leave a lasting impact on schools and the curriculum through its distinct and different ways of working in developing creative learning, it needs to engage with the challenges Mike Fleming lays out so clearly for us.

**Dr David Parker, Creativity, Culture and Education**  
**Dr Julian Sefton-Green**

# **'arts educators have generally been slow to relate their work to either other histories of education or social, political, and cultural histories in general'**

Chalmers (2004:11)

## **Introduction**

This review examines the development of arts education and its relationship to the concept of creativity. Its aim is to provide a review of some of the key literature which explores arts education, its traditions and distinct subject issues, and how these either differ or overlap with more general writings on creativity. It has been conceived in two main sections: (i) history and traditions and (ii) arts education and creativity.

The first section examines changing approaches to arts education from 1870 to the present day. It focuses primarily on compulsory education and only includes passing reference to the significant developments in arts education realised in contexts other than schools, for example through arts associations and in higher education. As Cox (2007) correctly points out when writing about music, learning in the arts takes place in informal as well as formal settings. In the first part of the twentieth century there are two contrasting narratives to be considered. One is concerned with official reports, education acts and publications and the other with the work of individual, charismatic writers and practitioners whose passion for the arts was intense but whose influence was fairly limited. The post war period from the 1950s onwards saw an expansion of interest in the arts in education when ideas influenced by progressive educators (in the tradition of writers like Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi) which had been developing since the turn of the century started to take hold. This section will also examine briefly the development of four individual arts: drama, dance, art, music.

The shorter arts education and creativity section examines the relationship between arts education and more general writings on creativity. It draws on some of the literature addressed in section one but with more of a focus on the explicit and implicit constructs of creativity in operation. It will examine the relationship of the concept of creativity to the arts curriculum, and how it relates to other more general writing on creativity. A key issue here will be the relationship between the concept of creativity, which seeks to inform the general curriculum, and the specific aims of arts in education.

Although this is not intended to be a detailed history of the development of the arts in education, a broadly historical approach has been taken. As Chalmers (2004:11) has pointed out, 'arts educators have generally been slow to relate their work to either other histories of education or social, political, and cultural histories in general'. He also identifies the fact that too

much dependence has been placed on secondary sources when writing histories. Although writing primarily about the United States context, his comments are of wider significance. He goes on to comment that 'there has been no single history of anything', providing a useful reminder that a history is not the same as a mere chronology and will inevitably involve a point of view (ibid: 13 ). What is more helpful than a mere chronology is to discern broad patterns in the development of ideas about arts education, particularly as the intention in this study is to relate these to concepts of creativity. Some of the broad questions/conceptual issues which will be addressed in this study within a chronological framework are as follows:

- What explicit or implicit arguments were advanced for the value of the arts in the curriculum? Or how were the arts variously justified?
- At what point did the concept of 'arts in education' as a generic term start to be employed? What were the arguments advanced for and against a generic conception of the arts?
- How was the concept of 'the arts' defined? Were 'the arts' conceived differently from 'crafts' education?
- What were the major influences on thinking about the arts: progressive educators? psychology of education? aesthetic philosophers? developments in the art world outside education?
- What are the implicit theories of art which underpin approaches to arts in education: formalist, representational, expressive?

These are ambitious questions to seek to answer in a fairly short publication and a note of caution is necessary:

(i) There is value in examining the history of arts education in terms of broad conceptual approaches but also danger in doing so. Any analysis, conceptual overview or model is likely to be a simplification of the reality and 'wrong' in some respects. But without some broad mapping of the territory, a linear, purely descriptive history may end up being at best uninformative and at worst confusing. It is important to be aware that writers can unwittingly distort the history to suit a particular interpretation or analysis. For example, it is not uncommon to see the development in thinking about the arts from the 1960s onwards in terms of two broad paradigms - from 'self-expression' and 'creativity' to a more inclusive view which included emphasis on

technique and response to art. This view, while valuable in bringing a stark perspective to complex information, nevertheless tends to oversimplify some of the issues as is evident in the 'drama debate' in the 1990s and the criticisms of the drama in education movement. The tendency to place writers like Bolton and Heathcote in the 1970s and 1980s in the same camp as earlier writers like Slade (1954) and Way (1967) on the grounds that they all subscribed to a self-expression view misses important differences of approach (this will be explored in more detail in the section on drama). Similarly the approach of Franz Cizek who influenced the development of child visual art was misinterpreted by some English followers as being completely devoid of any emphasis on technique in favour of spontaneity (MacDonald, 1970:345). It is important not to impose a 'false unity on diversity' (Allen and Turvey, 2001:24) but without the description of broad patterns it is difficult to negotiate the development of ideas with any clarity.

(ii) A potential danger in describing broad approaches to arts education is making assumptions about the arts in general that are true only of one particular art form. As Langer (1957:13) pointed out 'it is a constant temptation to say things about 'Art' in [a] general sense that are true only in one special domain, or to assume that what holds for one art must hold for another'. For that reason, section one will focus on particular art forms in addition to examining a general history of the development of the arts in education. Each of the arts subjects has distinct issues relevant to the history of its development, although common threads can be discerned.

(iii) The development of thinking about teaching the arts has been dominated by progressive educators and psychology rather than philosophy of art. This may account for a lack of conceptual clarity in some of the writing where terms are not always used with consistency. However, it is important to resist a search for strict definitions in uses of terms like 'art' and 'creativity'. Rather than replacing imprecise use of terms with narrow definitions, it is more useful to examine how various terms were used and what can be determined about the development of thinking from their use. Weitz's use of Wittgenstein's thinking on language and meaning marked a significant change from a search for essentialist definitions of 'art' and instead recognised that the concept of art was fluid and changing (Weitz, 1956). As outlined in Section 3, this way of thinking can be usefully applied to arts education because it prioritises the use of terms over a search for definitive meanings.

(iv) It is important not to interpret the past too negatively in the light of contemporary understanding. For example, one can criticise the excesses of self-expression in some approaches to the arts quite easily, but these need to be seen within their contexts. The goal is to understand meaning and intention; it is therefore necessary to take account of the contemporary ideas and socio-cultural context which informed the changing approaches.

(v) There is a danger of concentrating on narrow views. The subjects of policy, theory and practice in arts in education are extremely wide and could embrace:

- writers who have written specifically about arts in education: (e.g. John Dewey, Herbert Read, David Best, Peter Abbs, Malcolm Ross);
- policy documents such as education acts, advisory documents, national curriculum;
- writers on aesthetics whose theories have been directly influential on the arts and less directly on education (e.g. Clive Bell, Susanne Langer, Robin Collingwood, Benedetto Croce);
- theories of aesthetics: form, representation, expression, institution;
- writers on philosophy who have influenced thinking in the arts (e.g. Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, Ludwig Wittgenstein);
- different art forms: visual art, music, dance, drama;
- the relationship between arts and wider concepts/issues in education (creativity, intelligence, learning, feeling).

The history of arts education, then, can be viewed in terms of key writers, influential government publications and reports, conceptual frameworks, the wider social and cultural history and indeed from other perspectives. It will be necessary to be selective without unduly distorting the range of influences or oversimplifying the issues.

**‘This area [aesthetic and creative] is concerned with the capacity to respond emotionally and intellectually to sensory experience; the awareness of degrees of quality; and the appreciation of beauty and fitness for purpose. It involves the exploration and understanding of feeling and the processes of making, composing and inventing. Aesthetic and creative experience may occur in any part of the curriculum, but some subjects contribute particularly to the development of pupils' aesthetic awareness and understanding because they call for personal, imaginative, affective and often practical, responses to sensory experience.**

(Department of Education and Science, 1985:17)

# 1 History and traditions

## 1.1 The pre-war period

The main issues in relation to the arts in education in the post 1870 period are as follows:

- the relative lack of attention to the arts in key government publications;
- the emphasis on education structures, basic education, health and well-being of children and teacher supply rather than on curriculum;
- the influence of key individual charismatic practitioners rather than official policy;
- the slow spread of progressive thinking in education which came to fruition in the second part of the century.

In order to understand the relative lack of attention to the arts in education in official documents it is important to consider the wider social context at the turn of the century. The year 1870 has been chosen as a starting point because The Elementary Education Act of that year provided elementary schools to ‘fill the gaps’ in the previously voluntary provision of education for young children. School boards were introduced and were given the power to create new schools and pay the fees of the poorest children. The main motivation was the provision of a basic form of education and the development of the curriculum was of less significance.

In his speech to Parliament introducing the bill which instigated the key changes, Forster made clear what the priority was facing the nation:

We find a vast number of children badly taught, or utterly untaught, because there are too few schools and too many bad schools, and because there are large numbers of parents who cannot or will not send their children to school (quoted in Maclure, 1986:99).

His speech went on to draw on a utilitarian, economic perspective, claiming that ‘upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity’ and that ‘if we leave our work-folk any longer unskilled, notwithstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become overmatched in the competition of the world’ (ibid:104).



Although there had been considerable opposition to the idea of educating the workforce, by 1870 it seemed not only desirable but of paramount importance to do so (Hopkins, 1994:314). Official thinking at the time was more concerned with practical problems and whether schools should be maintained by voluntary effort or the state than with theoretical perspectives on the deeper purpose of education and the role of the arts. As Dent (1970:3) comments in his history of education in England, 'It can hardly be denied that England was in the 1860s one of the worst educated countries in the West.' The conditions in schools, which were not untypical, were reported by an HMI at the time who referred to the 'squalid little room 14 feet 4 inches by 8 feet in a back street' which housed thirty three children crowded together and the master's knowledge and qualifications which were 'of the humblest kind'; his method of instruction was 'to hear the lessons of each child one by one, while the rest are learning off their spellings' (ibid, 1970:7).

## 1.2 Early education acts

The early education acts and reports were focused more on national structures than on the content of the curriculum which was almost exclusively focused around reading, writing and basic arithmetic. The challenge to ensure attendance in school also detracted from any attention to developing the curriculum – a challenge exacerbated by the lack of an adequate number of teachers. The 1902 Education Act established local authorities and this represented a major step in bringing some order to bear but the emphasis was still more on structures rather than curriculum content.

By the time secondary education for all was established in 1944 considerable progress had been made since the dark days of the turn of the century, which perforce focused on basic questions of children's physical wellbeing and improvements in buildings and the school environment. It is not surprising that the arts did not figure as a major priority given the preoccupation with basic issues such as literacy, school attendance and physical health. The implicit assumption of course is that arts are seen as more of a luxury than a basic right – an attitude which was prominent in this period but which was set to prevail right up to the present time.

If one of the reasons for diverting any attention to developing the curriculum were practical challenges, another was a key policy development. Lowe's revised Code of Regulations (1862) had permitted grants to be made out to schools on the basis of satisfactory examination results in reading, writing and arithmetic and according to Hurt (1971:208), 'school managers took the minimum of the examination schedule as their maximum'. One of the effects therefore of 'payment by results' was to restrict the curriculum with no incentive to schools to go beyond the basics. Successive Codes over the next thirty years removed the worst features of payment by results till the principle itself was dropped (Maclure, 1986:79).

The policy had an adverse effect on any possible moves that might have been made towards a more creative curriculum. As will be discussed, more progressive ideas were in circulation at the time but their impact was not great. The process of testing pupils in the nineteenth century focused on reading, writing and arithmetic. The reading test at standard V (i.e. 10 years old) involved reading 'a few lines of poetry from a reading book used in the first class of the school' and at standard VI reading 'a short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper or other modern narrative' (ibid: 80).

As inspector of schools, Matthew Arnold was critical in his 1867 annual report of prevailing practices, criticising the mechanical processes of teaching and the approach to testing, recommending more 'free play' for the teacher:

The mode of teaching in the primary schools has certainly fallen off in intelligence, spirit, and inventiveness during the four or five years which have elapsed since my last report. It could not well be otherwise. In a country where everyone is prone to rely too much on mechanical processes and too little on intelligence, a change in the Education Department's regulations, which by making two-thirds of the Government grant depend upon mechanical examination, inevitably gives a mechanical turn to the school teaching.... (quoted in Maclure, 1986:81)

Another inspection of schools in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester in 1870 confirms the impression that the vast majority of schools in these areas based their curriculum wholly or predominantly around reading, writing, arithmetic and needlework (for girls). A teacher log book in 1863 notes the following entries:

- June 1 School came under the operation of New Code  
Received notice of Examination of school.
  - June 8 Drilled upper classes on paper
  - June 18 Drilled all in slate writing
  - July 8 Drilled 6th class in Alphabet and small words and 1st and 2nd,  
4th and 5th in Reading and 2nd in Spelling.
  - August 14 Drilled in Arithmetic.
  - August 18 Drilled all school in writing on slates...
- (Simon, 1965:117)

Despite the predominant narrow and utilitarian approach to schooling, more liberal ideas were certainly in evidence and associated with the 'New Education' movement. Rousseau's ideas had influenced a number of educational publications in England; such as the Edgeworths' *Practical Education*, which was originally published in 1798 and then in later editions. The book advocated predominantly non-book-based methods of learning, including 'trials of dexterity and activity', sports and games, 'observation, experiment and invention' and educational toys such as dolls, prints and dissected puzzles (jigsaws).

The contrast between a utilitarian and more liberal approach to education is also captured in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854). Gradgrind's narrow obsession with 'facts' and a purely functional approach are frequently noted in writing about education. What is less often referenced is the contrasting vision in the novel embodied in the characters with a circus background: 'fancy' (the exercise of imagination), entertainment, education of feeling and sensibility. The circus symbolises the importance of amusement, and Gradgrind, when he finds his children trying to peep through a hole to see the circus, widens the reference to the arts in his dismissive comment, 'I should as soon have expected to find my children reading poetry' (1854:23). The effect of the limitations placed on imagination is seen in the dysfunctional lives of his children; and Gradgrind comes to realise this himself towards the end of novel. It is not too far-fetched to read the novel as an implicit justification for the importance of artistic activity for a deeply enriched life. However, there is little evidence that this view of the justification of the arts penetrated official educational thinking to any great degree.

Understanding the development of arts education in this period is also further complicated by differences between developments in the private and the growing public sector. It might have been expected that arts flourished more in the fee-paying public schools because of their more established traditions and better resources. However, that was not the case because the study of classics was at the heart of the curriculum. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (Hughes, 1857) provides an insight into the purposes of education as understood by the middle and upper classes. The freedom enjoyed by the Rugby boys foreshadows the emphasis on manliness of character that was to be so much a feature of public school education in the build up to the First World War. The developing ideals of chivalry and 'muscular Christianity' certainly encouraged public schools to retain the classical curricula that defined elite society of the time.

It is worth remembering that the educational policy-makers at the beginning of the twentieth century were themselves the products of a nineteenth century education. Doubtless the vast majority would have experienced an elite education suitable for their class. The change in attitude towards the education of the working classes did not happen overnight – some policy makers feared the consequences. The state's increasingly broad-ranging approach to social problems was particularly reflected in the education of children. The Bryce Commission of 1895 (which led to the 1902 Act) conveyed a change in tone when stating that the purpose of schooling was no longer to give the working class child a basic minimum education: indeed, children should be given opportunities to make the most of their schooldays (Glass, 1971:28). In 1908, the president of the National Union of Teachers was reported as saying that

the first object of all legislation on education should be to secure for every child in the realm an equal opportunity to obtain a sound education, given by qualified teachers, under the best possible conditions, irrespective of creed or the social position of the parents (The Times, 1908: 10).

As well as the difference between private and public sectors, differences between individual schools makes generalisation difficult. The timetables for Winchester and Bedales in 1900 provide a fascinating comparison between a bastion of tradition and an emblem of progressive ideas – or in the words of the Bedales Head Master, J. H. Badley, 'an educational

laboratory for testing principles and their applications in various methods' (Badley, 1905:257). The former offered a narrow classical education while the latter branched out to include more creative and wide-ranging subjects such as drawing, dancing, and even gardening.

Because the arts were associated with leisure, it is inevitable that social class differences are relevant when making judgements about the relative attention given to them in schools. But a gender perspective is also relevant because there was a tendency to see music and art as an upper-class hobby for ladies. In elementary schools in the Victorian period, music was more or less synonymous with singing; musical instruments were largely beyond the reach of the relatively poor. Similarly, visual art could also prove an expensive pursuit. George Sturt (1932) in his account of his childhood education recalls making art 'specialisms' at his local boys' school in the 1860s, but this happened only twice a year. George had to provide the equipment himself.

Despite the lack of attention to the arts in official documents there were some key teacher practitioners who had distinctive ideas about arts based approaches to education, e.g. Harriet Finlay Johnson (1911), Henry Caldwell Cook (1917), Marion Richardson (1948). Finlay-Johnson was a Victorian village school headmistress on the South Downs whose drama-based approach challenged the authoritarian methods currently in use (Bowmaker, 2002). Caldwell Cook introduced the 'Play Way' in his approach to teaching at the Perse School in Cambridge and Richardson was a key figure in the development of visual art teaching. Other practitioners such as Susan Isaacs, Homer Lane, A.S. Neill and Kurt Halm were similarly influenced by progressive ideas (Holdsworth, 1984:162).

### 1.3 The development of progressive thinking

The period up to the Second World War was not entirely bleak in terms of official thinking about education content and pedagogy. More progressive ideas in education had been developing since the turn of the century, reacting against the excesses of restrictive Victorian approaches. In 1911, Holmes' *What Is and What Might Be* contrasted different possibilities from 'the path of mechanical obedience' to 'the path of self-realisation': rote

learning should give way to the development of creativity and imagination. His ideas were influenced by the work of Finlay-Johnson. The opening sentence of his book, 'The function of education is to further growth', clearly announced the significant emphasis in the progressive approach. Nunn's *Education Its Data and First Principles* (1920), clearly influenced by Caldwell Cook's experimental approach, endorsed the significance of a play-based approach to education:

It is hardly extravagant to say that in the understanding of play lies the key to most of the practical problems of education; for play, taken in the narrower sense as a phenomenon belonging especially to childhood, shows the creative impulses in their clearest, most vigorous and most typical form. (Nunn, 1920:89)

Two publications on the teaching of English, the Newbolt Report (HMSO, 1921) and *English for the English* (1921) by George Sampson, had argued for a form of education which would be a preparation for 'life' not 'livelihood'. This belonged to a tradition which emanated from Matthew Arnold which saw English, as a subject, as a counter force to the negative effects of the industrial revolution and advocated liberal arts over a utilitarian functional approach to education.

During the 1920s and 1930s a series of reports from the committee chaired by Hadow did not just introduce structural changes to the education system (e.g. separate schools for infants and juniors, limiting class sizes to a maximum of thirty children) but also addressed educational ideas. The Hadow report of 1923 on the 'Differentiation of the curriculum for boys and girls respectively in secondary schools' was impressed by the 'almost unanimous agreement' among the witnesses (including parents) on the 'desirability of developing the aesthetic side of secondary education' (Board of Education, 1923:60). However it subsequently commented on the relative neglect of music, drawing and painting, and 'other forms of aesthetic training', although this was less noticeable in girls' schools, which had inherited an appreciation for the value of the fine arts from the older tradition of women's education. In boys' schools, with some notable exceptions, the Report commented that 'the aesthetic side has hitherto been much neglected'. The justification for the arts is given in terms of 'developing concentration of mind, accuracy of observation, and a genuine appreciation of natural beauty and artistic achievement, and in stimulating

the growth of the imaginative, critical, and creative faculties' (Board of Education, 1923:61). It suggested that in the past technical skill had been too much regarded as the only measure of successful achievement in these subjects.

The 1931 Hadow report placed emphasis on the pupils being active rather than passive, on thinking rather than rote learning. It suggested that that 'a good school, in short, is not a place of compulsory instruction, but a community of old and young, engaged in learning by cooperative experiment' (Board of Education, 1931:xv). The curriculum of the primary school is to be thought of less in terms of departments of knowledge to be taught, and more in terms of activities to be fostered and interest to be broadened' (Board of Education, 1931:xix).

The Spens report (Board of Education 1938:171) reaffirmed the view expressed in the Hadow report that a 'more prominent and established place in the ordinary curricula of schools should be assigned to the aesthetic subjects'. The report on grammar school education contains an appendix on the history of the 'liberal arts' tradition from classical and medieval traditions:

These arts were called liberal because they were originally regarded as the branches of knowledge appropriate for freemen as opposed to those trades and skills practised for economic purposes by slaves or persons without political rights. (Board of Education, 1938:404)

The 'arts' referred to here were, apart from music, not the aesthetic subjects but included subjects such as arithmetic and grammar.

By 1943 the discussion of arts subjects in the Norwood Report (Secondary School Examination Council, 1943) had a more contemporary flavour. Art, music and handicraft were discussed as a group.

They have not received the attention in schools which is due to them. They were received as late-comers; when they were taught, they occupied a place outside the regular curriculum and were taught as 'extras' or spare-time activities. The right teachers were not easy to find; the rooms and equipment demanded have not always been available; and the subjects have therefore lacked a good tradition in the schools. (Secondary School Examination Council, 1943:122)

The report goes on to identify another reason for their neglect. They were often regarded as 'an offset or relief to other subjects, appealing to some special powers of the mind otherwise neglected'. Emphasis had been laid on their unique and special values but the Norwood report saw their justification in different terms. 'As long as languages, literature, mathematics and natural science remain subjects of the curriculum, art, music, and handicraft can with certainty claim a place for themselves as offering, in another field, an extension of the opportunities given by those subjects' (my italics) (Secondary School Examination Council, 1943: 124).

A series of handbooks were increasingly embracing more inventive and creative ideas. The Board of Education *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers* published in 1937, clearly influenced by the various Hadow reports contained fairly lengthy separate sections on music as well as art and craft. Dancing is dealt with in the chapter on physical training, and 'dramatic activity' is addressed in the discussion of approaches to teaching English Language and Literature. The underlying philosophy is derived from an expressive view of the arts.

The various arts, which are primarily concerned with the expression in outward form of ideas and experience which make some special appeal to the artist, have each its own technique. Whatever he creates or interprets, the artist seeks to achieve something that will cause both in himself and in others a feeling of satisfaction – similar perhaps to what we experience in our response to the work of nature – through the use of design appropriate to the medium he has chosen. So, too, the crafts which are primarily concerned with the making of serviceable things in various materials, have each its own technique (Board of Education, 1937: 220).

The discussion of the relation between 'art' and 'craft' shows the influence of Robin Collingwood (e.g.1938) and highlights a theme which is helpful in understanding the development of ideas about art education in this period. As Macdonald (1970:17) has pointed out that from as far back as we can trace, art was considered as craft and skill. In fact the concept of 'art' as something special and separate from normal life is a fairly recent phenomenon in the history of the human race. The meaning of 'art' has changed over time. The term 'work of art' as we use it would have been 'baffling to all previous cultures, including the civilizations of Greece and

Rome and of Western Europe in the middle period' (Carey, 2005:7). It was the recognition that the word 'art' may mean very different things in different times and places that also prompted Gombrich (1995:15) to declare that Art with a capital A does not exist. Objects which are now venerated as art in museums and galleries had a functional use and were not perceived as art as such.

This kind of analysis has contributed to the sort of thinking that has led some theorists to announce the end of art. This view arises when art is seen as 'neither a natural or universal phenomenon but instead a particular sociohistorical institution' (Shusterman, 2000:3). A naturalistic view is found in some of the early advocates of the arts, influenced by Rousseau and Dewey, and it makes a compelling case for the arts in education.

Naturalism defines art as something deeply rooted in human nature which finds expression in every culture, primitive as well as advanced. Here art is seen as arising from natural human needs and drives: a natural desire for balance, form, or meaningful expression, a thirst for a kind of enhanced, aesthetic experience that gives the live creature not only pleasure but a more vivid, heightened sense of living. According to this conception, art is not only deeply grounded in the natural but also instrumental in the survival and development of human nature. (Shusterman 2000:5)

Research by evolutionary theorists, archaeologists and cultural historians reinforce a naturalistic view of the arts (Turner, Ed. 2006).

A number of key teachers and writers then had been advancing the value of 'arts in education' (although that generic term was itself rarely used) since the turn of the century. The Hadow reports in the 1920s used the term 'fine arts' and 'aesthetic training', whilst earlier official publications often used the term crafts or referred to the individual art form. Dancing, singing and drawing were encouraged in different contexts but these tended to be recognised more as crafts and were not treated as a composite group. When not seen as leisure time activities, the value of the arts subjects was often seen in relation to their practical value and their contribution to skills development. For example the Edgeworths recommended for the young child such occupations as drawing, cutting out shapes, modelling in clay or wax because these presented 'a challenge to the child's dexterity' (Curtis and

Boultonwood, 1953:395). The intellectual influence came from progressive writers in education rather than writing about the arts and these ideas started to have wider impact in the post war period.

## 1.4 The post war period

**The key issues in relation to the arts in education in the post-war period are:**

- the continued spread of progressive ideas.
- the discovery of child art as a distinct phenomenon.
- emphasis on creativity largely in terms of self-expression.

The period of optimism after the war saw a burgeoning of some of the progressive educational ideas that had been developing since the turn of the century. In terms of wider social change, this period saw the creation of the welfare state, the introduction of welfare payments and state insurance, and the raising of the school leaving age to fifteen (Marr, 2007:61). The Festival of Britain held in 1951 was a moment of 'patriotic tingle' which caught the national imagination:

High culture, represented by abstract sculptors, classical music, the latest in design, did manage to hold hands, however briefly, with popular culture, as represented by the cafes selling chips and peas, the funfair rides, fireworks and Gracie Fields in cabaret. (Marr, 2007: 110).

The 1950s also saw a recognition of 'child art' and 'child drama' as separate entities worthy of recognition in their own right. This represented a culmination in the thinking which had its origins in the naturalistic ideas of Rousseau. This shift in value was less in terms of skills acquisition and more in terms of personal development. A key aspect of this thinking meant a change in perception of the role of the art teacher from instructor in craft and technique to facilitator and 'friendly guide'. Non-intervention by the teacher became a virtue and was central to some of the more general educational ideas.

## 1.5 Changing views of arts education

The postwar period is often analysed in terms of ‘changing paradigms’ in approaches to arts education (Abbs: 2003). This analysis is helpful in providing a broad, if at times over-general, understanding of developments in this period and in clarifying the relationship of the concept of ‘creativity’ to arts education (which will be pursued in detail in section three of this publication).

One paradigm derives from progressive, child centred approaches which prioritised the importance of self-expression and creativity. It is also associated with the modernist movement in its break with tradition. The approach is reflected in the development of drama, visual art and dance education although it is less evident in music. In drama, Slade’s (1954) recognition of ‘Child Drama’, for example, was based on the observation of the natural activity of children at play; the role of the teacher was to nurture rather than intervene, with the emphasis on spontaneous dramatic playing rather than on performing or working with texts. According to Slade, encouraging young children to perform prematurely was to encourage them to show off or in his memorable phrase to become ‘bombastic little boasters’.

The second paradigm embodies a more inclusive approach, embracing ‘responding’ to art work as well as ‘creating’, and placing more emphasis on tradition, form and convention.

A word of caution is needed. As indicated in the introduction, progressivism and the self-expression movement has to be seen in its historical context and not judged purely from the advantages of a contemporary perspective. It was a challenge to the utilitarian, authoritarian beliefs which had given rise to very mechanical and narrow approaches in the classroom. There is also the danger of allowing the imposition of a general model to distort the views of some advocates of the arts. Read’s (1956) *Education Through Art* was first published in 1943 and in the post-war period became a seminal text which argued that ‘art should be the basis of education’. This book is seen by some commentators as the epitome of the self expression paradigm. I suggest, however, that although self-expression is a key element of his thinking, Read’s book is somewhat more balanced than is often suggested. His view of ‘appreciation’ (by which he meant ‘response

to others’ modes of expression’) is not that it has no place at all but simply that it is less appropriate for the younger child. He took the view that appreciation ‘can undoubtedly be developed by teaching’ but that it ‘cannot be expected to show itself much before the age of adolescence’ (ibid: 209).

In the same way, Slade is often thought to have been anti-theatre but in fact much of his professional work was in the theatre; he saw performance as coming in the final phases of the developmental stage and thus most appropriate for the older child. Both Slade and Read recommended a reduced role for the teacher when working in the classroom with younger children. Read thought that a major challenge for the teacher was to preserve the original intensity of the child’s reactions to the sensuous qualities of experience – to colours, surfaces, shapes and rhythms: ‘These are apt to be so infallibly ‘right’ that the teacher can only stand over them in a kind of protective awe’ (Read, 1956: 209). Slade (1954:131) also viewed the teacher as a kindly, gentle guide, avoiding ‘too many fussy, unnecessary suggestions’.

It is tempting to be dismissive of the romantic extremes of this kind of thinking, particularly when, in some forms of practice, it led to the abandonment of the teacher’s responsibility to teach (however subtly that concept is interpreted), leaving children entirely to their own devices. But the importance of attending to the child’s interests, perceptions and experience rather than imposing crudely from outside is a pedagogic insight of considerable significance. As well as the view that ‘man’ should be educated to become ‘what he is’ (the natural growth approach) Read also took the view ‘that man should be educated to become what he is not’ (Read 1956: 2).<sup>1</sup>

It is easy then to exaggerate the polar positions and to downplay the pedagogic insights embodied in the progressive, self-expression movement, despite the undoubted excesses of some writers and practitioners. The restoration of tradition (Abbs’ second paradigm) may be an unwitting or disguised way of fostering elitism and, in practice, results in curbing creativity. The challenge for education regarding how to respond to ‘high’ and ‘low’ (or popular) conceptions of art is not informed by a simple plea for the restoration of tradition and rejection of modernism. At its worst

<sup>1</sup> In addition Read does not subscribe to what might be described as an ‘extreme’ subjectivist view – according to Read, art involves both form i.e. a ‘universal objective aspect’ and perception (Read 1956: 33)

the self-expression paradigm can be seen as abdicating the role of the teacher, abandoning standards by valuing absolutely anything in the name of creativity and rejecting the importance of form and technique. However the contrary view can equally be subject to an extreme formulation: imposition of authority, adoption of mechanistic and regimented approaches, a failure to recognise the importance of engaging the learner, and denial of any developmental considerations in relation to teaching art.

A more positive view of the self-expression movement would acknowledge some of its pedagogical insights. By seeing these polar positions more in a dialectical rather than oppositional relationship, a more balanced and integrated view would recognise the importance in an arts curriculum of responding to the work of others (in addition to making work of one's own) and would also acknowledge that art education must incorporate the teaching of form and technique. However, it would not deny the insights derived from the pioneers of progressive approaches to arts education related to the importance of experience, feeling, engagement, creativity and genuine ownership.

## 1.6 Concepts of expression

Contemporary thinking regarding arts education might have benefited from some of the writings in aesthetic philosophy which were evolving more subtle versions of expression theories. For example, a series of papers in the 1950s and early 1960s challenged the self-expression view of art as voiced in particular by Tolstoy:

To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced, and having evoked it in oneself, then, by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others may experience the same feeling - this is the activity of art. Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands onto others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by those feelings and also experience them. (Tolstoy 1994: 51)

Self-expression theories of art then concentrated attention on what was said to be going on in the process of creation: the artist is said to be

expressing inner feelings or emotions in the work of art. A form of self-expression is found in the work of Robin Collingwood (1938) whose influence is apparent in some of the pre-war writing on arts education and of Robert Witkin (1974) who influenced writers in the 1970s and 1980s. The challenges to this formulation came from a number of sources. Hospers (1955) pointed out that the origins of art and the motivation of artists are varied and do not always subscribe to the notion of 'solitary geniuses engaged in mysterious acts of self-expression' (1955:319). Ryle (1954:72) referred to the 'muddle' in this kind of thinking: 'we only have to mention such emotions as boredom, jealousy, restlessness, irritation and hilarity in order to make the whole story as ridiculous as it is'. Papers by Bouwsma (1954) and several papers in the collection edited by Hospers (1968) also addressed this theme. By criticising one form of expression theory, these writers paved the way for a more balanced view of the importance of a notion of expression or even self-expression in thinking about art.

The metaphor of pouring emotions into an art work embodied in the idea of self-expression produced an unbalanced and in some cases misguided approach to art education. The assumption that it was the emotion of the creator which was the key determinant of quality rather than the work itself lead to uncertainty about making judgements and a tendency towards relativism. For many practitioners teaching art meant stimulating emotion rather than inducting pupils into a particular discipline. However, phrased in that way, the choice seems to be between a rich and vibrant conception of art education and one which is objectivist, sterile and emotionally dead. A more balanced view of expression theories as developed amongst aesthetic philosophers such as Benedetto Croce, Susanne Langer, Arnaud Reid and Ray Elliott might have avoided the polarisation and preserved some of the key insights afforded by those theories. Instead of focusing on the creator of the work in explaining the relevance of emotion to the art process, more mature expression theories concentrated attention on the art object.

Anticipating later reader response and poststructuralist theories, Elliott (1966), suggested that exaggerated versions of the self-expression theories had obscured the more significant insights these offered in relation to response to art and cast doubt on the adequacy of an exclusively objectivist theory.

The expression theorists recognized that a poem can be perceived not as an object bearing an impersonal meaning but as if it were the speech or thought of another person and this it is possible for us to make this expression our own. A work may be experienced 'from within' or 'from without'. (Elliott, 1966:146).

The pivotal landmark in the post war period was the Plowden Report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967). This is often criticised as the key text which promoted excesses of child centred, progressive education ideas (Peters, 1969). The report is perhaps insufficiently valued for its achievements, such as its significant insights into the social determinants of educational success and the establishment of educational priority areas. It also recognised the need to expand nursery provision and the importance of participation by parents, as well as informing debates on streaming and the use of IQ tests. The report is enthusiastic but not sophisticated in its justification or rationale for the teaching of the arts and is more concerned with practicalities. Visual art is 'both a form of communication and a means of expression of feelings which ought to permeate the whole curriculum and the whole life of the school. A society which neglects or despises it is dangerously sick' (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967: 247). The section on music has little on aims but is more concerned with practicalities to do with teacher training. It does place emphasis on musical appreciation as well as suggesting that this practice 'has lately fallen a little into disrepute' and asserting that 'there is a place for listening to good music whether played by the teacher or a visitor or heard by means of recorded sound' (ibid: 254).

The Plowden report is sometimes criticised for promoting unbridled self-expression but, once again, scrutiny of the actual content of the documents indicates a more balanced perspective. (For a summary of criticisms of Plowden see Gillard, 2004; Pollard ed., 1987; Wilkinson, 1987). The report saw a place for drama primarily within English and took a reasonably balanced view on the question of performance, 'though some primary school children enjoy having an audience of other children or their parents, formal presentation of plays on a stage is usually out of place' (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967:218). Dance is acknowledged and promoted within the section on physical education.

Furthermore, the influence of the Plowden report on the teaching of the arts was not as significant as is sometimes assumed; for though it impacted on the teaching of visual art in primary schools, the greater influence during this period came from advocates of the particular art forms (Sedgewick, 1993:133). It was actually in the 1970s, as Ross (1989) has pointed out, when the arts as a whole were subjected to critical scrutiny. Furthermore, this occurred in the context of increasing public interest in the effectiveness of educational provision more generally. James Callaghan's Ruskin speech in 1976 had launched the 'Great Debate' in Education, paving the way for later reforms and increasing centralisation. A polarisation between fostering creativity and neglecting basics is implicit in a key section of his speech.

First let me say, so that there should be no misunderstanding, that I have been very impressed in the schools I have visited by the enthusiasm and dedication of the teaching profession, by the variety of courses that are offered in our comprehensive schools, especially in arts and crafts as well as other subjects and by the alertness and keenness of many of its pupils. Clearly, life at school is far more full and creative than it was many years ago... But I am concerned on my journeys to find complaints from industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job that is required. (Callaghan, 1976)

This approach underpinned the introduction of a national curriculum at the end of the 1980's. It also promoted a greater emphasis on links between education and vocational training, on national standards of achievement and on the need to be more explicit about objectives. The speech is characteristic of much of the official writing of the subsequent period; the arts are never directly criticised nor neglected in theory but their significance was implicitly downgraded. Other policy developments impacted in practice on the priority given to the arts.



## 1.7 The arts as aesthetic experience

Many of the curriculum documents which were written in the period before the introduction of the national curriculum were influenced by writing in the philosophy of education. Hirst's (1974) philosophical analysis 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge' had defined seven 'disciplines' or 'forms of knowledge' which each had central concepts peculiar to the particular form and a distinct logical structure.<sup>2</sup> As liberal education is aimed at achieving an understanding of experience in many different ways, it was argued that syllabi should be constructed to include all the disciplines. Hirst's theory has been criticised and later revised (Pring, 1976; Smith, 1981; Hirst 1993) but its influence was apparent in many official documents of this period. The inclusion of 'literature and fine art' as a distinct form of knowledge or area of experience (the term often preferred in the less philosophical reports) ensured that the arts were not entirely neglected. The analysis sometimes took different forms. The HMI publication *A View of the Curriculum* published in 1980 identified the 'aesthetic and creative' as a key area of experience (Department of Education and Science, 1980). This terminology was continued in the 1985 DES publication *The Curriculum from 5-16*:

This area is concerned with the capacity to respond emotionally and intellectually to sensory experience; the awareness of degrees of quality; and the appreciation of beauty and fitness for purpose. It involves the exploration and understanding of feeling and the processes of making, composing and inventing. Aesthetic and creative experience may occur in any part of the curriculum, but some subjects contribute particularly to the development of pupils' aesthetic awareness and understanding because they call for personal, imaginative, affective and often practical, responses to sensory experience. (DES, 1985:17)

The primary implication of Hirst's forms of knowledge approach is that curriculum description tended to focus more on 'aesthetic and creative experience' rather than arts in education per se. Although all the curriculum documents leading up to the national curriculum acknowledged the value of the aesthetic, there was a strong feeling that the arts were slowly being marginalised. The Gulbenkian report was originally published in 1982 but it

<sup>2</sup> The seven forms of knowledge were: mathematics, physical sciences, human sciences, history, religion, literature and the fine arts, and philosophy.

is the introduction to the second edition in 1989 which provides a clearer perspective on the social and political context and the concerns about the arts which were predominant at the time (Robinson, 1982; 1989). It argued that the arts were at risk from two misconceptions (Robinson, 1989).

First, to those who argued that the main role of education is to prepare young people for work, arts education evidently seems unnecessary except for those looking for arts jobs. Second, through the emphasis in some teaching on creativity, self-expression and personal development, the arts had become associated with non-intellectual activities, and therefore seemed to lie outside the priorities of those who argued for a return to 'traditional' academic values' (Robinson, 1989: xii).

Here then is an implicit recognition of two polarities: the contrast between utilitarian and liberal views that had emerged in the pre-war period and was thought to be rising again; and secondly, the distinction between self-expression and tradition which inhibited the formation of a more integrated conception of the value of the arts. The report itself identified six main areas related to the justification of the arts in the curriculum: developing a full variety of human intelligence (in contrast with academic study and logico-deductive thought); creative thought and action (for adaptability); education of feeling and sensibility; exploration of values; understanding cultural change and differences; developing physical and perceptual skills. The Gulbenkian report was authored by Ken Robinson who also wrote the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) report *All Our Futures* in 1999.

## 1.8 Post national curriculum

The period up to and after the introduction of the national curriculum saw schools preoccupied with accountability, inspection, testing and the associated bureaucracy. According to Ross (1989: 17), under intense adverse political pressure arts educators resorted to advocacy. In fact writing on the arts in this period was productive, sustained by authors in individual arts, but also in part by the Falmer series edited by Peter Abbs. Publications by authors such as David Best, Rod Taylor, Peter Brinson, Charles Plummeridge, Glennis Andrews and Rod Taylor, Robert Watson and

David Hornbrook, kept intellectual debate alive and addressed topics related to both individual arts subjects and generic arts in education issues which had consequences for curriculum provision. The distinction between the 'aesthetic' and the 'artistic' raised issues concerning the distinctive nature of arts education. The question as to whether arts should be conceived as a generic group had implications for the choice of arts subjects which should be offered to pupils.

This issue of whether it makes sense to group the arts together has long been contentious. However what is important is not the categorisation itself but the consequences of seeing the arts in a particular way. A generic concept of the arts can be dangerous if it leads to the conclusion that experience of one art form is thought to be sufficient to count as a meaningful education in all the arts. It is important to recognise the distinct characteristics of different art forms. However, it is also helpful to recognise that the arts do have a family resemblance.

*All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), published in 1999, was commissioned in part to feed in to the QCA review of the national curriculum. A key change of emphasis can be discerned from the previous Gulbenkian report where the arts were seen as an important way to balance the emphasis on academic abilities: 'Children and young people have much more to offer. The arts exemplify some of these other capacities – of intuition, creativity, sensibility and practical skills' (Robinson, 1989: 5). In contrast, the intention of the NACCCE report (1999) was to advance the significance of creativity throughout the whole curriculum, not just in the arts, a theme which will be addressed further in section three.

Some commentators continued to be pessimistic about the place of the arts in the curriculum as long as schools are driven by systems of testing and accountability, a view prevalent in a number of countries (Sharp and LeMetais, 2000: 5). However, since the publication of *All Our Futures* there have been encouraging developments either directly focused on the arts in education or initiatives that have impacted on arts provision and attitudes to the arts. The Creative Partnerships initiative, itself aimed at developing children's creativity and imagination, was the major outcome from this report. Blackstone (2002) described a range of other Government initiatives in the immediate aftermath of the report, such as Artsmark and increased

funding for various initiatives related to music provision. A statement on the DCMS website lists further developments as a response to *All Our Futures*, including: guidance on the creative development of pre-school children, increasing numbers of specialist art colleges, and more flexibility in the national curriculum.<sup>3</sup> Of course, claims of politicians and government agencies need to be tempered with realistic appraisal, but the publication of Excellence and Enjoyment (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) does suggest that the repeated concerns about the effect of restrictive policies of the ten years prior to *All Our Futures* have been heeded.

A key element in the Creative Partnerships initiative has been, as the title of the project indicates, an emphasis on 'partnership' and that is one of the key current ingredients in developing effective approaches to the arts in schools. There have been very encouraging initiatives taking place at local level. One example is The Forge, funded by the Arts Council and Durham and Sunderland local authorities, an organisation that specialises in developing high quality participatory arts projects, working with young people, artists and educators.<sup>4</sup> Central to its work is a specific emphasis on high quality, a welcome departure from a tendency in the past to use the concept of creativity to legitimise any type of activity. Examples of other initiatives indicate an increasingly positive attitude and developing practice in the arts in education: Devon Arts In Schools Initiative;<sup>5</sup> ArtForms Music & Arts Initiative (Leeds);<sup>6</sup> Drama for Learning and Creativity (Norfolk);<sup>7</sup> and Cultural Hubs (Telford, Durham, and Bournemouth and Poole). Empirical research reports in recent years reinforce the view of increasing interest and activity in the arts in education (e.g. Harland *et al*, 2000; Downing, Johnson and Kaur, 2003).

## 1.9 Tensions and dichotomies

In this brief overview of the history of arts education a series of polarities can be discerned which serve to highlight different approaches to the inclusion of the arts in the curriculum. These oppositions are the key

<sup>3</sup> Please see the DCMS website for further detail, and particularly: [http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference\\_library/Consultations/2000\\_closed\\_consultations/all\\_our\\_futures.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Consultations/2000_closed_consultations/all_our_futures.htm)

<sup>4</sup> In the Forge [www.intheforge.com](http://www.intheforge.com)

<sup>5</sup> Devon Arts In Schools Initiative <http://www.daisi.org.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> ArtForms Music & Arts Initiative <http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/documents/teamdocs.aspx?tid=39>

<sup>7</sup> Drama for Learning and Creativity, Norfolk <http://d4lc.org.uk/>

concepts in understanding the development of thinking about arts education and also provide insight into notions of creativity. In the pre war period, there was tension between utilitarianism and liberalism. The functional approach to education influenced the way some of the arts subjects were justified, with a frequent emphasis on acquisition of general skills such as manual dexterity. Concepts of art and craft were often used synonymously. The influence of progressive thinking in education saw more emphasis placed on the child as opposed to subject-discipline, on creating rather than appreciation, and on feeling rather than cognition. The justification for the arts was seen largely in terms of personal growth and emotional development. Advocates of the arts who prioritised self-expression were more concerned with the growth of the individual rather than the communal, cultural and social aspects of the arts. The value of tradition led to a curriculum rationale based on the value of cultural heritage as opposed to modernist conceptions of the place and value of the arts.

As indicated, some later commentators, when writing about earlier developments, exaggerated the differences embodied in these contrasting concepts. In some ways this is an inevitable consequence of the way language itself can deceive. A representational and essentialist view of meaning tends to fossilize thinking and lead to polarised assumptions. A more dynamic view of language and meaning opens the way for more thinking which seeks to integrate the competing elements. Ironically it was Herbert Read, often thought to embody an extreme version of self-expression theory, who advocated synthesis:

The end we desire may be called a synthesis. Our contention is that the basis of all intellectual and moral strength lies in the adequate integration of the perceptive senses and the external world, of the personal and the organic, and integration which is only to be achieved by methods of education. (Read, 1956:220).

**This issue of whether it makes sense to group the arts together has long been contentious. However what is important is not the categorisation itself but the consequences of seeing the arts in a particular way. A generic concept of the arts can be dangerous if it leads to the conclusion that experience of one art form is thought to be sufficient to count as a meaningful education in all the arts. It is important to recognise the distinct characteristics of different art forms. However, it is also helpful to recognise that the arts do have a family resemblance.**

## 2 Individual art forms

This section will examine four specific art forms. Before doing so, however, it is important to explain the inclusion of certain art forms and the exclusion of others. For what counts as 'art' is too often taken for granted in writing about education. Literature, film, and different types of media can all lay claim to being considered 'arts'. English as a subject can be viewed differently as a humanities or arts subject (see Abbs, 1982). A key practical factor in selecting subjects to discuss in this section is of course the national curriculum. But even here the choice is not straightforward: drama is embedded within the English orders; art is referred to as 'art and design' but design also appears in technology; dance appears within physical education. The Gulbenkian report (Robinson, 1982) identified the arts as dance, drama, music, visual arts and literature. The Ofsted publication 'The Arts Inspected' (1998) chose art, dance, drama and music for their report.

The definition of what counts as 'art' is relevant to any classification. Much aesthetic theory up to the 1950s was concerned with precisely that question, providing rival accounts of the defining characteristics of art. For example, theories of representation, form, expression and intuition associated with writers like Clive Bell, Robin Collingwood, Leo Tolstoy and Benedetto Croce can be interpreted as attempts to encapsulate precisely what art is. Weitz's (1956) use of Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance questioned the search for essentialist definitions. The implication of this view is that theories of art can now be largely seen as tools to illuminate discussion rather than attempts to provide definitive explanations of what counts as art. Weitz's account has not been without criticism but the post-Wittgenstein view that the meaning of a term like 'art' is not static but a function of its use in social contexts is compelling. It avoids the trap of assuming that 'art' can mean anything anyone wants it to mean but it also acknowledges that the concept of 'art' is open, evolving and dynamic. This discussion of four key arts in the context of education needs to acknowledge that the categorisation is highly traditional and may not be the best way of conceptualising the arts as a generic category for the twenty-first century. When Lys (1997: 2) discusses the way humans fulfil themselves aesthetically, he distinguishes between the categories of the fictional, visual and musical. The 'fictional' category embraces film as well as fiction and includes what has traditionally been referred to as 'low art' as well as 'high art'. The implication of this distinction between 'high' and 'low' art will be returned to in section three of this publication.

## 2.1 Drama

### Key issues:

- the recognition of 'child drama' as a separate art form.
- the separation of concepts of 'drama' and 'theatre'.
- the identity of drama as separate subject or method across the curriculum.

Valuable accounts of the history of drama teaching have been provided by Coggin (1956) and more recently by Bolton (1984 and 1998) and Lewicki (1996). At the start of the twentieth century, drama was strongly associated with the new education movement because it embodied ideas of natural growth, child centred education and experiential learning. It was associated with progressive education because it was invariably seen as an activity (the notion that 'drama is doing' was an often quoted phrase) but many approaches to the subject were only 'progressive' in a fairly superficial way. Throughout drama's history there has been a tension between the claims and ideals of the writing about the subject and the practical reality in the classroom, given the need for organisation and discipline of large classes. The way in which the subject was conceived took a variety of forms and some of the practices were highly regimented and mechanical. What was meant by 'drama' in schools could take many forms: working with short scripts or playlets often written specifically for children, acting out stories, dramatic playing, mime, movement, speech and elocution exercises (Boas and Hayden, 1938; Alington, 1961; Pemberton-Billing and Clegg, 1965). One difference of opinion which has divided exponents has been whether drama should be seen primarily as a subject in its own right or a teaching method. Drama as a teaching method was employed as early as 1910 by Finlay-Johnson, and Caldwell Cook (1911) who incorporated drama methods into his teaching of English.

Drama as subject or method was not the only controversy. One of the key factors in the development of drama teaching in the twentieth century was the separation of 'drama' and 'theatre'. This distinction can be seen in relation to broader polarities discussed in the previous section: responding and creating, child centred and subject centred approaches. The distinction was most notably captured by Way (1967:2) '...theatre is largely concerned

with communication between actors and an audience; 'drama' is largely concerned with experience by the participants.' This is a different distinction from that which operates more widely outside the context of education where 'theatre' has been taken to refer to performance whereas 'drama' has referred to the work designed for stage representation, the body of written plays (Elam, 1988). The separation of 'drama' and 'theatre' in education began in the 1950s prior to the publication of Slade's *Child Drama*. HMI John Allen reported that in 1951 at a memorable conference on drama in education at the Bonnington Hotel, Southampton, 'I realized with an alarm I can recall to this day, the depth of the split that was developing between concepts of drama in schools and the theatre arts' (Allen, 1979:12).

The term 'drama in education' did not (and still does not) just mean the general practice of drama in school and other education contexts but became a term used to describe a particular approach to drama. It was Slade (1954) (himself influenced by developments in visual art education), who had recognised child drama as a separate art form as opposed to adult theatre. And it was Slade's writing and practice (and later that of Way) that had more widespread influence in schools. Slade's approach, which had strong echoes of Rousseau's romantic belief in natural development, was characterised by respect for the creative ability of children. He recommended minimum intervention by the teacher who was there to guide and nurture rather than instruct.

Way's approach had the same theoretical origins but placed more of a focus on individual practical exercises. A key aim for him was the development of the child's intuition. The work of Bolton and Heathcote in the 1970s is often placed in the same 'drama in education' category as that of Slade and Way and criticised for neglecting the art form in favour of either self-expression or learning across the curriculum (Hornbrook, 1989, 1991; Abbs, 1991; Ross ed. 1982), However, Bolton (1979, 1984) and Heathcote (Wagner 1976; Johnson and O'Neill, 1984) brought a change of emphasis to the subject. In their drama work more attention was paid to content, the nature of the experience of the pupils and the role of the teacher in elevating the quality of the drama as well as defining educational objectives. For example, a typical lesson in the 1950s or early 1960s on the theme of a visit to the seaside might have involved the children performing actions to the teacher's commentary: 'One morning you wake up early and go into the bathroom to wash...' or else engaging in their own dramatic play by getting into an

imaginary car, driving to the seaside and jumping in the sea. A Heathcote/Bolton approach however would seek to add depth and challenge the pupils' thinking and problem solving skills: for example, a drama about a trip to the seaside might become, under the teacher's influence, an examination of family expectations and the exercise of authority. Thus understanding and cognition were restored in drama work which had become more preoccupied with feeling. In the early days of their work, drama in education was taken to refer to the spontaneous acting out of improvised plays, 'living through' drama but the methodologies widened and developed over the years. Crucially they saw their work as embodying elements of theatre form. The use of techniques or conventions such as teacher in role, tableaux, questioning in role made their approach more accessible to classroom teachers but could result in a formulaic approach. Writers and practitioners such as John O'Toole, Jonothan Neelands, Cecily O'Neill, and Joe Winston developed their work in significant ways. The concept of 'process drama', for example, emerged as a distinct genre, characterised by improvisation and engagement of the learners in negotiating the unfolding drama.

It was in the 1980s that Hornbrook began to criticise some of the widely accepted orthodoxies of drama in education, claiming that it had lost its roots in dramatic art (Hornbrook, 1989) and that the reality of what went on in schools did not always match the rhetoric of the writing. It was often a source of great confusion to the newcomer to drama teaching or indeed to the outsider to be told that drama in education has little to do with acting, theatre, the stage and play scripts which are, after all, those aspects of drama which are most normally associated with the subject.

The strong divisions between 'drama' and 'theatre' which were at their most apparent in the 1970s and early 1980s have given way to a more inclusive approach to the subject where performance, improvisation, exercises, use of script all have their place. This comprehensive view of the subject is reflected both in the national curriculum and examination syllabi. *The National Drama Secondary Teachers' Handbook* (National Drama Association, 1998) took the view that an inclusive model of practice is now widely accepted. The Arts Council (1992) publication 'Drama in Schools' reflected the wider consensus. The range of papers published in the journal *Research in Drama Education*<sup>8</sup> indicates the breadth of approaches currently being employed.

<sup>8</sup> Research in Drama Education <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/13569783.asp>

The development of drama reflects wider development in arts education. Its association with the 'new education' movement meant that its early justification was in terms of individual personal growth and self-expression. However, there has been a tendency to exaggerate the views of the early practitioners and downplay some of their positive insights. Slade and Way, for example, were not anti-theatre but were strong advocates and practitioners of theatre. They showed considerable wisdom when they advocated a developmental approach to the subject and warned about the dangers of putting children on the stage prematurely.

## 2.2 Dance

### Key issues

- the view of dance as physical activity and training rather than as an art form.
- the relative significance and competing emphasis on free expression or technique.
- the influence on education of wider developments in the art form.

Dance currently finds its place in the curriculum within the subject of PE. This raises the issue of whether dance should be seen primarily as a physical or aesthetic activity, a question which has dogged its history. A useful overview of the early development of dance education is provided by Haynes (1987). She points out that dance education has developed without a sense of the heritage that other arts subjects enjoy in part because of practical issues to do with the absence until recently of systems of recording and notation:

There are, for instance, no equivalents in dance of a Bach, a Rembrandt or a Shakespeare, for there are no existing scores, artefacts or texts to bear witness to the works of past choreographers. As a consequence, there is no substantial body of literature on the dance, no tradition of scholarly research, no complex and varied school of analysis and criticism – no common literature discourse. Compared to the abundant literature on all other art forms, dance is in a state of critical and historic impoverishment. (Haynes, 1987:142).

Dance in schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was largely accepted for its physical and (less significantly) social rather than aesthetic benefits (Brook, 1989:64). As with the other art forms, dance owed its development in the first part of the twentieth century to key individuals such as Cecil Sharp, Isadora Duncan, Ling, Jacques-Delcroze and Rudolf Laban. Physical education had been recommended in the 1890s as part of the curriculum of the elementary school in the form of music and drill. It was in this period that the link between dance and physical education was formed and this conception has never really altered in the official documents. In the 1937 *Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers* (Board of Education, 1937) dance is given just a few short paragraphs in the chapter on 'Health and Physical Training'. The publication acknowledged that many schools probably confined themselves to folk dances but the reference to 'a more specialised type of dancing' (ibid: 171) was rather vague on what alternative possibilities might be available. The recommendation that the dancing lesson, 'should be a period of stimulating and enjoyable rhythmic activity giving definite training in easy, light and harmonious movement of the whole body' (Board of Education, 1937:171) hardly gave the teacher much to go on but it is likely that the particular entry was influenced by the more progressive ideas which had been developing.

Isadora Duncan, who died in 1927, is generally seen as a key originator of a new concept of dance which celebrated spontaneous expression of 'natural' movement. Her beliefs in the power of dance to develop self-expression and creativity had much in common with her contemporary advocates of progressive education. She did not see the development of technique as an end in itself, although she did not reject it outright. English pioneers of Duncan's style such as Margaret Morris, Madge Atkinson and Ruby Ginner began to have an influence on education and paved the way for the adoption of approaches developed by Laban (Haynes, 1987:145).

The Plowden report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967) acknowledged the teaching and writing of Rudolf Laban as being a key influence on developments in the 1950s and 1960s. Laban's work originated in the theatre but when he moved to England he established links with industry and education as well as with the stage. His early influence, mainly in secondary schools for girls, was through his book, *Modern Educational Dance* which had been published in 1948. He placed a strong emphasis on personal expression, on spontaneous improvisation and experimentation and

saw creative activity as a means of evolving a style of dance which was 'true' to the individual personality (Haynes, 1987: 149).

As with the other arts subjects, divisions and differences of opinion grew. Some practitioners objected to what they saw as a loss of the discipline of dance technique with the emphasis on personal development (Taylor and Andrews, 1993: 34). Towards the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s Laban's work was subjected to criticism. A number of writers argued that dance education should change its emphasis from its more psychological/therapeutic orientation towards the more formal and aesthetic conception of dance as an art form (Redfern, 1973). This development was further encouraged by the presence in England of the contemporary dance style of Martha Graham. There was a tendency for dance teachers to divide into opposing groups, much like the divisions in the drama world. One emphasised product, technique and performance, the other placed more emphasis on process, expression of feeling and individual development.

The curriculum placement of dance with physical education continues to be an issue. The Ofsted publication *The Arts Inspected* (1998) struck a somewhat defensive tone:

Where dance is taught within the curriculum in schools is less important than that it is taught to a high standard by knowledgeable teachers guided by a well-planned scheme of work that provides continuity and progression within and across key stages' (Ofsted 1998).

However, concern about the current curriculum provision for dance is still strongly contested - as expressed in the evidence given to a select committee by the Council for Dance Education and Training:

Currently, dance occupies a place within formal education ill-suited to its central role as a major art activity and cultural pursuit. That dance should appear on the National Curriculum as an element of Physical Education reflects a prevalent educational perception that it is 'part of something else' rather than an articulate and persuasive language in its own right. (Culture, Media and Sport Committee, 2004)

Of all the art forms in education, dance has perhaps received the least attention and been the most marginalised. Its advocates are no doubt right to challenge its inclusion with the physical education curriculum but those

arguments need to be formulated carefully. In advancing that case, there is a danger of implicitly relegating bodily sensory experience as being of a lower significance in the realm of aesthetic experience. Much writing on arts in education has focused on the polarity between feeling and rationality with much less attention to an equally important mind/body dichotomy which has been prevalent. An inclusive view of the arts allows more recognition of the links between the arts and wellbeing. Shusterman (2006) has coined the term 'somaesthetics' to capture the significance of the body's role in aesthetic experience and illustrated convincingly its firm roots in aesthetic tradition.

Recognizing that body, mind, and culture are deeply codependent, somaesthetics comprises an interdisciplinary research program to integrate their study. Mental life relies on somatic experience too and cannot be wholly separate from bodily processes, even if it cannot be wholly reduced to them. We think and feel with our bodies, especially with the body parts that constitute the brain and nervous system. (Shusterman, 2006:2).

Dance education has a potential role to play in expanding thinking about the nature of arts education in the context of this kind of theorising. In his discussion of somaesthetics, Shusterman poses the question whether the pursuit of humanistic study should be focused on the traditional content of high culture or whether it should embrace popular culture. This reflects a challenge for arts educators. Dance and music are the art forms that young people most avidly engage with, but this is often not in accord with the way they are represented in the school curriculum.

## 2.3 Music

### Key issues

- The balance between making and appreciation.
- Growing interest in composition.
- Concerns about the low status of music as a subject.

Valuable histories of the development of music education have been provided by Cox (1993, 2001) and Pitts (2000). A broad, perhaps oversimplified, view of developments shows an increasing emphasis on musical appreciation in the early twentieth century, a greater focus on performance in the 1950s and more concern with improvising and composing in the 1970s. Various versions of the current national curriculum have included the different components of composing, performing, listening and appraising in a more balanced view of the subject. The emphasis on 'making' is replicated in several of the arts in the late 1960s and 1970s as a culmination of the progressive thinking that had been steadily emerging. Cox's (2001) review of the content of musical journals over a seventy five year period highlights the dangers of assuming a linear development of thinking about the subject. He charts the continuities, discontinuities and shifting alliances, and illustrates clearly the way different themes and views emerge and re-emerge at different times. General claims therefore can be misleading but the official publications do provide some indication of broad trends in the subject.

Music was established in elementary schools at the turn of the 20th century but it was almost exclusively vocal, with class singing lessons forming the major part of the curriculum. The songs were often religious or patriotic and were often chosen for their moral content and contribution to national identity (Johnson, 1989). Musical appreciation was predominant in the 1920s and 1930s. The Hadow report (Board of Education, 1926:240) specifically stated that the aim of music teaching considered as part of a school curriculum 'should be rather the cultivation of a taste than the acquirement of a proficiency; it should lay the foundation for intelligent study and enjoyment of music in after life'. The report went on to endorse the importance of the technical aspect of music but suggested that it should be 'subordinated to the human delight in beautiful sound, which is the basis and foundation of all music'.

By 1943 the Norwood report took a more balanced view between appreciation and what it termed 'executive skill' recommending that it is part of the teacher's work to cater for both (Secondary School Examination Council, 1943). The benefits of music education are expressed predominantly in social terms.



Membership of a choir or an orchestra gives valuable experience of coordinated effort and achievement; the individual has to subordinate himself to the collective purpose of the whole, which nonetheless depends upon him; children who are unable to take part in other cooperative activities often gain self-confidence and a sense of community from singing or taking part in an orchestra alongside their school-fellow. (ibid, 1943: 126)

Pitts (2000:204) has commented on 'a gradual shift in the views and methods of music educators in the twentieth century, broadly demonstrating an increasing acceptance of a wider musical repertoire, and a similar recognition of the variety of musical opportunities that can be made available to children'. The Newsom report (Central Advisory Council for England, 1963) included music in the section on 'practical subjects' alongside art, craft, needlework, housecraft, handicraft, and physical education which itself highlights the degree to which the aesthetic identity of arts subjects was still undervalued. The report highlighted a concern that is often voiced by writers on music education, the contrast between the enthusiasm for music shown by young people who 'crowd into record shops' and the reality of the curriculum as experienced in schools. This disparity is explained partly in the report by the narrowness of music curriculum on offer in many schools. This narrow approach to music education has been challenged in more contemporary writing, for example, in the context of research into how popular musicians learn (Green, 2002). Ofsted (2006) have reported on the recent work of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Musical Futures Project exploring different approaches to music provision at Key Stage 3.

By 1967 the Plowden report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967:252) was still commenting unfavourably on the state of music education in primary schools referring to the 'unsatisfactory position' which would 'need to be tackled systematically and resolutely'. The report expressed concern about the musical training received by teachers and this attention appears as ongoing theme in much writing about primary music.

The tension between traditional and progressive approaches, as we have seen in other arts subjects, is also manifest in music education. A traditional approach tended to see music as a body of knowledge with the emphasis on appreciation and performance (which included singing). Progressives saw music in expressive terms and thought children should be engaged in

making and experimenting themselves. Pitts (2000: 120) draws attention to the dilemmas and debates in the 1980s on the issue of children experimenting with sounds and instruments, as part of a belief in creativity, and whether the term 'composing' was justified.

For some years, music has been the arts subject with the lowest subscription at GCSE (Little, 2007). Plummeridge (2001:21) has pointed out that 'music educationists often appear to be on the defensive' and the theme of music's low status often appears in writing about the subject. One of the key issues here is related to the issue of justification. All of the arts have suffered in an educational climate which prioritises value for money, observable outcomes, concrete objectives and accountability. But music does so perhaps more than the others. Despite some attempts to justify music on the basis of extrinsic justification (the Mozart effect for example),<sup>9</sup> the arguments that it should be seen primarily as an aesthetic subject with a key aim of a rich and fulfilled life are convincing (Finney, 2002).

## 2.4 Visual Art or Art and Design

### Key issues

- Early emphasis on drawing, training and technique rather than expression.
- The recognition of 'child art'.
- The influence of studies in psychology, the growth of interest in primitive art, and the appreciation of the characteristics of modern art.

As with the other arts, the aims of art and design education and practical approaches in the classroom have been conceived in different ways and are subject to some of the same broad dichotomies found elsewhere. Justification has drawn on both utilitarian and liberal views, with an expressive conception of fine art or a more functional view of design. Similarly, teaching approaches have divided between a stress on systematic instruction and an emphasis on free expression and creativity. Visual art has received more attention from historians than the other subjects and a

<sup>9</sup> The Mozart effect was a term used to refer to an increase in spatial temporal reasoning as a result of listening to Mozart.

number of comprehensive studies have been written (Macdonald 1970; Sutton, 1967; Field 1970). A more recent overview of key issues is given in Addison and Burgess (eds., 2003).

Macdonald's (1970) seminal history investigates the study of art and design education in Italy, France, Britain, Germany and the United States, and traces the philosophies of teachers from the age of the guilds and the academies, setting them in the context of the general education theories of their times. A key development in thinking about art education (which influenced the development of drama education) was the recognition of child art. The acceptance of child art was influenced by four related factors. One was the naturalistic thinking of Rousseau who had argued that the child needs an education suited to its nature. It was Spencer who introduced the relevance of this kind of thinking to the teaching of art in England, even though his ideas did not have an immediate impact on practice. Spencer challenged the emphasis on mechanical drawing from copies, recognising that when the natural instinct of the child is allowed to emerge, 'the drawing of outlines immediately becomes secondary to colouring' (Spencer, 1878: 83). Spencer compared the mechanical approach of teaching drawing to the process of teaching a child to speak by drilling in parts of speech. Other writers such as Thomas Ablett, Alexander Bain, James Sully and Ebenezer Cooke contributed to the development of thinking about art education in this period. Bain, for example, argued that 'The utility of drawing as a general accomplishment must not be overrated' and argued for the cultivation of 'art-emotion' (Macdonald, 1970:324). Similarly, Ablett recommended that children be taught to use their imagination when drawing. Innovative thinking in art education which challenged prevailing mechanistic practices thus began relatively early and paved the way for later more radical developments later.

A second key factor in the acceptance of child art was the influence of developmental ideas in psychology which corresponded with, and influenced, the increasing interest in the development stages of the drawings of children. Sully's *Studies of Childhood* published in 1895 contained the first classification of this kind. A third influence was the increasing recognition of primitive, tribal art as a sensitive rather than crude form of expression. The fourth influence was the increasing appreciation of modern art which served to challenge conservative thinking. According to Macdonald (1970:329), the inrush of the colourful post-impressionist work made it possible to compare child and adult art.

The Austrian teacher Cizek (1927) was an influential writer promoting child art as an art in its own right (similar to Slade's view of child drama). Partly influenced in his thinking by observing child graffiti in the streets Cizek was struck by the colourful and rhythmic qualities of work produced by young children. As often happened in the history of arts education, enthusiastic followers misinterpreted and exaggerated the practice of key advocates. Cizek's approach was not as devoid of guidance and attention to technique as was often thought, as is exemplified in Macdonald's identification of the following misinterpretation in the 1928, *Art in Schools*. 'For the children were not, in the usual sense of the word, taught at all! There was no insistence on technique, no ordered method of study....Method, material, subject, purpose, all these are left to the child's free choice.' (Littlejohns, 1928. quoted in Macdonald 1970).

One of the advocates of Cizek's approach was Viola, whose *Child Art* was published in 1942 and did much to advance this way of thinking about the subject. The recognition of child art brought an increase in exhibitions of children's work, notably by Marion Richardson. Under her influence this approach developed with more emphasis on the need for the teacher to stimulate the imagination of the child, thus embodying a view of the artistic process contained in self-expression theories.

A growing belief in the need to broaden the approach to art is found in the Norwood report of 1943 with the belief that 'Art and handicrafts should in our opinion receive the broadest interpretation in schools'. There is an emphasis on training in necessary skills, because such training 'coordinates hand and eye and develops control'. The report, however, also recommended the development of a form of 'appreciation', the 'encouragement of the boys and girls to see with seeing eyes, to be aware of form and colour and design'. It was recommended that all children should have the opportunity of 'seeing the place of art in the spiritual and social and economic life of the present and the past. The study of a civilisation or an age can scarcely be undertaken without reference to its art' (Secondary School Examination Council, 1943:126).

The distinction between 'art' and 'design' (and the earlier distinction between 'art' and 'craft') reflects some of the dichotomous thinking that has been characteristic of the arts in education. Collingwood (1938) attempted to distinguish between art and craft by suggesting that craft always involves a

separation of means from ends (for example, a tool is crafted for a specific purpose). The concept of 'design' therefore has associations with utility and planning. Black (1973:34) defined design as 'a problem solving activity concerned with invention and with formal relationships, with the elegant solutions to problems which are at least partially definable in terms of day-to-day practicability'. However the danger of making a firm distinction between the two terms is that the concept of art may become, in turn, less associated with technique, form and planning and more exclusively with expression. Insisting on a rigorous distinction between art and design not only tends to reinforce other distinctions (e.g. between feeling and cognition) but also leads to separatist rather than inclusive views of art. As Lyas (1997:218) has suggested, 'it is not easy to see where the line between deliberately made things that are art and those that are not is to be drawn'.

## 2.5 Summary

Debates within art education have much in common with those within the other arts. Tensions can be observed between child and subject centred approaches, and between advocates of education in art and education through art (Hickman, 2005). As we have seen, this formulation was used in writing about drama where an induction into the conventions, techniques and discipline of the subject as well as its history was contrasted with an emphasis on personal development. Art education has been subject to different forms of emphasis in discussions about its aims and values in its more recent history: as a form of visual education or literacy, as cultural learning, as a focus for the development of individual creativity and imagination, as design education, and as a form of instruction in skills. Its methods have also been subject to debate, for example the degree to which teaching art should follow a sequential pattern (Hickman, 2005: 18). The introduction of new technologies has also inevitably impacted on the content of arts curricula. According to Steers (2003:21), in visual arts education 'conflicting aims and values have always been in evidence' but he goes on to say that these debates are the life-blood of art education'. Attempts to formulate definitive statements about the aims and purposes of art and to close debate are not conducive to promoting a dynamic and creative approach to teaching.

**For the purposes of examining the concept of creativity within the context of arts education a search for definitions is not the most helpful starting point. It is more productive to look at how the term has been used and interpreted, and what this signals about the arts in education.**

### 3 Arts education and creativity

#### Key Issues

- The concept of creativity in arts and in the wider context of education.
- The need for an inclusive view of creativity.
- The value of an inclusive view of arts in education.

The aim of this section is to continue the overview of the development of arts education with particular reference to the concept of creativity. It will not attempt to provide a comprehensive review of the literature on creativity but will focus on the degree to which the concept is helpful in providing a greater level of perspicuity in understanding the way thinking in the field of arts education has evolved. There are many valuable detailed accounts of creativity, e.g. Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010); Boden, (1996); Craft, Jeffrey and Leibling (2001), and it will not be necessary to repeat their content. Much writing on creativity begins with a search for definitions with the tacit assumption that the correct meaning of the word or concept exists somewhere waiting to be discovered (Allen and Turvey, 2001:5). For the purposes of examining the concept of creativity within the context of arts education a search for definitions is not the most helpful starting point. It is more productive to look at how the term has been used and interpreted, and what this signals about the arts in education.

In many of the early reports the noun 'creativity' is not used at all and even the adjective 'creative' is not used with great regularity. The Hadow report (Board of Education, 1926) makes reference to the importance of studying 'great creative work' but in its section on teaching subjects the word 'creative' is not used at all. The Spens report (Board of Education, 1938) has a section contrasting 'conservative' with 'creative' activities in the community. The former are the more routine activities which serve to preserve and maintain the existence of the community, while the latter are more special. They are exemplified by, but are not exclusive to the activities of poets, dramatists, painters and musicians. The Newsom report (Central Advisory Council for England, 1963) writes of the need to steer the adolescent's 'doubting spirit' into 'positive and creative channels'. The noun 'creativity' starts to get used with more regularity in later writing. The view that 'creativity' must refer to something precise and concrete leads to questions such as 'can creativity be taught?' 'is creativity an attribute?' which are induced by the form of the language. Such questions are not significant in themselves but only if the underlying, contextual and practical implications are unpacked.

One of the themes which has emerged in this examination of the arts in education is the broad movement from a focus primarily on creative self-expression and making to a more inclusive view of the arts which embodies making, responding, performing and appraising. This corresponds with a greater emphasis on cognition rather than just the development of feeling (Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 1982). The more balanced view of what education in the arts should involve is reflected in the way the arts subjects have been addressed in different versions of the national curriculum. Although this explanation of changes in approaches to the arts in education is largely accurate, there has been a tendency to exaggerate differences, and thus increase the danger of replacing a subjectivist (or what some might describe as a romantic view of arts education) with an objectivist, elitist and sterile point of view, as was argued above. I suggest here that an exploration of the concept of creativity and an understanding of the way language both illuminates and deceives can inform this issue.

Creativity is often thought of as an individual mental process aimed at the production of something new. In the context of arts education that view had (and still has) misleading consequences. It meant that there were no criteria for judging outcomes and anything that was considered 'creative' could be valued as being worthwhile. Later definitions of creativity tended to include the word 'appropriate' to counter objections (Boden, 1996). The word 'creativity' has positive connotations and is often used as a blanket term of approval to legitimise activities of any kind. Seeing creativity as a 'mental process' with the implicit assumption that it was something internal and occult offered further protection from critical scrutiny. This dualist view of creativity is difficult to avoid because common sense indicates that creativity is in some sense an internal capacity; moreover, denying that view runs the risk of subscribing to a form of behaviourism.<sup>10</sup> However it is important not to take the contrasting view that the word 'creativity' refers to something mysterious and hidden. The distinction between process and product which dominated much writing about the arts is therefore of less significance than the insight that creativity can be manifest in either product or process but it needs to be identifiable in concrete terms. The prioritising of the internal and private over the external and public led, in some cases, to a suspicion of the teaching of techniques as well as the neglect of form and the aesthetic dimensions of art.

<sup>10</sup> Different versions of behaviourism have been advanced since the 19th Century but in simplest terms the theory focuses only on observable behaviour and not mental states and capacities, particularly when explaining learning.

### 3.1 The usefulness of 'creativity'

However, recognition of some of the misleading consequences of the use of 'creativity' in a historical context does not mean that the concept should be rejected from arts in education discourse. Just as Smith (Smith and Simpson, eds. 1991:171) investigated the 'usefulness' of aesthetic education, a similar approach can be taken to creativity. As Elliot (1971:70) has said, the concept can function as a 'regulative idea' in education, as 'a focus of human hopes and aspirations'. It has for him an 'inspirational force' and is a reminder that education is concerned with ideas of innovation and progress: 'it proclaims the strength of the spirit against necessity'. To some this kind of rhetoric may appear archaic and overly romantic, particularly in an era which values transparency, efficiency, logic and sureness over ambiguity, complexity, uncertainty and richness of experience. Indeed, writing about the value of the arts in education can sometimes appear elusive and indeterminate. The arts in education have been described as a 'value marker' (Broudy, 1991:132), a 'symbolic system of human understanding' (Goodman, 1976), a 'powerful means of promoting re-creation' (Elliot, 1991:241), a source for 'intensification and clarification of human experience' (Smith and Simpson, eds. 1991:14) and 'imaginative cognition' (Efland, 2004: 751). However, the arts often deal in forms of understanding which push the limits of language and attempts of this kind to capture its import are all worthy of serious consideration.

The ideas of inspiration and innovation associated with creativity described by Elliot can be extended to the process of responding to art (Elliott, 1966). In many of the early official reports the arts were allied with other handicrafts and practical activities because they were concerned with making. However, if creativity is seen as more than just making in a literal sense, it is possible to see a response to art itself as a creative process. This has important consequences for teaching because it avoids a subjective/objective duality which can lead to the view that responding to art is largely a passive process, with negative consequences in the classroom. It also leaves the teacher with a more significant role, which, as I have shown, the progressives struggled to find when an authoritative, didactic approach was rejected. As well as inducting pupils into the discipline of the subject, the teacher has a key role in helping pupils engage with art products by making connections with personal experience and understanding how form

and content are inextricably connected. This process of active, constructive understanding is usefully seen as a creative process and resonates with reader response theories in literature and reception theory (Iser, 1988; Rosenblatt, 1986).

Recognising the import rather than the analytic logic of the concept of creativity in relation to arts in education does not mean closing discussion and critique, nor does it mean ignoring research in this area (Craft, Jeffrey and Liebling, 2001; Sternberg and Lubart, 1999). Turner-Bisset (2007) has argued that recent initiatives on creativity do not mean genuine change in primary education. She analyses two initiatives in particular: the Department for Education and Skills (2003) publication *Excellence and Enjoyment* and the OCA website on creativity, arguing that 'the performativity<sup>11</sup> discourse in this country is effectively hijacking the creativity discourse' (ibid:201). Craft (2006) has questioned how an increased interest in creativity in the wider education sphere has developed without sufficient reference to a values framework. The notion of creativity which has been predominant is one associated with individuality and which also 'values highly innovative engagement with the economy as both producer and consumer' (ibid: 340). She emphasises the need for connecting 'wisdom' with nurturing creativity so that innovation does not become an end in itself but that it should be tempered by a concern with values. The qualities and attributes embodied in the notion of wisdom, e.g. taking on multiple perspectives, being able to handle uncertainty are precisely those which engagement in the arts could be said to develop. Ward (2007) has demonstrated how different constructs of creativity are brought into being through research methods and argued that this can create and sustain politically expedient accounts of creativity.

I suggested above that a more balanced view of the arts in education is needed which does not abandon the positive insights of the progressive, child-centred thinkers. This means recognising the energising force of the concept of creativity in arts education but also being prepared to unpack the term and articulate what is worthwhile. As suggested, the polarisation between concepts of subjectivity and objectivity often inhibits meaningful dialogue and this can extend to the articulation of purposes and reasons. There are parallels here with responses to, and judgements about, art. How do we resolve differences of opinion about what counts as good or

worthwhile art? Does it not all come down to subjective opinion? Lyas (1997:128) suggests that the terms subjectivity and objectivity are misleading here. To make a remark about whether one likes a work of art or not is not the end of the matter but the beginning. It is to 'reach out in an effort to establish community', to invite discussion, to get people to see things as we do. In the same way, describing an activity as 'creative', has to be seen as the start and not the end of dialogue, discussion and justification.

In much early writing about the arts it was assumed that there was a creative area of the curriculum which was exclusively the province of the arts. The message of *All Our Futures* then, as well as other related national developments, is liberating: not just for the curriculum as a whole, but also for the arts in education (NACCCE, 1999). It highlights the importance of creativity across all subjects but also signals that the arts are about more than just creativity. At different times in its history the arts have been justified in different, and sometimes very narrow, ways: as cultural heritage, personal growth, training in functional skills, development of creativity and imagination, understanding of the human condition, problem solving, and the development of empathy. And this list is only the beginning! In an enthusiasm to defend the arts in education against what is often constructed as a hostile social context, contemporary advocates sometimes overstate their case. For example, there have been many attempts to show the positive effects of the arts in all sort of extraneous areas, albeit not always with much success, as reviews of the research have shown (Eisner, 1998; Harland *et al*, 2000; Winner and Hetland, 2000; Comerford Boyes and Reid, 2005.). It is however worth recognising that different art forms and even different art works frequently have different intentions and effects; they can enthral, move, enlighten, inform, inspire, amuse, challenge, entertain or provoke. To speak about the impact of the arts as a whole, as generic concept can sometimes be misleading.

There is a body of opinion both within aesthetic theory and specifically within arts education that rejects any attempt to justify the arts on extrinsic, instrumental grounds. Gingell (2000) has pointed out, for example, that if art is judged primarily in terms of the contribution it makes to our moral and intellectual life we miss the appeal of certain art forms: to worry about the 'message' of a Ming vase 'is to miss its aesthetic point'. From this perspective, the mistake lies in regarding the arts in general as

<sup>11</sup> The term 'performativity' is adopted by Turner-Bisset from Lyotard (1994) and refers to an exclusive focus on the values of efficiency and performance.

instrumentally valuable, to see them as a means to some other end rather than as an end in themselves. This intrinsic view embodied in the 'art for art's sake' movement has some appeal. It underlines a power of art but it is sometimes also overstated and does not sit easily in an educational climate which puts a premium on concrete outcomes, accountability and value for money. A form of intrinsic justification which sees the arts as being in their different ways an essential form of human enrichment is compelling and is not necessarily incompatible with describing the value and impact of particular art forms and works within an educational context.

In their review of the 'rhetorics' of creativity, Banaji, Burn and Buckingham (2010), highlight a distinction between those writers who recognise the 'democratic nature of creativity' and those who subscribe to more elitist views derived from a conception of creativity based on 'romantic genius'. They also draw attention to the distinction between 'little c' and 'big C' creativity (Craft, 2001) which also corresponds with democratic and elitist accounts of the concept. The distinction raises the question of the degree to which the arts curriculum in schools should embrace 'low' as well as 'high' art.

### 3.2 'High' and 'low' art

The distinction between high and low art is initially easy to recognise but difficult to sustain. As Fisher (2001) has said, it is relatively easy to assign Shakespeare and classical music to one category and pop music and soap operas to the other, but describing distinguishing criteria is more challenging. The test of time argument (Savile, 1982) goes some way to specifying criteria but it excludes modernist works and the avant garde which are often seen as archetypes of high art. In practice, categories such as pop art, mass art, folk art become conflated but distinguishing them highlights further problems. Carroll (1998) has provided a convincing defence against the criticism that mass art is not genuine art. A film of a Shakespeare play can be seen as a form of mass art. Carey (2005) has shown how so-called low art can enrich people's lives. Problems arise also because of the use of the generic concept 'art' and the assumption that judgements of quality have the same basis. A work of fiction may have more content and apparent depth than an abstract painting but that does not make it necessarily superior.

Shusterman (2003) has pointed out that underlying the dichotomy between high and popular art is a contrast between art versus entertainment. Arguments for teaching the arts are often conceived in terms of a contrast with 'mere' entertainment. But to dismiss entertainment and related concepts too readily may also be a mistake. The term 'amusement' derives from the verb 'to muse' whose early meanings are 'to be absorbed in thought'. Shusterman points out that we can associate the concept of entertainment with notions of 'sustaining, refreshing and deepening concentration'; paradoxically, to maintain the self we need also to forget and look elsewhere. Tilghman (1991) has drawn attention to the relationship between aesthetics and ethics, art and life highlighted by a study of Wittgenstein. Art, he suggests, 'selects an object, a scene, a situation, and makes that object stand still to be contemplated' (ibid:40). The notion of contemplation here is close to Shusterman's account. The ethical dimension is related to the aesthetic not so much in terms of its specific moral content (though that of course is often part of its interest) nor in terms of rule-following but in affirming and revealing humanity (Fleming, 2006).

Many cultural theorists indicate a continuing evolution towards a more inclusive view and away from what Eaton (2001: 57) has described as a 'separatist' account of art with its origins in Kantian aesthetics: see for example Willis (1990) and Carey (2005). The contrasting positions are familiar: one (separatist) view emphasises art for art's sake, intrinsic ends, aesthetic formalism, and cultural autonomy; the other (inclusive) highlights the embedded socio-cultural context of art, conventionalism and the acceptance that the arts may be the means to extrinsic ends. The inclusive view is associated with John Dewey, Leo Tolstoy as well as more contemporary theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Marcia Eaton, Colin Lyas and Richard Shusterman. It furthermore embraces the arts as a form of intercultural education which is becoming increasingly significant (Fleming, 2006). However, schools are still left with a challenge because many commentators argue convincingly that they have a responsibility to teach the best (Gingell and Brandon, 2000). The issue is not easily resolved but accepting an inclusive view is not necessarily to embrace a relativist position and abandon the importance of making judgements. Again, this debate is not exclusive to arts education. Polarised views of this kind have underpinned much of the debate about the literary canon (Bloom, 1995; Benton, 2000; Gorak, 2001; Guillory, 1993; Altieri, 1990). The traditional

canon centred largely on issues of quality and was associated with preserving what was thought to be 'the best'. Much contemporary thinking has challenged the simple making of absolute judgements but, on the other hand a relativist position which sees judgments about quality as a purely personal matter is hardly helpful in the context of designing a curriculum. A resolution of this tension may lie with the notion of 'consensus'. However, this is contrary to the traditional authoritarian notion of the canon (Fleming, 2007). Subscribing to an inclusive view of art is, then, not necessarily to embrace a relative view that anything goes, but means recognising, as Lyas (1997) does, that the ways we fulfil ourselves aesthetically are extraordinarily wide and various.



**A vibrant and successful future for the arts in education must lie partly in effective support from politicians and policy makers but also in developing understanding and practice through continued debate and dialogue.**

## Conclusion

This short review of the history of arts education and creativity has highlighted changing approaches, differences of opinion and often conflicting views of aims and priorities. That is exactly how it should be. A vibrant and successful future for the arts in education must lie partly in effective support from politicians and policy makers but also in developing understanding and practice through continued debate and dialogue.

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