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“ART, THE POOR RELATION OF THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM”

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BY

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INTRODUCTION

In Ireland, as in many other countries, the position of Art, Craft and Design in the post primary curriculum is not a healthy one. It is generally accepted that Art, Craft and Design have a crucial role to play in the education of the young person. Many of the leading experts in educational psychology have stressed its importance in the development of every student, regardless of their levels of ability. Elliott Eisner says, "What Art has to contribute to the education of the human is precisely what other fields cannot contribute". (1)

However, it is not my intention here to develop a rationale for Art, Craft and Design in the curriculum of the school. This task has been completed in many countries such as Britain, the U.S.A. and more recently here in Ireland. It is sadly indicative of the neglect and ignorance of the value and necessity for Art, Craft and Design in the educational programmes for all young people, that a rationale for its inclusion needs to be made at all. Art, Craft and Design has been conclusively shown to be crucial in the social, intellectual and aesthetic education of any young person. This being the case, it would be reasonable to expect that Art, Craft and Design would hold a prominent position in the curriculum of the school. Statistics prove otherwise.

TABLE 1

Art-Intermediate Certificate 1990

BOYS	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	8,994
TOTAL NUMBER EXAMINED	28,585
GIRLS	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	14,424
TOTAL NUMBER EXAMINED	29,661
TOTAL (BOYS AND GIRLS)	58,246
TOTAL TAKING ART	23,418

SOURCE: Data taken from Tuarascail Staitistiúil 1989/'90 An Roinn Oideachais.

The figures shown in the table show just how poorly Art is regarded at Junior Cycle. Of the total number of girls examined roughly 48% sat the examination in Art. Of the total number of boys only 31% studied art. Of the total number of students only 40% studied art.

TABLE 2

ART INCLUDING CRAFTS - LEAVING CERTIFICATE 1990.

BOYS	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES.	3,596
TOTAL NUMBER EXAMINED	26,185
GIRLS	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	6,228
TOTAL NUMBER EXAMINED	28,961
TOTAL (BOYS AND GIRLS)	55,146
TOTAL TAKING ART	9,824

SOURCE: Data taken from Tuarascail Staitistiúil 1989/90 An Roinn Oideachais.

The figures shown in the table above make for even more distressing reading as far as Art, Craft and Design is concerned. Of the total number of boys examined, just over 12% chose to sit this examination. This represents a drop of almost 40% from the total number of boys who took Art in the Intermediate Certificate Examination. Of the total number of girls examined just over 21% sat the examination in Art, including crafts. This represents a drop of 43% in the percentage of the total who sat the examination

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER.	
I. THE 1960'S: A TIME FOR CHANGE	6
II. CURRICULUM CONTINUITY	10
III. LACK OF AIMS	15
IV. INADEQUATE RESOURCES	18
V. THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE BACKGROUND AIMS AND PRINCIPLES ART, CRAFT AND DESIGN SYLLABUS	22
CONCLUSION.	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	32

at Intermediate Certificate Level. Of the total number of students who took the Leaving Certificate examination only just over 20% studied Art, including crafts. These statistics illustrate the poor status of Art, Craft and Design in the curriculum of the school.

It is my intention to discuss some of the reasons for the position of Art, Craft and Design as the poor relation within the school curriculum. There are I think, several major factors which have been responsible for the inexcusably weak educational position of Art, Craft and Design in post-primary education in Ireland. These factors include historical influences, lack of policy towards objectives and the poor resources given to Art, Craft and Design throughout the school system. The low percentage of students sitting for examination in Art including Crafts is another major obstacle to its development. What are the reasons for this? How can this problem be overcome? These are just some of the questions which I hope to deal with.

This summer, 1992, students all over Ireland will make history by being the first to sit the new Junior Certificate Examination. This new examination is seen by many as a radical departure from the old style examination system used in this country for many years. I will take this opportunity to examine the Junior Certificate's outlines and its relevance to Art, Craft and Design in particular.

FOOTNOTES

1. Elliott W. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision. (New York: MacMillan, 1972) p.5.

CHAPTER I

THE 1960'S: A TIME FOR CHANGE.

In 1949 Professor Thomas Bodkin wrote,

In Irish schools, the subject of art, in either the historical or the practical aspect, is neglected. Few of the principal schools and colleges, for either boys or girls, employ trained teachers to deal with it, or possess the requisite accommodation and equipment for the purpose. (1)

Compare this statement to that of the Curriculum and Examinations Board in their much more recent report of 1985 which states,

There is a great variation between schools with regard to resources, teacher provision, timetabling, space equipment and materials. The attitude of the principal is often central in determining the position of visual arts education in the curriculum. (2)

In the almost fifty years between the publication of these two reports it is both remarkable and disturbing that so few positive developments have taken place in relation to the position of Art, Craft and Design in post-primary schools.

I personally think that there is little to be gained from delving into the history of Irish education to seek reasons for the evident neglect of Art, Craft and Design throughout the century. I think it would be far more revealing to look at some more recent developments which have, in my estimation, been detrimental to the standing of Art, Craft and Design in Irish post-primary education.

The period 1960 to 1980 was a remarkable one in the history of Irish Education. The state adopted a much more active role in educational planning. Compared with previous decades, this period witnessed a dramatic increase in government and public interests in education. The extent and range of the changes made

during this transitional period were such that I think they must be seen against a background of wider social and attitudinal change during this particular period. The initiation of curriculum development projects was to become a distinctive feature of educational change in the 1960's. In America, the "Space Race" really got underway in 1957 with the launching of the "Sputnik" satellite by the Soviet Union. The Americans saw this as a major threat to their technological superiority and, as a result a major effort was put into the strengthening of science and mathematics curricula to counteract this. Naturally, this had a "Knock On" effect globally and curriculum development began to make its appearance in Ireland.

It was against this international background that educational reform commenced in Ireland in the early 1960's. Dr. Hillery, who was then Minister for Education saw the role of post-primary education as one of developing the resources of the country to meet social, economic and industrial needs. This necessitated major restructuring of the post-primary educational system. One of Dr. Hillery's main objectives was the expansion of facilities for increased participation in technical and other forms of applied education, especially commercial and business studies. In an interview in 1964 he said,

Secondary education with us is only one stream. What we really need in this country is the other stream, the technical, the scientific. We need to develop these but the argument goes that we need free secondary education for

everybody. Now if you were to give secondary grammar type education to everybody you would be wasting your money in two ways: You would be getting too many people taking a course which is no use to them. We haven't jobs for them. And these people who are so trained and cannot get employment have lost the chance of being trained in skills, whereas we need people with skills and we need them very badly. (3)

Subsequent developments in post-primary education, however, revealed that the aspiration towards greater participation in technical subjects in particular, remained largely unfulfilled. By introducing the idea of comprehensive schools, with common courses and examinations for all post-primary schools, Dr. Hillery was hoping to achieve an equality of standards in the vocational and secondary sectors. However, this appears to have worked against his aims. Practical and vocational subjects lost out to the more traditional academic subjects. While these changes had the effect of providing a wide range and choice of subjects, enabling students to study both traditional secondary academic subjects and traditional vocational practical subjects if they wished, the attempted reform took place almost entirely within the existing framework of the secondary school curriculum and examination system. As a result, post-primary schools were still seen to be intermediate institutions between primary and third level. This is a major reason, I think for the lack of importance attached to Art, Craft and Design in the post-primary sector since the subjects taken by many students are chosen because of their usefulness in terms of advancement in the employment market or furthering their careers at third level colleges. The schools also tend to place greater emphasis on these subjects to the detriment of Art, Craft and Design.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ciaran Benson, The Place of the Arts in Irish Education: Report of the Arts Council's Working party on the Arts in Education, (Dublin: Arts Council, 1979) p.7.

2. Curriculum and Examinations Board, The Arts in Education: a Curriculum and Examinations Board Discussion Paper. (Dublin: Curriculum and Examinations Board, 1985) p.18

3. Donal Mulcahy, Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-Primary Education, (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981) p.

CHAPTER II

CURRICULUM CONTINUITY.

While the 1960's and 1970's were to be a time of rapid growth and change affecting many aspects of post-primary education in Ireland to an extent unknown since the early years of the new state, considerable change and, in some cases, substantial growth were also experienced in primary and third level education. The curriculum for national schools, devised in the early years of the Irish Free State, remained in being with only minor alterations, until the "new" curriculum of 1971 was introduced. The original programme tended to be narrow, with Irish, English, arithmetic and singing forming the main core, while history, algebra and geography was taught in senior classes. The introduction of a compulsory primary certificate in 1943, involving written examinations in the three subjects Irish, English and arithmetic, tended to further narrow the programme. Scholarship examinations, though including a wider range, acted as further pressure to edge out artistic or aesthetic subjects in national schools. Education was subject centered. The child had to adapt to the curriculum rather than vice versa. The late 1960's saw the development of a new curriculum for national schools which became official policy in 1971. This curriculum in its ideology, content and format was a radical contrast to that which had existed previously. Ciaran Benson says of it,

It emphasised the need for greater sensitivity to individual differences and to the background and environment in planning educational programmes. This implied a more child - centred approach and a greater flexibility both of teaching style and of curriculum planning. (1)

Based on the ideology of child - centred education, it offered, in theory at least, a wide subject range and encouraged "discovery - type" teaching methods with pupil interest and involvement as the prime objectives. The inclusion of imaginative programmes in Arts and Crafts, Music, Drama, Dance and Mime activities heralded a new era in Irish National Education. The aims of the new curriculum state clearly that education should be child centred thus providing a curriculum which would:

- (1) Enable the student to lead a full life as a child.
- (2) Equip him to avail himself of further education so that he might go on to have a full and useful life as an adult in society.
- (3) The full and harmonious development of each child must be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of children of widely natural endowment. (2)

The new curriculum marked an important advance in Irish Education. It emphasised the need for greater sensitivity to individual differences and the background and environment of pupils in planning educational programmes. However, to properly implement this new programme, a reduction in the pupil/teacher ratio was necessary. Unfortunately this has not occurred. A lack of funding has also contributed to the failure to fully realise the potential of the new curriculum in many schools. Art, Craft and Design requires additional, and in some areas, more expensive resources than other subjects. Very often, the level of ability of the teacher determines the amount and quality of Art and Craft which happens in the classroom. Lack of training in the arts for Primary Teachers is a serious obstacle to the development of the arts in primary schools. In many cases, students are given very little training in this area. Benson says,

Most students arrive in the college with a negligible experience of the arts and so are not pre-disposed to them. Their criteria for evaluating subjects very often concern the utility of the subject, and the implicit hierarchy they have formed of the subject's value reflects the position of the arts in the post-primary curriculum. Arriving in a college of education they observe that the arts are generally regarded unenthusiastically by practising teachers. This tends to confirm their views on the low status of the arts.
(3)

Therefore, I think it is clearly evident that the attitude of the primary sector towards Art, Craft and Design has been a major influence on the subject at post-primary level. While the aims of the new primary curriculum are good in theory, they have not been allowed to develop in many schools because of lack of provision and resources. Donal Mulcahy says of the consequences of lack of co-ordination between the primary and post-primary sectors:

Before anyone seemed to realise it, pupils who had studied under the new curriculum began to appear at the door of the post-primary school. In addition to having studied under a different curriculum and different methods of teaching, these pupils had neither studied for nor sat the primary certificate examination, and, quite possibly, they would not have sat an entrance examination to secondary school either.
(4)

There is a lack of continuity between primary and post-primary schools in a number of important respects. There is no liaison between the administrators of the two levels of education, they are separate and the training, understanding and approach of teachers in both systems differ greatly. The general consequences of such differences is a breaking of the flow of the educational experience of the child as he progresses from primary to post-primary education. Consequently, we could have a situation arising where something of value which is begun in primary school,

finds little or no follow up in post-primary education. This is especially important where Art, Craft and Design is concerned. In my own experience this situation arose as I made the transition from Primary to post-primary to post-primary school. Coming from a national school where Art, Craft and Design was given a good deal of importance to a secondary school where it was not offered to students in the top streams was a very disconcerting experience. From then on, my experience of Art, Craft and Design took place outside the school and had to be self-initiated. This has been the trend as regards Art, Craft and Design education in many post-primary schools where it is seen as a subject suitable for students who are regarded as potentially moderate or low academic achievers.

At present the main emphasis in second level education is on transfer to third-level education and on preparing students with that aim in mind. Similarly the influence of the secondary schools, where entrance examinations are now common, tends to dominate some primary schools in the same way. Benson quotes from a submission of the Association Of Primary Teaching Sisters,

The pressures on the school children to get ahead, to get places in second level schools and to make the grade academically are very great and militate against their greater involvement in art and craft and it is very difficult to see how this can be remedied. (5)

FOOTNOTES

1. Benson, Place of the Arts, p. 28
2. An Roinn Oideachais, Curaclam na Bunscoile - Primary School Curriculum - Teachers Handbook, Parts 1 and 2, (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1971).
3. Benson, Place of the Arts, p. 63
4. Mulcahy, Curriculum and Policy, p. 133.
5. Benson, Place of the Arts, p. 39.

CHAPTER III

LACK OF AIMS.

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, each kind of post-primary school in Ireland, be it secondary, vocational, comprehensive or community school, has been empowered to share one common pursuit; namely the offering of courses towards one or all of the public state examinations, and the public examinations in turn exert powerful influences on the conduct of schooling. One point which emerged forcefully from a consideration of the main events dating back to the events in education during Dr. Hillery's time in office, is the way in which post-primary education came to be viewed as an agent of economic development. John Coolahn states,

Economists were now emphasising education as an economic investment rather than taking the traditional view of education as a consumer service. (1)

Only a relatively small proportion of school leavers go forward to third-level education, yet matriculation requirements largely shape the programmes of study for pupils who do not intend to go into third-level education as well as for those who do. This situation has forced subjects such as Art, Craft and Design into the depressed position that they now hold in the curriculum of most post-primary schools. As long as third level institutions specify certain subjects as being acceptable for meeting their entry requirements, other subjects, such as Art, Craft and Design will continue to be neglected.

One of the major reasons for the present situation of subject-

centred education in post-primary schools in Ireland is, I think, a lack of aims for the curriculum. Curriculum provision in Irish post-primary education is, in general, too restricted to provide a good general education. Many experts have given their opinions as to what a general education should consist of. Most of them agree that the visual arts have a very important role to play in education.

Eisner says.

....an educational programme that neglects the qualitative aspects of intelligence, one that side steps the metaphorical and affective side of life, is only half an education at best. At worst it leads to the development of men callused to the insights of the visually poetic in life. (2)

If the number of students studying Art, Craft and Design outlined earlier is anything to go by, then an enormous amount of young people are not receiving a good general education. Lack of aims and statements for Irish post-primary education have led to this educational imbalance, where many aspects of, what are considered to be necessary to educate the whole person, are not being catered for. If we had an ideal educational system which gave every student a good general and balanced education, then according to all the evidence put forward by educational experts, Arts, Craft and Design would be of central importance in the curriculum of the secondary school.

Mulcahy says,

Believing that educational practice ought to be shaped by educational aims, philosophers of education have always accorded special attention in their discussions to aims in education. Notwithstanding this, however, in Ireland as elsewhere, the importance attached to the question of aims in discussing educational matters has not always resulted in the careful setting forth of statements of aims and the drawing up of educational programmes in line with them. (3)

FOOTNOTES

1. John Coolahan, Irish Education : Its History and Structure
(Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1981) p.131.
2. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision, p.5.
3. Mulcahy, Curriculum and Policy, p.5.

CHAPTER IV

LACK OF RESOURCES

One of the biggest factors militating against the development of Art, Craft and Design in post-primary schools is the lack of properly trained Art, Craft and Design teachers, proper resources to teach the subject and the high pupil/teacher ratio in many schools. The Curriculum and Examinations Board's Arts discussion paper says of this situation:

...It is unimaginable however, that a similar situation could arise in other areas of the curriculum and that schools would, for example, employ unqualified teachers for mathematics or science. The low status of visual arts in the schools is not helped by the inferior financial standing of art teachers in comparison with most of their colleagues on the staff. This is an unacceptable situation that perpetuates the down grading of visual arts education. (1)

The consequences of this have been disastrous for the development of Art, Craft and Design. Not only does it further perpetuate the poor image of the subject in the eyes of students, but also in the eyes of parents and other teachers.

In today's society of ever-increasing standards, parents want the best for their child. As parents usually have the greatest influence on their children's decisions, especially at an early age, they are unlikely to want their children to be taught by someone who does not appear to have the proper qualifications. Very often, it is a teacher of another subject who may happen to have an interest in Art, who ends up teaching Art, Craft and Design as well. Some would have us believe that if it were not for these teachers, then Art, Craft and Design would not be taught

in some schools at all. Not only does this situation keep fully qualified Art, Craft and Design teachers out of a job, but, most importantly, it does not give students a proper education in the visual arts.

This happens, and is tolerated, I believe because there is a lack of understanding of the nature and value of an education in Art, Craft and Design. This is where teachers must try and change these attitudes by doing their utmost to elevate Art, Craft and Design to its proper status within the curriculum of the school. There are a number of ways in which this could be achieved. Firstly, teachers should demand proper resources to teach their subject. While many advances have been made in the teaching of science and foreign languages by the provision of laboratories and equipment, very little has happened as regards the teaching of Art, Craft and Design. Art rooms do not encourage the teacher or pupil in any way. The teaching of Art, Craft and Design requires tremendous organisation and concentration. Lack of proper facilities disrupt and hinder the proper teaching methods. Students must have an enjoyable working environment which they can respond to, but very often, in Irish post-primary schools, art rooms are dirty, dull and disorganised. An uncaring attitude is often adopted by students on entering the art room, which would not be the case in other classrooms within the same school. The image of Art, Craft and Design must be greatly enhanced by those who are in a position to do so. The building up of Art, Craft and Design must happen at all levels, from the basic structure of art rooms to the inclusion of the subject in the curriculum as an integral part of every child's education.

It is the teacher of Art, Craft and Design who must, I believe, initiate any such changes. I think that every art teacher should have a thorough knowledge of the value of Art and Design education in order to enable him or her to enhance the educational image of this subject. The extrinsic and intrinsic values of Art, Craft and Design must be put forward at all times where subjects are being discussed and evaluated. At a more basic level, the art teacher can, if properly trained, run an efficient and well organised art room. The problem of lack of resources has in the past been due, partially at least, to the poor image of Art, Craft and Design as portrayed in many schools. Hopefully, this image will change dramatically for the better as soon as possible. All teachers of Art, Craft and Design must do their utmost to ensure their subject no longer remains the poor relation.

FOOTNOTES

1. Curriculum and Examinations Board, Arts in Education, p. 18.

THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE.

BACKGROUND.

As I mentioned earlier, the new curriculum, introduced in Irish primary schools in 1971, focused on the child rather than the subject. This was in sharp contrast to the subject centred approach taking place in post-primary schooling. This abrupt transition from one approach to another was causing problems for many pupils. In most post-primary schools, many teachers complained about the rigid limits of what they were obliged to teach their students, while it is true to say that the students themselves often felt that what they were learning had little relevance to the real world outside of school. The existing examination system was felt to measure too narrow a range of abilities, skills and achievements. It was obvious that a change in the structure of the post-primary curriculum was needed very badly. The establishment of the Curriculum and Examination Board (C.E.B.) in January 1984 quickened the impetus towards change at post-primary level. One of C.E.B.'s tasks was to make recommendations regarding a new unified assessment system for the junior cycle of second level schooling to replace the Intermediate and Group Certificate Examinations. Various working parties were established by the C.E.B., which issued discussion papers from September 1985. Boards of studies for particular categories of the curriculum were then established and they reported by the following year. An Arts Working Party was set up in October 1984 and made its report to C.E.B. in February 1985.

The C.E.B.'s first consultative document, Issues and Structures in Education, set out its initial thinking on a curriculum framework for Junior and Senior cycles. It identified a need for a broader and, more balanced core curriculum, with an increasing emphasis on skills and processes. This curriculum structure would have to be sufficiently flexible to recognise and accommodate curriculum initiatives at school and regional levels. Assessment procedures would be determined by the aims and objectives of the curriculum. The C.E.B. was replaced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (N.C.C.A.) in November 1987, and by September 1988, seven new syllabi were ready. The following year, they were introduced as part of the new programme by the Minister for Education, Mrs. Mary O'Rourke. This new programme was called the Junior Certificate.

From September 1989, all students entering second level schools in Ireland have followed programmes leading to the award of Junior Certificate. This certificate replaces the existing Group and Intermediate Certificates and thus all second level students (in secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools) follow a common programme. The subjects of study remain as before, but extensive revisions of the syllabi have taken place for a number of subjects and are planned for others. It will be examined in June of 1992 for the first time.

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES FOR THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

The general curriculum for the Junior Certificate Examination encompasses a number of aims and principles which are clearly stated:

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development, for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. (1)

This statement of a general aim for the overall curriculum is very important. Firstly, as curriculum is decided on at a national level it must represent all that we consider valuable and desirable in education. Secondly, the statement of aims declares the responsibility that education holds in the development of every young person. The inclusion of such areas as aesthetic, creative, critical and cultural are therefore seen as necessary in the education of every young person. This is good news for Art, Craft and Design, and also for other neglected areas of the curriculum such as music, dance and literature, as the areas mentioned are integral elements of all these subjects. The values of Art, Craft and Design, especially, are wide ranging and very diverse. Eisner says,

The prime value of the arts in education lies, from my point of view, in the unique contributions it makes to the individual's experience with and understanding of the world. The visual arts deal with an aspect of human consciousness that no other field touches on: the aesthetic contemplation of visual form. (2)

This should entail a position of strength for Art, Craft and Design within the post-primary curriculum based on these findings alone. The Junior Certificate programme is based on the following principles,

Breadth and Balance: in the final phase of compulsory schooling, every young person should have a wide range of educational experiences. Particular attention must be given to reinforcing and developing the skills of numeracy, literacy and oracy. Particular emphasis should be given to social and environmental education, science and technology and modern languages.

Relevance: curriculum provision should address the immediate and prospective needs of the young person, in the context of the cultural, economic and social environment.

Quality: every young person should be challenged to achieve the highest possible standards of excellence, with due regard to different aptitudes and abilities and to international comparisons.

The curriculum should provide a wide range of educational experiences within a supportive and formative environment. It should draw on the aesthetic and creative, the ethical, the linguistic, the mathematical, the physical, the scientific and technological, the social, environmental and political and the spiritual domains. (3)

The Junior Certificate syllabus for Art, Craft and Design is centred around a core of areas to be studied. This core involves drawing, two-dimensional Art, Craft and Design and three-dimensional Art, Craft and Design. In addition to the core area, students must augment their work by including support studies. The guidelines issued to Art, Craft and Design teachers says,

Support studies involving critical appraisal, history and appreciation of Art, Craft and Design, and related studies should be organised to form an integral part of the learning experience in order that the student perceives new meanings and new discoveries. These studies may also become the starting-point, stimulus or main motivational force in a learning experience in order to bring to the act of appreciation and critical appraisal, personal experience with the formal elements that constitute the process, object or statement. (4)

The syllabus document issued by the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment states,

The teacher will select a minimum of one option for ordinary level, and a minimum of two for higher level, to suit the ability, developmental stages, previous experience, interest and potential of the students. The teachers specialist skills, the schools resources and facilities and local identity and tradition should also be taken into account. (5)

There are, I think, a number of serious questions to be asked at this point. Firstly the art-teacher must be prepared to deal with

students of varying abilities and backgrounds. A child who has come for a good background of Art education, for instance is obviously going to be more aware and experienced in that area. This could lead to a situation where children of greater potential, but with a poorer artistic educational experience, are compared unfavorably to other children.

The document also presumes that all Art teachers will have specialist skills. The introduction of the Junior Certificate has made great demands on teachers of Art, Craft and Design. To fully implement the syllabus teachers must be proficient in drawing, painting and other two-dimensional areas, as well as three dimensional areas of Art, Craft and Design and must include in his or her repertoire a wide range of course options. I fully agree that all teachers of Art should be more than capable in all areas mentioned, but no provision has been made to ensure that all schools have fully qualified teachers of Art, Craft and Design. If the aims of the curriculum are to be achieved, then every student must be given an equal opportunity to receive the best possible introduction to Art, Craft and Design. For many, it may be the last years of formal education, and this makes the impact and value of a well run course even more crucial. A student's attitude towards the visual arts is developed by his or her own experience of them.

There has been much discussion about the options included in the Junior Certificate syllabus for Art, Craft and Design. The inclusion of such subjects as photography, video-making, Art

Metalwork, and computer graphics looks impressive at first glance. However, the reality of the situation for many schools is a lack of basic facilities and resources which make many of these options impractical. Indeed, it could be said that the ideal of the Junior Certificate is not always matched by the reality of what happens in the classroom. The situation, where Art, Craft and Design is concerned is that, if the aims of the Junior Certificate, are to be achieved, extra resources in many areas will be required. With large classes in many schools and no apparent reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio being envisaged, the day to day implementation of an Art, Craft and Design syllabus becomes very difficult.

During the course of introducing the Junior Certificate it was proposed that a percentage of the marks be awarded to pupils on the basis of assessment of their performance by their own teachers. This was not agreed upon by teachers and so, for the present, there will be no internal assessments of the Junior Certificate Examination. This situation should not have come about at the late stage at which it did. The procedures regarding assessment should have been agreed upon well in advance of the beginning of the Junior Certificate programme. This type of controversy does not project a very positive image of the new developments in the system.

I think that some sort of school-based assessment is necessary, especially in Art, Craft and Design. The teacher, in this case, the Art teacher, is I believe, best able to assess pupils on their

long term performance and levels of ability. The current situation is that work must be sent to Department of Education in Athlone to be assessed. This will impose restrictions on the amount and type of work being submitted. Works on a large scale or delicate pieces would therefore not be encouraged. A resolution to this problem must be arrived at immediately.

There are many opportunities for the development of Art, Craft and Design under the new system. Now is the time to ensure that it does not become a second-class subject as it became in post-primary schools under the previous system. The aims of the Junior Certificate are conducive to the improvement of Art, Craft and Design in schools. In its introduction, the syllabus outline for Art, Craft and Design states,

Art, Craft and Design are three interdependent disciplines. They are fundamental to human existence, predating written language. They play a major role in human evolution and development. (6)

As long as the value of Art, Craft and Design is recognised, the right conditions should evolve for its promotion.

Despite criticisms of the new Junior Certificate programme, it must be stated that there are bound to be difficulties in the introduction of any new programme on a nationwide scale. I think there are many positive aspects to be considered as well. It is a step in the right direction as far as post-primary education is concerned. The overall aims of the Junior Certificate, while some may argue about their content, are for the first time written down

providing something which can be built upon in future years. I think that it is very important that the aims for the Junior Certificate and any follow-up programme for senior cycle, are continuously reviewed and improvements made where possible. The situation must not occur again where the development of Irish post-primary education is allowed to stagnate for many years until change is forced upon it.

FOOTNOTES

1. The National Council for Curriculum Assessment, The Junior Certificate: Art, Craft, Design: Guidelines for Teachers. (Dublin, An Roinn Oideachais and The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 1990) p. 1.
2. Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision. p. 9.
3. The N.C.C.A., Guidelines for Teachers. p. 1.
4. Ibid., p. 4.
5. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, The Junior Certificate: Art, Craft, Design: Syllabus. (Dublin, An Roinn Oideachais and the N.C.C.A., 1990) p. 1.
6. Ibid., p. 1.

CONCLUSION

Art, Craft and Design has not been given its proper status in the curriculum of post-primary schools in Ireland. It has been, and continues to be, the poor relation of subjects which are rated much higher for a variety of reasons, none of which are educationally sound. As we approach the 21st century the role of education is rapidly changing. No longer are jobs plentiful and populations are increasing on a global scale. Scientists and many sociological indicators have long been predicting an age of leisure when man will no longer have to work for a living. This situation may or may not occur. Whether it does or not, it is true to say that trends in education will change with the times. If this situation does arise then Art, Craft and Design will play a vital role in future educational policies, just as economic prosperity influenced curriculum reform in the 1960's.

The new aims stated in the Junior Certificate curriculum are a foundation upon which further curriculum development can be built. The aims must not be influenced by factors other than the desired education we wish to see all of our young people receiving. I do not think anybody can deny that they would wish Art, Craft and Design to be part of this education.

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