

The Role of Art in Vocational Preparation and
Training Programmes

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THE ROLE OF ART IN VOCATIONAL PREPARATION
AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme from its origins to the present day. Having looked at the origins and subsequent development of the Programme in Chapter One, it is proposed that an exploration of the structure and organisation be carried out in Chapter Two, examining what is involved in such a programme. Chapter Three examines the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in a school, paying particular attention to the availability of subjects, selection procedure and the time allocation to the different areas. The role of art in a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is examined in Chapter Four. Chapter Five deals with the students' views of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and art as a subject.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF THE VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING
PROGRAMME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The start of vocational education in Ireland was with the Vocational Education Act of 1930 in which it was stated that provision be made for

.... general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufacturing, agriculture, commerce and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for improvement of young persons in the early stages of such employment.¹

The Act goes further to state that it is the duty of every Vocational Educational Committee to establish and maintain a suitable system of continuation education in its area in accordance with this Act, and to provide for the development of such systems. Each Committee also was to supply, or aid the supply of, technical education in its area in accordance with the Act.

The Act entitled the Minister for Education to issue grants, with the consent of the Minister for Finance to schools "providing continuation education or technical education which are not schools established and maintained by a Vocational Educational Committee".²

In short, what all this means is that a need for general and practical training had been recognised as a preparation for employment in industry. Under this Act it was required that each Vocational Educational Committee maintain these schools and supply the technical education needed. Provisions were also made

whereby the Minister for Education, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, could issue grants to schools providing this continuation or technical education which were not established and maintained by a Vocational Education Committee.

With further developments in education this vocational emphasis was overshadowed by the introduction into Vocational Schools in 1969 of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate programmes and examinations.

A review of the suitability and effectiveness of these programmes was carried out in 1978 in which it was discovered that a degree of disillusionment had set in among staff. It was maintained that the courses were "over academic and not suited to all students".³ This disillusionment led to a growing demand among school authorities for an alternative to the Leaving Certificate course that would be of shorter duration and more related to employment and the practical needs of the individual. A number of schools in the country introduced such alternative courses, called Pre-employment Programmes or Preparation for Work courses. Many of these courses were very local in character and often lacked work experience. As a result they did not bridge the gap between school and the adult world of work. However, their very existence indicated a need and they did provide a framework for future courses.

The necessity for schools to become aware of the needs of industry were identified by Dr. Patrick Hillery in a speech in 1963. He wanted to see a balanced curriculum in the new Comprehensive

Schools. He also claimed that:

Secondary education is only one stream. What we really need in this country is the other stream, the technical and scientific.⁴

A report carried out by the O.E.C.D. in 1966 called, Investment in Education,⁵ offered a wider view of what education was about and was a watershed in educational development. The report tried to forecast the needs of industry and develop strategies for education to meet these needs. The report conveyed the idea that by investing in educational provisions the country would be investing in one of its most important products, the pupil. The concept of training pupils for industry now had a firmer economic basis as the benefits of such training could be reaped by both the individual and the state.

From 1973 onwards there was a growing concern throughout the European Community and its member states regarding the increased rate of unemployment. Statistics from 1975 showed that the burden of unemployment was falling more heavily on young school leavers than on any other group. Ten percent of the workforce was unemployed with 21.5% of these being under 20 years of age. There was now a need to explore and develop new approaches to the preparation of young people for adult and working life. There was also a desire among member states to extend co-operation and transfer experience in the field of education through the Community.

Since this was an E.C. problem it was inevitable that it would be discussed at E.C. Council level. On 13 December 1976 a resolution was adopted in Brussels concerning measures to be taken "to improve the preparation of young people for work and to facilitate

their transfer from education to working life".⁶ Member states were required to improve their provision and establish a number of pilot projects. A section of the European Social Fund was designated to "assist unemployed young persons in gaining further training and giving priority to first job seekers".⁷

On 4 April 1977 the Department of Education circulated details of the Pre-employment Course to all Vocational, Community and Comprehensive Schools and invited applications from schools interested in running such programmes. The guidelines sent from the Department of Education stated that the Pre-employment Courses were intended for pupils who, on attaining school leaving age, would leave school. The general aim of these courses was that of "bridging the gap between the values and experiences normally part of traditional education and those current in the adult world of work".⁸ The course strove to enable pupils to see and understand what would be expected of them in the world of work. It tried to equip the pupils with the personal and social skills, as well as the vocational skills, which would make them more employable and more importantly, more confident and self-sufficient. It strove to do all this through three broad sections, each of which was allocated one third of the time:

A - Technical modules

B - General studies, including personal and social development

C - Work experience

To begin with, there were nine technical modules listed:

1. Building Construction
2. Woodwork

3. Art
4. Home Economics
5. Engineering
6. Secretarial
7. Agriculture
8. Electrical
9. Services

Each school was encouraged to select two from the list. The number of modules offered was eventually increased to fifteen. It is also worth noting that schools were encouraged to develop their technical modules where local conditions permitted or made such development necessary.

Technical Studies

The emphasis in the Technical Module section is on general technical skills. It is designed to encourage and develop practical work, personal initiative and high standards of workmanship. There is also a strong emphasis placed on "the development of technicacy".⁹ This is the ability to understand and solve problems of a practical nature.

General Studies

The General Studies section aims to develop the student's standard of communication and mathematics to the level required in work and in everyday life. It comprised courses on communication, social mathematics and industrial/social studies. An integral part of the course was personal and social development. The Careers Teacher aimed to develop the student's ability to

make career decisions, "to understand him/herself, his/her capabilities and interests and to match these with the realities of available opportunities".¹⁰

Work Experience

The Work Experience section was crucial. Now, for the first time, work experience was built into the course. As was mentioned earlier some of the Preparation for Work Programmes set up did not succeed due to the fact that they lacked a unit of work experience and so found it difficult to bridge the gap between school and work. As part of the work experience section pupils were "placed in employment for the equivalent of one day per week throughout the school year".¹¹ At the end of the course pupils received a course record which consisted of a certificate outlining the programme followed and their progress in it. It also contained references or notes from the employers.

In 1977 eighty schools were involved in the programme. The following year some one hundred and twenty were involved and it remained at this number until 1984. In May 1984 the Department of Education issued a circular to all second level schools with details of a new programme to be known as the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and invited applications for participation in it.

Vocational Preparation and Training Programme

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme was introduced at a time when the employment situation throughout Europe was deteriorating. There was concern that many young people, on

completion of compulsory schooling, were inadequately prepared for the world of work. The E.C. Council of Ministers on 11 July 1983 adopted a resolution providing for the development of vocational training policies in the member states. One of the principal provisions in this resolution is that, during the next five years, member states would:

Do their utmost to ensure that all young people who so wish, and particularly those without educational or vocational qualifications, could benefit over a period of six months and if possible one year, following full-time compulsory education from a full-time programme involving basic training and/or an initial work experience to prepare them for an occupation.

Moreover, will pursue their efforts in the context of their national policies and practices, to see that for young people without sufficient qualifications, including particularly those who are looking for work, adequate opportunities of vocational training designed to improve their skills and qualifications are available.¹²

In short, what the Council resolution means is that adequate opportunities were to be made available for young people leaving school without any qualification to receive training which will make them more suitable for employment.

In implementing the objectives referred to the member states should, according to the resolution, ensure that the measures to be adopted are accompanied by "appropriate information and guidance services",¹³ and also by the development of training for teachers and instructors. The measures are to be implemented in a manner which the pupils can relate to and which corresponds to their "needs and abilities".¹⁴ The measures adopted should also, according to the resolution, tie in with the general system of vocational training and certification and meet the requirements of industry.

Since then, proposals based on a programme of Vocational Preparation and Training have been included in the Department of Education's application for funding from the European Social Fund in Brussels. The Social Fund is designed to assist in meeting the challenges posed by unemployment in the European Community. Vocational training is considered an important medium for tackling the unemployment situation. The European Commission views the lack of adequate training as a principal cause of unemployment because (a) "an inadequate level of training inhibits economic activity and this depresses employment" or (b) "there is too often a mis-match between training and available jobs".¹⁵ This view held by the Council of Ministers is reflected in recent Department of Labour Economic Status of School Leavers Surveys. The figures show that an alarming number of unqualified school leavers are unemployed one year after leaving school.

Pattern of Unemployment Amongst School Leavers

	Percentage Unemployed
Students with no qualifications	45-50
Students with Intermediate/Group Certificates	20-25
Students with Leaving Certificate	Up to 17

(Source: Department of Labour Economic Status of School Leavers)¹⁶

This table highlights the need for further training of pupils before or after leaving school. Pupils who leave school early with little or no qualifications are more likely to be unemployed within one year. According to the table the more qualifications

one has the greater the chances are for finding employment. Almost half of those who left school with no qualification were unemployed within a year of leaving school. Comparing this to those who leave school with their Leaving Certificate only 17% of those are unemployed after one year. This figure shows a much higher level of employment among this group. Those who leave school at the compulsory schooling age with inadequate qualifications also run a greater risk than those leaving with their Leaving Certificate. It is significant to note that although they may leave early they have, according to these figures, a much lesser chance of finding employment.

From looking at the figures it is obvious that the two groups to be targeted are those with no qualifications and those with inadequate qualifications. A more comprehensive training programme was needed to assist in the further training of young people. These figures were said to be similar all over Europe and, as has been noted, it was for this reason that the E.C. Council of Ministers adopted this resolution. It was a European problem which required action. Unemployment rates, particularly among young people, were rising all over Europe.

The need for training in the technical and scientific areas was recognised in Ireland from as early as 1930. In 1963 Dr. Patrick Hillery also recognised the need for such training and its possible benefits. The work programmes implemented in various schools around the country did not quite meet the requirements of the young people. There was a growing need for basic training as traditional unskilled labour was declining. Training became

increasingly necessary for employment. The establishment of Pre-employment courses in 1977 followed by the establishment of Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes offered an answer. It offered a course which aimed not only to help teach a skill and offer work experience but also helped develop communication and personal skills which may have been lacking. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme was put together with the needs of the student very much in mind.

Throughout this chapter the need for training was recognised. As far back as 1930 the Minister for Education of the day made provisions for training in a wide variety of areas as a preparation for employment. The need for training and qualification became increasingly important as time moved on. The burden of unemployment was falling most heavily on young, unskilled people. The demand for unskilled, manual labour was in decline. Links between the demands of industry and employment were becoming clearer. Industry needed more skilled and trained individuals and the role of the state in providing opportunities to train young people became more important. The state came to recognise the benefits of such investment.

The importance of training for employment resulted in a number of E.C. Council of Ministers decisions. They recognised the importance of training for employment, but also more importantly, the importance of training relevant to the needs of industry. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes were a direct result of the 1983 resolution adopted by the Council of Ministers. This programme attempts to bridge the gap between school and the

world of work. It also attempts to develop the communication and personal skills of the student which will make them more mature as an individual and hopefully more employable. In the next chapter we will take a closer look at the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. An Roinn Oideachais, Vocational Preparation and Training Programme: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme: Information Notes and Outline Syllabus Material 91-92, p. 4.
2. Ibid, p. 4.
3. Micheal O'Lionain, Pre-employment Courses, An Overview. Compass. Journal of the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, School to Work. Vol. 7, No. 2, 1978, p. 3.
4. O.E.C.D. Report, Investment in Education, 1966. Discussed in Crooks, Tony and McKernan, Jim. The Challenge of Change: Curriculum Development in Irish Post-primary Schools 1970-84. Ed. Crooks and McKernan. (Dublin: Criterion Press, 1984), p. 15.
5. Ibid, p. 15.
6. Ibid, p. 4.
7. Williams, Kevin and McNamara, Gerry. The Vocational Preparation Course: An Educational Appraisal and Practical Guide: Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland, Dublin, 1985, p. 17.
8. Tony Crooks, "Transition from School to Adult Life", Compass: Journal of the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1982, p. 6.
9. Micheal O'Lionain, "Pre-employment Courses: An Overview". Compass: Journal of the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1978, p. 5.
10. Crooks and McKernan. Challenge of Change. p. 16.
11. Ibid, p. 16.
12. An Roinn Oideachais, Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 16.

13. Ibid, p. 16.

14. Ibid, p. 16.

15. Ibid, pp, 1-2.

16. Ibid, pp, 1-2.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF A VOCATIONAL PREPARATION
TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is an Irish programme set up in response to the E.C. Council of Ministers resolution adopted in 1983 providing for the development of vocational training policies in the member states. This chapter will examine the structure and the organisation of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, what such a programme entails, how such a course would be organised in a school and what and whom it involves.

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is intended for young persons, particularly those in the fifteen to eighteen years of age range who propose to enter the world of work directly from school after reaching the compulsory school leaving age. They require training to enable them to bridge successfully the gap between school and the world of work.

Course Structure

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is divided into three main areas:

Technical Studies/Vocational Training

Work Experience

General Studies

These elements, while expressed separately are, in the words of the Department of Education, "inter-related and inter-dependent".¹

The content of the Programme is designed with this in mind. There is great emphasis on personal development in the Programme. The Programme as a whole is "a stage in the maturation of the individual".² It will help students to choose an adult role in life. All the elements of the course combined contribute to provide the student "with the knowledge and skills to move from school to work".³ As has been noted, considerable emphasis is placed on the importance of personal development which is of great importance to Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students. As will be shown later many of the students who do a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme are students who, for one reason or another, either leave school early with no qualifications or leave with inadequate qualification, having failed almost everything. As mentioned before but also resulting from this such students often have poor or low self-esteem.

As a result of this low self-esteem these students could have experienced failure on a regular basis. The traditional curriculum is not suited to their needs and as a result they may opt out. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme offers students a chance to gain experience and learn new skills which are more relevant to the world outside school. It offers students a chance at success and increased self-esteem. The combination of all these various elements may make the transition from school to work that bit easier.

Looking briefly at the three main elements of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme - General Studies, Work Experience and Vocational Training - it is noticeable that the

General Studies section plays a crucial role in the course.

Students need "practical skills in communication and in numeracy and an initial understanding of the adult world of work".⁴ Many of these students would not have a sufficient grasp of the basic communication and numeracy skills, so this part of the course tries to increase their level of understanding in this practical aspect of these skills to a level which would prepare them for life after school and which would be acceptable to employers.

Work Experience is an attempt at providing students with the experience of a work situation, with a view to enabling them to understand the reality of work and work roles. It broadens the awareness of the student to what is expected by employers and to how to relate to others in the work place.

In the Vocational Studies sector each participant is required to choose particular areas of study. Options available include:

Art/Craft/Design

Commerce

Construction Studies

Engineering

Electronics

Horticulture

Services

and related modules including Mini-Company and group projects.

Each option is sufficiently broadly based to allow entry into a series of possible occupations. The learning experience in these sectors should be organised to lay the strongest possible emphasis

on practical work, on personal initiative and on the completion of organised tasks. Group project work is also an integral part of the Vocational section and this offers students the chance of working together on assignments according to a planned schedule. This helps to strengthen the preparation of the young person for working. The combination of all this helps to strengthen the student in preparation for working life through the "range of vocational outlets to which he/she may aspire, but also through the cultivation of skills, disciplines and attitudes which have general applications in the world of work".⁵

Organisation of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme

The school should, in accordance with the Department of Education's regulations, designate a member of the teaching staff to take the role of Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Co-ordinator. Accordingly, the Programme Co-ordinator would undertake to:

1. Organise the local employers or employment agencies for the placement of students in employment for the work experience element of the Programme.
2. Explain the aims of the Programme to those who would be involved in it outside the school, such as parents, trade unions, employment agencies.
3. Arrange for input to the Programme from outside agencies and bodies such as trade unions, employers, health and social welfare personnel.
4. Be, in general, the focal point in the local organisation and administration of the Programme.

The Co-ordinator's role is to act as a liaison between the school and the agencies outside of the school who could have a role to play in the successful running of the Programme. A good understanding of the aims and objectives of the Programme is essential for the successful implementation of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. For this reason the Programme should involve:

1. School Principal, Management Authority

At these levels decisions on school policies are taken which affect personnel and time-tabling - both of which are relevant to the running of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme according to the Department of Education guidelines.

2. School Staff

The staff as a whole could be involved. Those who are not directly involved may be able to contribute advice and suggestions which would be of benefit to the Programme. Also, according to the Department of Education's guidelines for the Programme the school's Guidance Counsellor should be time-tabled for regular group work with the students concerned.

3. Parents

As stated in the Department of Education's guidelines parents should be involved and "be fully conversant with the aims and objectives of the Programme".⁷ It is suggested that contact be made with the parents either on an individual or group level. It is also suggested that a descriptive document outlining the Programme be drawn up.

4. FAS

The Programme Co-ordinators are urged to get in touch with

the local FAS office and "familiarise themselves with the range of services available".⁸ FAS may be able to offer some form of training as a substitute for work experience. They may also make their training centres available for use.

5. Employers, Trade Unions, Chambers of Commerce, Employer Organisations, Trade Councils, Personnel Organisations, Agricultural Interests

The involvement of employers in the Programme is essential to its success. Not only do they co-operate in the supply of work experience, they also ensure that the work experience contributes to the aims of the Programme. Trade unions can also contribute to the aims of the Programme by allaying fears that the students are being exploited in any way. All of these groups can make valuable input to certain parts of the Programme by giving talks to the students on their area of expertise.

There is quite a complex organisation structure to the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. The role of the Co-ordinator is of crucial importance as he/she acts as the focal point of the Programme. A Programme like this needs the help and co-operation of the bodies and agencies already mentioned for its success. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is strongly oriented towards work and employment and so the input from these various agencies is of great value to the students and also to the overall unity of the Programme. It is also important to stress the value of a clear understanding of the aims of the Programme in all the sections mentioned, from the school authorities to the employers. Without such an understanding the relevance and unity

of the Programme would become clouded and the success and value of the Programme left in doubt.

Aim of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme

As noted above a knowledge and understanding of the aim of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is important to its success. Looking at the aim of the Programme, it is important to note that according to the Department of Education's guidelines the Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes are "intended for young people of 15-18 years who, having completed their compulsory education, desire to prepare and equip themselves for employment".⁹

The aim of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is that of:

Bridging the gap between the values and experiences normally part of traditional education and those current in the adult world of work. Increasingly, modern society demands individuals with personal resources and flexibility to cope with the complexities of the labour market and the rapid change of work roles. In the service sector, the most rapidly growing economic sector, personal and interpersonal skills are particularly important and all young workers must have the ability to plan and make life and career decisions if they are to be successful in working life.¹⁰

In short, the aim of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is to prepare students for the world of work by overcoming the differences of what is expected in school life and what is expected in the world of work. It also aims to increase the resourcefulness and ability to cope with the different and changing demands of the work place and the labour market as a whole. The aim of this Programme would be carried out through the

three sections of the Programme which were mentioned earlier. At this stage the different sections of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme will be looked at in more detail, section by section.

Vocational Studies

The Vocational Training component of the Programme is split up into seven basic course designations or skills areas as follows:

- (a) Engineering
- (b) Construction
- (c) Agriculture
- (d) Services
- (e) Craft and Design
- (f) Commercial
- (g) Electrical/Electronics.

Normally it is expected by the Department of Education in its guidelines "that courses will be organised to include two modules from within a single designation".¹¹ For example:

Designation

Modules

Craft and Design

Graphics, Printing, Dress Design,
Soft Furnishing and Tops¹²

So if the designation was Craft and Design it is expected that the course would be structured in such a way as to include two modules from the designation. There is also the option, open to course planners, to structure courses which contain modules from designations which are similar in nature and which complement each other. Students are encouraged to choose modules which are suited to their own attitudes and aptitudes. Each module is designed to

ensure that participants all acquire a range of skills which could be adapted to suit a series of related occupations. Each module is designed and organised to allow for a step by step development of practical skills through experimental learning sessions. These sessions are designed to encourage "personal initiative and commitment".¹³ Emphasis is placed on the completion of tasks within a specified time frame. This is a very important part of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme as working within a given time could be one of the demands of employment.

Entrepreneurial skills and initiatives will also be developed through individual assignments. Group work plays an important role in the Programme. It assists "in the personal development of each participant and helps to develop social and affective attributes".¹⁴ The student is strengthened as a result of this preparation for working life, by the expansion of vocational skills and the cultivation of skills, disciplines and attitudes which are of value in the world of work. Opportunities to develop a range of general skills which encourage students to be more "adaptable and flexible"¹⁵ in their approach and also to encourage and develop appropriate work "attitudes and commitments"¹⁶ are also very important. The importance of all this is paramount to the successful transfer from school to work. The Vocational Studies section, as can be seen, has an important role to play in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. It provides students with a firm basis in their chosen area, although it will not qualify them for direct entry into employment in this area. It will give them a taste of what it is like and, as already mentioned, a basis upon which further training can build. It would also help students

mature and develop and be more capable of dealing with the world of work. The fostering of general skills like adaptability and commitment in the work place would also help to ensure a successful transfer to the world of work.

Work Experience

The second section of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme to look at is the Work Experience section. This section is organised in such a way that students get experience in a real work situation for one day a week throughout the year. The students spend about eleven days with each of three different employers throughout the year. The purpose of this is to provide a variety of job experiences in different areas of work, to give the students a "taste of what these jobs entail and what is expected of them as employees."¹⁷

The aims of this section, as laid down by the Department of Education, are as follows:

1. To provide an experience of the nature and realities of working life and of the skills needed for success at work and an understanding of the relationships between these skills and realities and the content of the overall Programme.
2. To provide basic competences and an understanding of the world of work and insights into the structure of industry, services, agriculture, etc.
3. To provide a knowledge and understanding of the types and ranges of work available, of the process of job search and of the skills needed for successful adaptation to the working world.¹⁸

These aims focus on the practical experience and skills needed for success at work. To provide experience of the world of work itself, letting the students see for themselves what is involved, the students need to develop an understanding of the structures of work and how the system works. Finally, this section aims to foster in students the ability to find their own job, how to apply, prepare for interviews etc. and how to equip themselves with the personal skills required for successful adaptation to the labour market.

Although these aims are expressed separately they appear in many other aspects of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. There is a special link between this part of the Programme and the learning (General Studies/Vocational Studies) part of the Programme. According to the Department of Education's guidelines these links "need to be constantly borne in mind".¹⁹ The students learn about the world of work but this also involves skills training and the learning of basic communication and numeracy skills, as all of these sections are of great value to the student and together they form the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

General Studies

This section of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is often regarded by students as the least interesting section and of little value in the world of work. Under the guidelines recommended by the Department of Education this section is composed of the following subjects:

1. Communication

2. Mathematics
3. Education for Living
4. Religion
5. Physical Education
6. Computer Familiarisation

The purpose of this section in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is to help improve the communication and numeracy skills of the students to a standard required by employers and for the ordinary things in day-to-day life. This section, like the other sections in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, has many areas where links can be drawn. Every section of the course should, as expressed before, be "inter-related and inter-dependent" as this contributes to the overall coherence and unity of purpose of the Programme.

One such area of overlap would be the area of communication and numeracy. According to the Departmental guidelines for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme there is a "fundamental responsibility"²⁰ on those providing the different options to improve "communication, numeracy and other basic skills".²¹ The inter-dependence of the different elements requires close planning to ensure that students benefit from appropriate reinforcement.

As has been noted this section is made up of six different areas. The following are the aims put forward by the Department of Education in its guidelines for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

Communications Studies

The overall aim of the communications studies in the General Studies section is the improvement of literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening. It also seeks to improve non-verbal communication which has a particular role to play in the world of work and everyday living. Here there is an obvious link with the work experience section of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. It states also that media studies will form part of this section of the Programme.

Mathematics

In this section the aim is to improve the student's numeracy skills. According to the Departmental guidelines the students should develop their computing skills and be able to "communicate through the medium of numerical and graphical representation".²² This sort of mathematics would be of a very practical nature and relevant to the world of work and everyday living, like everything else in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. This also makes use of modern technology with the use of calculators and computers.

The relevance of every section in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme to modern technology is important to note. Each section, especially the Vocational Studies section should, according to the C.D.V.E.C. Curriculum Development Unit's Vocational Preparation and Training Programme Assessment Procedures Handbook, teach skills "relative to work in present day technological society".²³ So all skills are required to be in line with developments in industry and society. It is obvious to see that the teaching of out-dated skills is useless and of little

benefit to the students. So the introduction of computers and other relevant technology into the maths class, like all other areas, is valuable to the pupils.

Education for Living

This element is intended to cover a wide range of topics, many of which are closely linked with aspects of the religion and physical education side of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. As has been noted before there are many areas of overlap throughout the Programme and only with good co-operation and planning would this be used to help reinforce things already learned. It is envisaged by the guidelines that all teaching staff would be involved in this section but it notes that "those involved in pastoral care would play a key role".²⁴ The topics in this area would include things like personal and social development, including sex education, hygiene, consumer affairs, social and cultural activities, health education, environmental education.

Religion

This element has its own position in the development of the student. It is organised by the religious authorities.

Physical Education

The aim of this element is to develop positive attitudes towards health and also the constructive use of leisure time.

Computer Familiarisation

Students should have an opportunity to make themselves familiar

with computers. Again, this refers back to the statement made earlier in which skills learned were to be relevant to present day technology and so the demands of industry.

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme's function or aim is to help students, who for one reason or another, leave school early with little or no qualification and give them a form of training which could help ease the transition from school to working life. As was already noted the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is divided into three sections. These sections combined, try to foster in the students an increased knowledge of both personal and social skills, technical skills and experience which are important for the development and maturation of the student. The development of these skills make the student more qualified for employment or further training.

For the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme to run and be successful it requires a lot of planning and co-operation on behalf of the staff in the school and those outside the school who would be connected with the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, ie., employers, trade unions. A clear understanding of the aims of the Programme is essential to the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme's success. The three sections which go to make up the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme are expressed separately but there are many links or areas of overlap between the sections. By stressing and bringing to the attention of the students the links between the different areas it enables students to see the relevance of the different sections and how they complement each other.

In conclusion, the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme offers students, who would ordinarily leave school and within one year find themselves unemployed, a chance to further their education and improve their chances of finding gainful employment. The Programme is sufficiently broadly based to offer a wide range of experiences to students which combines to help develop personal and social skills. It may also increase students' self-esteem.

Having looked at the structure and the organisation of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme it would now be worth while looking at the Programme in a school.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. Williams and McNamara. Vocational Preparation Course. p. 18.
2. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 6.
3. Ibid, p. 7.
4. Williams and McNamara. Vocational Preparation Course. p. 17.
5. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 17.
6. Ibid, p. 8.
7. Ibid, p. 8.
8. Ibid, p. 9.
9. Ibid, p. 6.
10. Ibid, p. 6.
11. Ibid, p. 17.
12. Ibid, p. 18.
13. Williams and McNamara. Vocational Preparation Course. p. 19.
14. Ibid, p. 19.
15. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 17.
16. Ibid, p. 17.
17. Williams and McNamara. Vocational Preparation Course. p. 21.
18. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training

Programme. p. 19.

19. Ibid, p. 19.

20. Ibid, p. 22.

21. Ibid, p. 22.

22. Ibid, p. 22.

23. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Post-Group/
Intermediate Certificate 1991/92. Years One and Two. Assessment
Procedures Handbook, (Curriculum Development Unit, October 1991).
(Dublin: Stationery, 1991), p. 24.

24. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training
Programme. p. 23.

CHAPTER III

THE EXAMINATION OF A VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND
TRAINING PROGRAMME IN A SCHOOL

For the purpose of this case study the school selected will be called School A. The school is a Community School with a junior and senior cycle. There is a small Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Year 1, with an intake of an average of twelve pupils. School A runs a successful Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in conjunction with the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee Curriculum Development Unit.

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in School A is a one year Certificate Programme available to students who have completed a junior post-primary education programme. Certificates are issued on successful completion of the Programme by the Department of Education, monitored by the C.D.V.E.C. Curriculum Development Unit.

The school's objectives for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme are as follows:

1. To further personal and social development.
2. To enable students to make positive responses to the challenges of growing up in today's world.
3. To introduce students to the adult working world.
4. To expose students to actual work situations in a number of different environments.
5. To broaden horizons and awareness of the variety of work

roles available.

6. To help students locate suitable and gainful employment opportunities which they can pursue with confidence.¹

Certification

All those who complete the course receive a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme folder giving details of achievement, attainments, work experience, employers' comments and references, school records and all other relevant data. This folder may, in a way, resemble a traditional reference. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is approved and certified by the Department of Education. The school itself also issues certificates to students who have completed the Programme.

Programme Co-ordination and Evaluation

There is a Programme Co-ordinator in charge of the Programme. Each student is evaluated by the employer, Co-ordinator and subject teachers in terms of initiative, attainment of skills, competency, suitability and punctuality. The Co-ordinator acts as the school/ employer liaison officer for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and visits the work situation on a frequent basis to discuss student progress and ensure satisfactory work experience and work performance.

The school Guidance Counsellor also assists the Co-ordinator through weekly class guidance and counselling as appropriate.

Outline of the Vocational Preparation and Training
Programme in School A

As has been noted the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is divided into three sections, which are:

Vocational Studies

General Studies

Work Experience

The following is an outline of how the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in School A is broken down.

Vocational Studies

In the Vocational Studies section School A offers four options, of which two are chosen. The designations on offer are, Engineering, Art and Craft Studies, Building Technology, Catering. A description of each designation is as follows.

Engineering/Metal Craft Studies

- Basic Car Maintenance
- Welding Process
- Engineering Design
- Metal Craft
- Computer Aided Design

or

Art and Craft Studies

- Fabric Printing
- Display Work
- Creative Drawing
- Pottery

- Puppetry
- Weaving

Building Technology/Woodcraft

- Woodcraft
- Cabinet Making
- Basic Building Construction Studies

or

Catering

- Food Preparation and Presentation
- Meal Planning
- Food Service
- Consumer Education
- Money Management

The options are split into two blocks. Students may, at the start of the year, opt for either Engineering or Art and Craft Studies in one block, or choose between Building Technology and Catering in the second block.

General Studies

In the General Studies section School A offers the following range of subjects.

Communications

- Letter Writing
- English for Leisure Time
- Improvement of Literacy and Oral Skills
- Job Search Skills
- Media Studies

- Research Skills

Social Studies

- Personal Development
- World Perspectives
- Third World Awareness

Social and Business Maths

Cultural and Language Studies

- French
- Spanish

Religious Studies

Physical Education

The purpose of the General Studies section is to encourage personal and social development. Also, it aims to improve the basic skills needed for employment, as has been already noted.

Work Experience

School A, with the co-operation of local businesses, offers students a wide variety of experiences in different areas:

Shopping centres

Sports' centres

Creches

Restaurants

Vocational Studies Section in School A

In School A the Vocational Studies section of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is broken up into two blocks of options, as has been noted already. Only one option can be chosen from each block, resulting in students who pick art, for instance, doing either building technology or catering.

The benefits of the Vocational Studies section are obvious and have already been mentioned. The school offers four subjects which it feels offer the students the widest variety and best possible experience in basic skills. The skills, which include everything from welding to preparation and presentation of food, have a very practical basis and as has already been mentioned act as a "basis for further training".² The demands of the labour market have been taken into consideration, so also have the expressed interests of the student in deciding the vocational options to be made available. The skills learned here will offer students a chance at further training. Many of the skills learned are transferable to everyday society and industry.

General Studies in School A

A wide range of General Studies subjects are available in School A's Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, the list of which was mentioned earlier. As with the Vocational Studies section of the Programme the benefits of this section have already been stated, so it suffices to say that the General Studies section increases the student's communication and numeracy skills. It also tries, in conjunction with the other sections, to develop the personal and social skills of the student.

The General Studies section in School A deals with the practical side of education to help the students cope better and be more independent in the world of work. It is plain to see that School A follows the aims of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme emphasising the practical skills and competences which need developing in a lot of these students. The General Studies section, through its various subjects, offers a lot to students and will help them in more ways than just finding gainful employment.

Work Experience in School A

With the co-operation of local businesses School A provides work experience placements which last about six weeks. Each student has five placements throughout the school calendar year. These work stations would be in businesses, shopping centres, sports' centres, small manufacturing industry, creches, etc. The benefits of work experience has already been mentioned but should be reiterated again in connection with School A.

In short, according to the Co-ordinator in School A, the students learn through their experience of work to come to terms with the new demands placed upon them and the change in values between school and the world of work. Although students are working in real jobs they still have the relative security of the school environment to help them through. This security helps to give students that bit more confidence.

Selection Procedure for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in School A

Students are selected for the Vocational Preparation and Training

Programme if the teaching staff in the school feel that they would not be suitable to pursue the Leaving Certificate programme. By the term "not suitable" the school means students who might just get five passes or less at Junior level. It also refers to students who the teachers feel are "too young" or "immature" and would "benefit from this year".

Another category suitable for selection are students who, for one reason or another, decide they want to leave school and do not wish to do their Leaving Certificate. Often, according to the Programme Co-ordinator, parents approach the school to ask for their son or daughter to be placed in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. Letters would be sent out to the parents of students who have been deemed suitable for the Programme. The Principal and other relevant members of staff would then meet parents and students in a group session to explain the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. Those potential students who wish may then apply for enrolment in the course.

Interviews would be arranged to further assess the suitability of students. This involves the Guidance Counsellor, the Programme Co-ordinator and the school Principal. It is interesting to note that it is the policy of the school that students with behavioural problems are not admitted to the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. According to the Programme Co-ordinator students with behavioural problems are not considered for the Programme for a number of reasons. Firstly, the school feels that they would upset the learning process with the result that they and the other students would lose out. Secondly, if these students

do not behave in school, the school feels they may not behave on work experience, thereby putting at risk the good relationship between the school and employers.

This process of selection is echoed in another school in Dublin and appears to be the norm throughout the country.

Selection should be by self-selection by the young people and their parents after discussion with the school. It would be a disaster for Vocational Preparation if students were to be forced to participate in the course simply as a filler between Junior and Senior cycle, or worse still, if it were to become a kind of compulsory dumping ground for those anxious to do the Leaving Certificate but not considered capable by the school.

In the selection of students for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme it is extremely important that, as has been noted, the Programme is not viewed as a "dumping ground" for the less academically inclined students. This could have the effect of decreasing the self-esteem of the students. Students should not be forced to choose to do a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. It is important that the students choose themselves to do such a Programme. In order to be able to make such a choice it is a good idea to have meetings, both on an individual and group level with students and parents to enable them to make an informed decision. Without this students would be entering a Programme of which they know nothing and may feel confused or alienated.

Time Allocation

In School A a typical day is divided up into nine 40-minute classes with the exception of Tuesday which for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Year 1, is their work experience day. On Wednesdays there are seven 40-minute class periods as the school

closes at 2.35 pm.

A week in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Year 1, is divided up as follows:

Monday - nine class periods

6 - General Studies classes

3 - Vocational Studies classes

Tuesday - work experience

Wednesday - seven class periods

4 - General Studies classes

3 - Vocational Studies classes

Thursday - nine class periods

7 - General Studies classes

2 - Vocational Studies classes

Friday - nine class periods

4 - General Studies classes

5 - Vocational Studies classes

34 - school based class periods

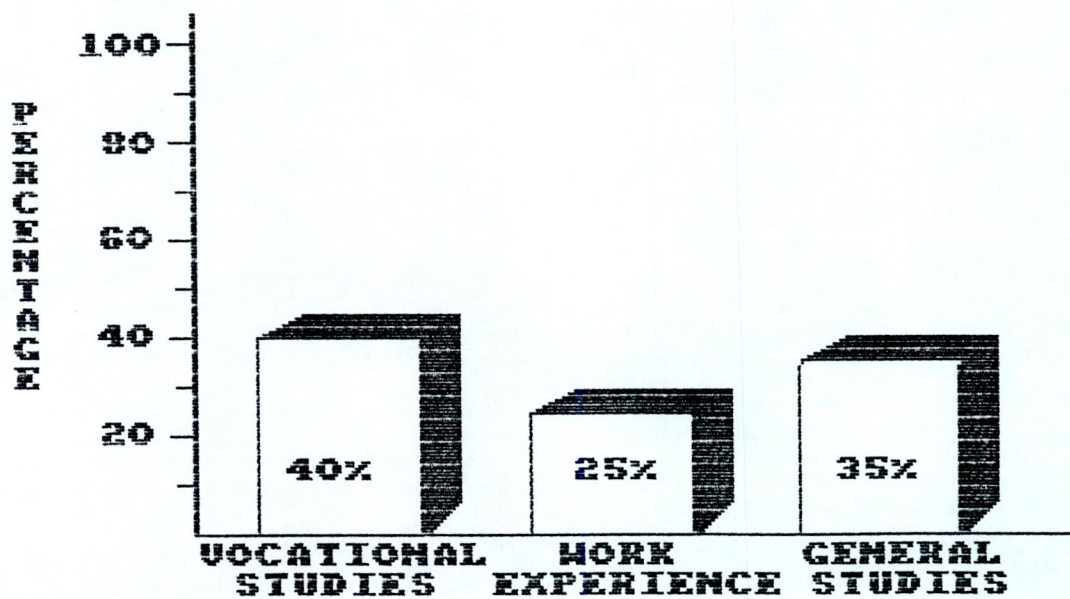
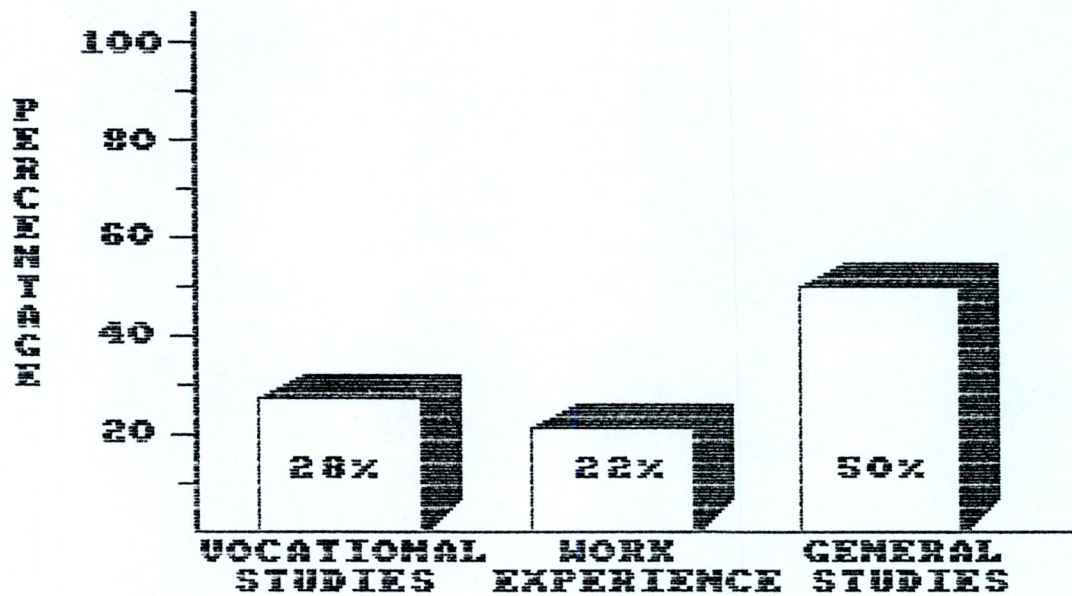
21 - General Studies classes

13 - Vocational Studies classes

9 - Work experience

TABLE 1

Time Allocation in School A for the Vocational Preparation
and Training Programme, Year 1 Compared to the
Department of Education's Suggested Working Week



From looking at this table it becomes clear that School A seems to have placed a greater emphasis on the General Studies section, giving it 50% of the time allocated compared to the suggested allocation of time by the Department of Education of 35%. School A would seem to be aiming to improve the communication and numeric skills of the pupils to a level acceptable to employers and which also make the student more independent in everyday life.

The continued success of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme in School A can be attributed to the Programme's organisation and planning. Without such planning the Programme would not be as successful. The selection procedure employed by the school ensures that those students who would benefit most from the Programme are chosen to do it. The selection procedure also ensures that there is a good working atmosphere in the classes, with little distraction from "messers" etc. The numbers, as has been noted, are small so students receive more individual attention.

Four options are available which offer students a choice. These options offer students an opportunity to experience an area which appeals to them. The numbers in the Programme restrict the availability of options. The time allotted to each section clearly favours the General Studies section, with the Vocational Studies section losing out on time. Even with this emphasis on the General Studies section the Programme in School A offers students a wide variety of experience and learning opportunities.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. School Vocational Preparation Course Outline
2. Williams and McNamara. Vocational Preparation Course. p. 79.
3. Ibid, p. 29.
4. Ibid, p. 19.
5. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 10.

CHAPTER IV
ROLE OF ART IN A VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND
TRAINING PROGRAMME

This chapter examines the role of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. According to the Department of Education art has "a major role to play"¹ in Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes. It goes further to state that "all jobs whether in the manufacturing of goods or provisions of services have some involvement with art and design".² The importance of art in our everyday lives has been recognised, so also has its environmental value and the influence it has on us in day-to-day things like "personal presentation"³ including, for example, the way one looks and dresses or "a good typist's layout of a letter".⁴ The influence of art also includes "knowing what materials are suitable for particular purposes".⁵ It could also help in "designing and making things".⁶

This view of art in education has been reflected in the Curriculum and Examination Board's Report of the Board of Studies: The Arts in which it states that "visual arts education is an active process through which the student learns to see and think visually".⁷ It is a learning process which involves "both the artistic and aesthetic experience".⁸ According to the Department of Education in the Junior Certificate Art, Craft and Design syllabus art enables students to "develop a number of important personal qualities, particularly those of initiative, perseverance, sensibility and self-reliance".⁹ In this document the Department of Education states that art, craft and design help students to

shape their world for "functional purposes"¹⁰ and that art, craft and design enables students to convey their "ideas and feelings".¹¹

As can be seen, the role of art in education as a whole is of crucial importance to the student. It enables students to express their own ideas and feelings. It also, in a much broader way, creates an aesthetic awareness in students which can be applied to almost every walk of life.

The importance of art and design in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme can never be under estimated. As stated earlier art helps students to communicate their ideas and feelings. It creates an aesthetic awareness. It can also help increase self-esteem in students with low self-esteem. It promotes positive attitudes to flexibility of thinking. Art enables students to think for themselves and to think better of themselves. This is one of the most important aspects of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme - that of building confidence which can only come from personal development. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme tries to foster in students a feeling of worth and confidence which may be very low after going through an educational system where they may have failed continuously. The Programme and the art component in the Programme is an ideal vehicle to increase the student's self-esteem.

The aims of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, according to the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme's Assessment Procedures Handbook, Curriculum Development Unit, October 1991¹² are:

1. To acquire an experience and understanding of art and be able to relate it to present day life.
2. To develop an appreciation of the effect of art on the individual and on society.
3. To develop expressive and communication skills based on visual and tactile experience.
4. To acquire transferable skills which are relevant to work and leisure in present day society.
5. To acquire an appreciation of visual art, shape, form, colour, design.
6. To explore the possibility of developing career, entrepreneurial or leisure time interests.
7. To be able to make informed consumer decisions.
8. To develop in students the ability to monitor their own achievements through an on-going process of self-assessment.

The aims of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme according to what is stated above, have a very practical basis to them. There seems to be a strong emphasis on relating what they have experienced to both present day society and also to the world of work and leisure. This is not only true of the aim for art, the same practical emphasis is seen in all the technical designation subjects - commerce, electronics, construction studies, engineering. This emphasis on practical skills and experience and their relationship with the world of work and leisure can also be used as a link between the different areas of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. These areas of overlap or the relationship between areas, if emphasised or brought to the attention of the student, could bring the different areas together and make it much

more interesting for the student. It could also enable students to see the relevance of the different sections.

Interview with Mr. Liam Lee, Art and Design Co-ordinator
of the Curriculum Development Unit

Many of the points that have been noted are expressed again in an interview with Mr. Liam Lee, Art and Design Co-ordinator of the C.D.V.E.C. Curriculum Development Unit. The C.D.V.E.C. Curriculum Development Unit was established by the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee and is managed jointly by the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee, Trinity College and the Department of Education. This interview concerns art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

Q: Why has art been considered as an option in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme?

A: Art is a good craft subject for both sexes, would help people going on to any sort of work which requires graphics.

Q: What do you feel are the practical benefits of art in such a course?

A: They can learn different crafts which may come in useful. It is good for hand/eye co-ordination. It is also a good subject for both sexes so it is also good from a social aspect.

Q: In what way could art help to increase the self-esteem of students?

A: All or almost all of the students who do Vocational Preparation

and Training Programmes are low achievers so when they complete something it is a success for them. Nothing succeeds like success. They begin to see they can complete a given task.

Q: In general, in the teaching of art in Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes is there an emphasis on the skills more so than on a level of understanding of the concepts?

A: For some of the students who do art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme it would be their first time doing art. Some would have done it before. They would be steered towards the craft side of things and it would be a 70-75% concentration on skills.

Q: How could art fit in better with the rest of the course?

A: Could do woodwork and a module of art, or engineering and a module of art and make metal jewelery. Or home economics where the art teacher could be involved in the designs for icing cakes. This would also contribute to the motivation of the student when they see links like this being made. Also, to see the input from another teacher in a subject which they wouldn't normally associate with them.

Q: Is there the possibility for links between art and the other areas, ie, General Studies and Work Experience?

A: Yes, ie, General Studies field trips, drawing for projects, etc.

Q: In your opinion how does the student view art as an option?

A: Very popular. Where it is available pupils take to it, find it is fun, something to aim for.

Q: What sort of attitude do teachers/principals adopt to art as part of the course?

A: Treated reasonably well.

Q: From your experience is art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme a female dominated subject? Why?

A: Yes, we would consider it a female dominated subject but the Vocational and Community Schools are moving away from this. It comes from tradition.

Q: How transferable are the skills acquired in art for the students?

A: Very transferable. Aesthetic education which they receive in art is very valuable and can be applied to a lot of practical things in life and work, ie, typing layout, putting up shelves.

Q: Should there be an emphasis on a more practical side of art, concerned more with consumer advertising, packaging, colour co-ordination (decorating), display?

A: This is an important part in technology, the production of a quality product which should work well and look well. Art should help everything. This relates to its designated aims and objects where it should relate to technology etc.

Q: Should art become a more integral part of this course, or is there a need for this?

A: There is a need for it from a general education point, to enhance the student's learning and increase their visual awareness. Also, in this day and age it gives them something to do if unemployed.

This interview was not recorded on tape. It consists of notes taken from answers to a list of questions prepared beforehand. The interview concerned the role of art in a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, the benefits of the subject with regard to the skills acquired, the aesthetic awareness awakened or focused and the possibilities it possesses to help increase the self-esteem of many of the students.

The art class has a role to play in all areas of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, but particularly in the practical sections where, as Liam put it:

There is a need for it, from a general education point, to enhance the student's learning and increase their visual awareness.

As a way to help art become a more integral part of the Programme a module of engineering and a module of art could work well where the students could combine the two and make metal jewellery. Or home economics and art where the art class and its teacher could be involved in tasks like icing cakes etc. where a degree of visual awareness is called for.

There are many more links between art and the other areas but they have to be stressed and brought to the attention of the students. Without this the association between the two areas may not be made and the opportunity for further development lost. Another positive and practical benefit of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (and all other areas of education) is its ability to help increase the self-esteem of students. Many of the students who do a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme are, according to Liam Lee who has had a lot of experience with students

like this all over the country, "low achievers". He feels that "when they complete something it is a success for them". The art class offers them an opportunity to take on a task and finish it. It is unlike other subjects where there is a right or a wrong answer. For students like these "nothing succeeds like success". They begin to see that they can complete a given task. Another positive benefit of art is that it can be used as a leisure time activity. It fosters a positive attitude towards leisure time activities.

An important comment to note from the interview is that there is a 70-75% concentration on skills in art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. Many of the students who do art in the Programme would never have done art before. This strong emphasis on skills highlights the practical nature of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and the role art plays in it.

Art as a subject in the Vocational Studies section of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is regarded quite highly by all parties concerned for its practical and positive benefits.

It offers an educationally sound vehicle through which students can develop and mature, both personally and socially. This is not only true for the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme but also for the Junior and, to an extent, the Leaving Certificate programmes. Art, as has been noted, develops the student's skills which may come in useful in the world of work and leisure. It also increases their visual awareness which has an influence on events in everyday life. It is also a subject which has been shown

to have the potential to increase students' self-esteem. This has been echoed throughout this chapter.

Art is a subject which can complement almost every aspect of the student's life, in school or in the world of work or leisure. For it to be able to fulfill this goal, its possibilities have to be brought to the attention of students and the links which have been mentioned so often stressed. If this is not done many of the students will fail to see the relevance of art in everyday life. How students view art is very important. In the next chapter we will hear their views on art and its relevance.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. An Roinn Oideachais. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. p. 48.
2. Ibid, p. 48.
3. Ibid, p. 48.
4. Ibid, p. 48.
5. Ibid, p. 48.
6. Ibid, pp. 48-49.
7. Curriculum and Examination Board. Report of the Board of Studies: The Arts. (Dublin: Curriculum and Examination Board, 1987), p. 23.
8. Ibid, p. 23.
9. An Roinn Oideachais and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, The Junior Certificate Syllabus: Art, Craft, Design. (Dublin: Stationery, 1990). p. 1.
10. Ibid, p. 1.
11. Ibid, p. 3.
12. Vocational Preparation and Training Programme, Assessment Procedures Handbook. p. 24.

CHAPTER V

STUDENTS' VIEW OF THE VOCATIONAL PREPARATION AND TRAINING
PROGRAMME AND ART AS A SUBJECT

The interview was structured in such a way as to ascertain why the students are doing a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and how they view the Programme compared to the Junior cycle. It was considered important to ascertain why the students chose art as one of their Vocational Studies options and what they thought of it. There was also an attempt made to discover the students' opinions of themselves and how they feel others view them.

The interviews were carried out on five Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students who chose art as one of their Vocational Studies options. The students attend School A which was examined earlier. The interviews were taped and a transcript of each interview is available. Before looking at the results of the interviews it is important that the backgrounds and academic history of each student is considered. (The art class consists of only five students so each student is considered). The academic history of the students is important to this case study so that one can see the ability of the students since entry into School A and also to give some background information on the ability of the class.

Student A

Date of Birth: 24/11/1976

Occupation of Father: Butcher

Occupation of Mother: Housewife

School Report		English	Maths	Art
Christmas First Year		D	E	D+
Summer First Year		D-	F	E
Christmas Second Year		E	E	E
Summer Second Year		F	F	D
Christmas Third Year		D-	C	E
Intermediate Certificate		E	D	E

Student B

Date of Birth: 9/5/1975

Occupation of Father: Accountant

Occupation of Mother: Housewife

Psychological Report

Mentally handicapped. Student has a reading age of an 8 - 9 year-old.

Student completed First Year in School A and was then allowed entry into the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

Student C

Date of Birth: 21/9/1976

Occupation of Father: Unemployed

Occupation of Mother: Housewife

School Report		English	Maths	Art
Christmas First Year		C+	D+	C
Summer First Year		D	D-	D+
Christmas Second Year		D	D-	D-
Summer Second Year		E	D	E

Christmas Third Year
Intermediate Certificate

E

D

Student D

Date of Birth: 13/7/1975

Occupation of Father: Unemployed

Occupation of Mother: Housewife

School Report

	English	Maths	Art
Christmas First Year	D	D	C+
Summer First Year	E	D	C
Christmas Second Year	E	D	D
Summer Second Year	D	D	E
Christmas Third Year	D	D	D-
Intermediate Certificate	D		E

Student E

Date of Birth: 25/4/1975

Occupation of Father: Unemployed

Occupation of Mother: Housewife

Results Not Available

From these results the ability level of the group can be deduced.

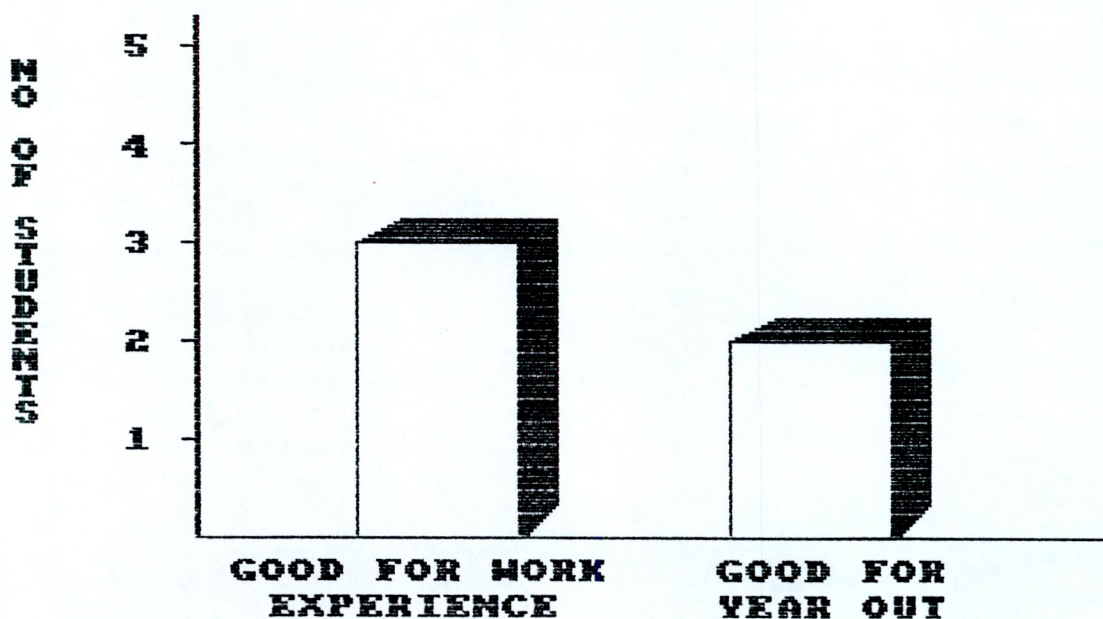
STRUCTURE FOR INTERVIEW

1. General Background.
2. Reasons why they are doing the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and how the students view it compared to the Junior Cycle.
3. Why the students picked art and how useful do they find it.
4. What the students do or do not find useful about the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme and how they feel it could be changed.
5. The students view of themselves and how they feel others view them.

Reasons why these Students are doing a Vocational
Preparation and Training Programme

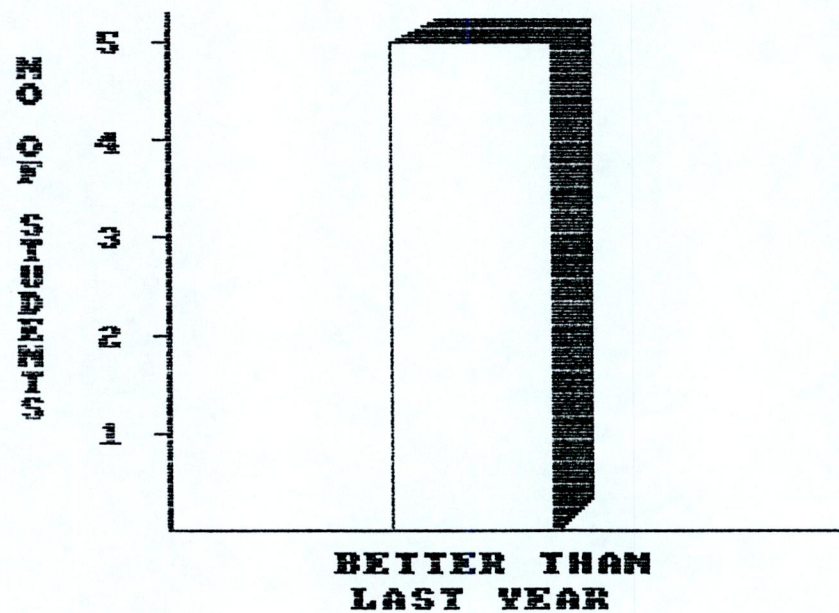
3 students - thought it would be good for work experience.

2 students - thought it would be good to take a year out from
ordinary school curriculum.



How the Students view the Vocational Preparation
and Training Programme

5 students - all students think it is good compared to last year (Junior cycle)

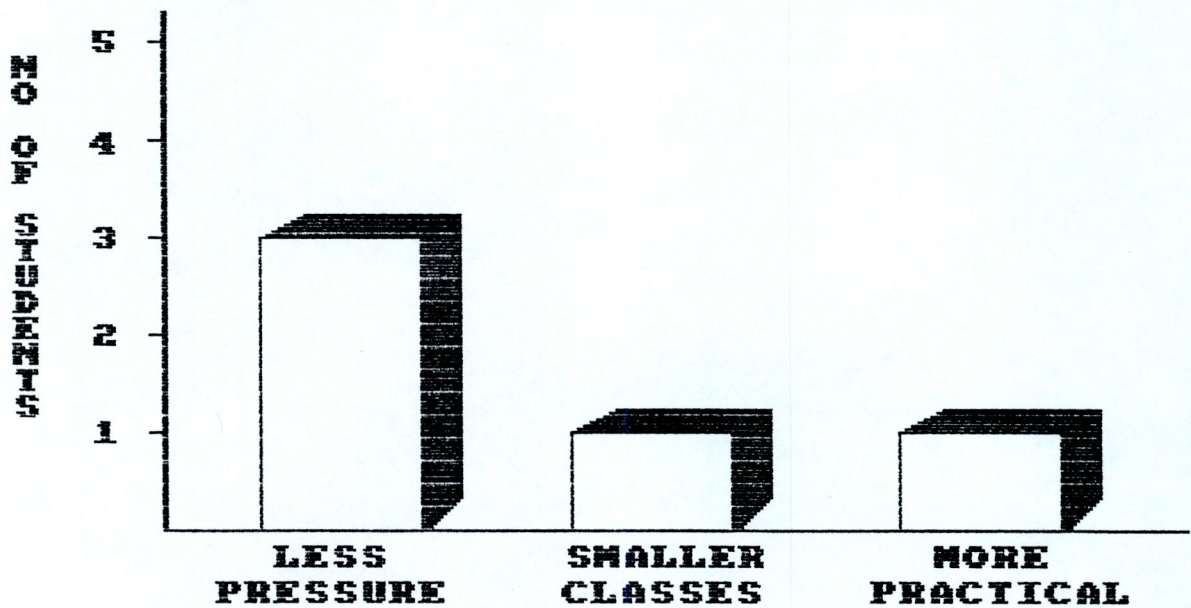


Why it is Better than Last Year

3 students - thought there was not as much pressure as regards study and exams.

1 student - thought it was better because the class sizes were smaller.

1 student - thought it was more practical.

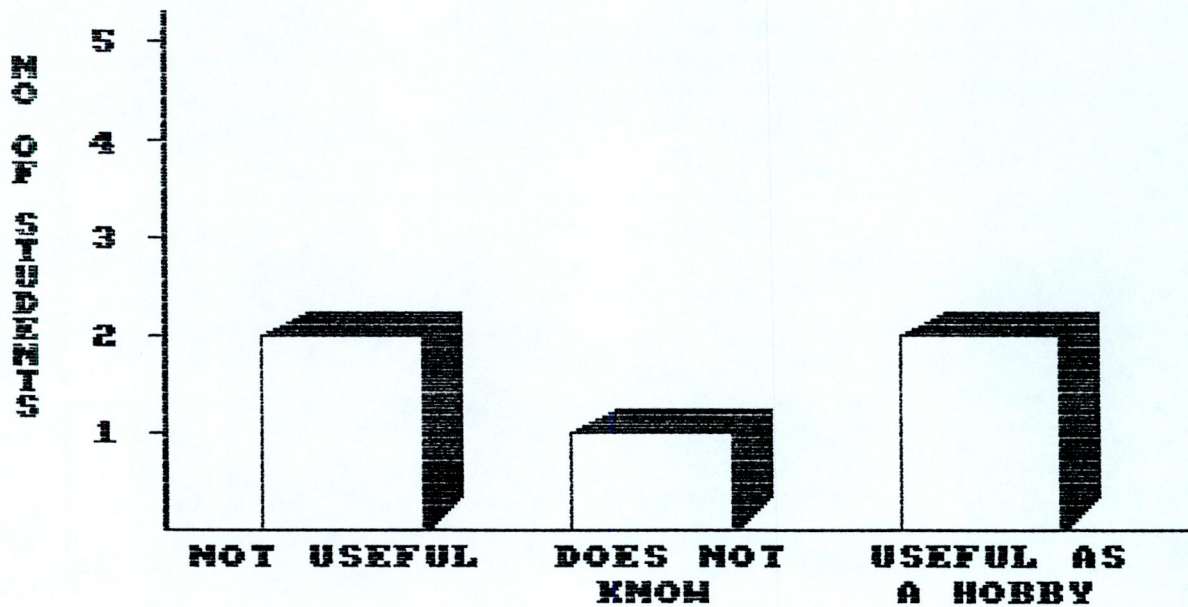


Students were Asked if the Thought Art would Come in
Useful when they were Finished

2 students - thought it will not be of use to them.

1 student - did not know.

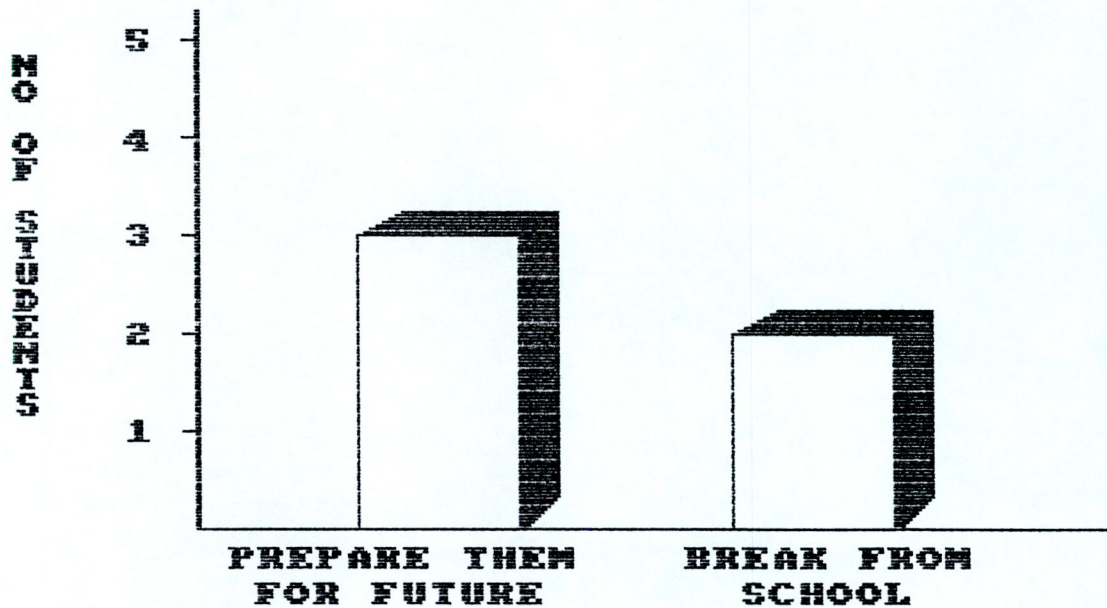
2 students - thought it will come in useful as a hobby.



Students were asked what they thought Useful about the
Vocational Preparation and Training Programme

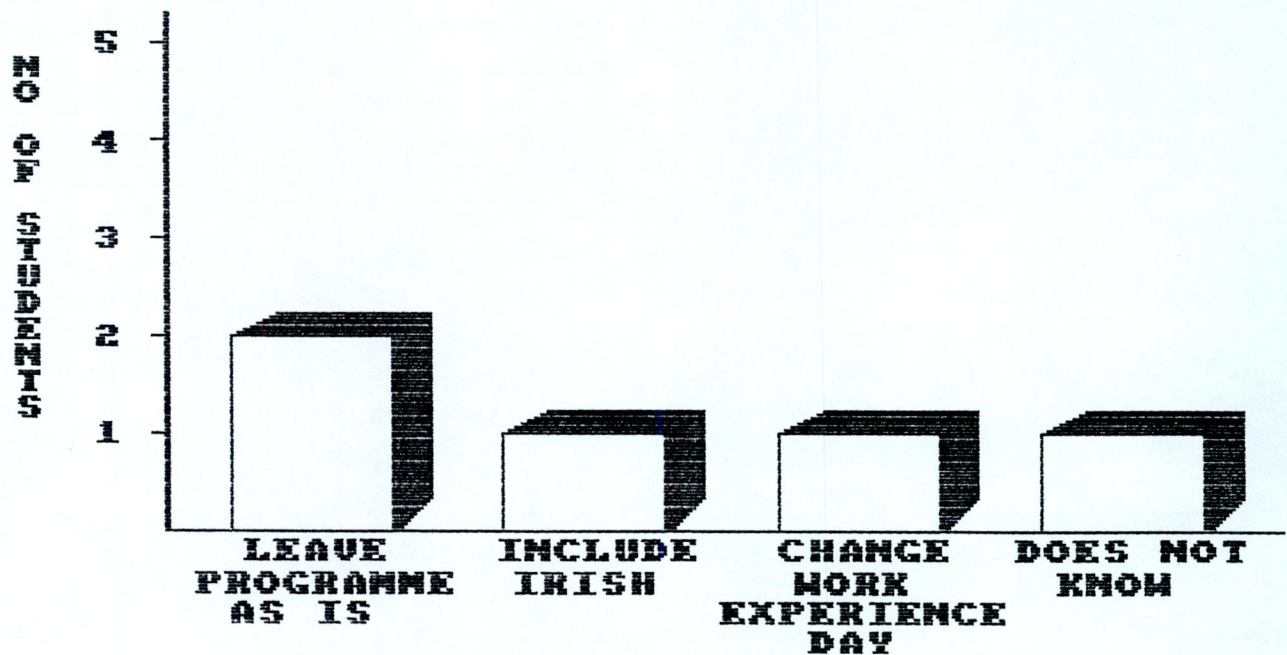
3 students - felt it will prepare them for the future.

2 students - felt it is a break from ordinary school.



Students were Asked what Changes they would Like to See
Made to the Programme

- 1 student - would include the Irish language.
- 1 student - would change the work experience day.
- 2 students - would leave the programme as it is.
- 1 student - did not know.



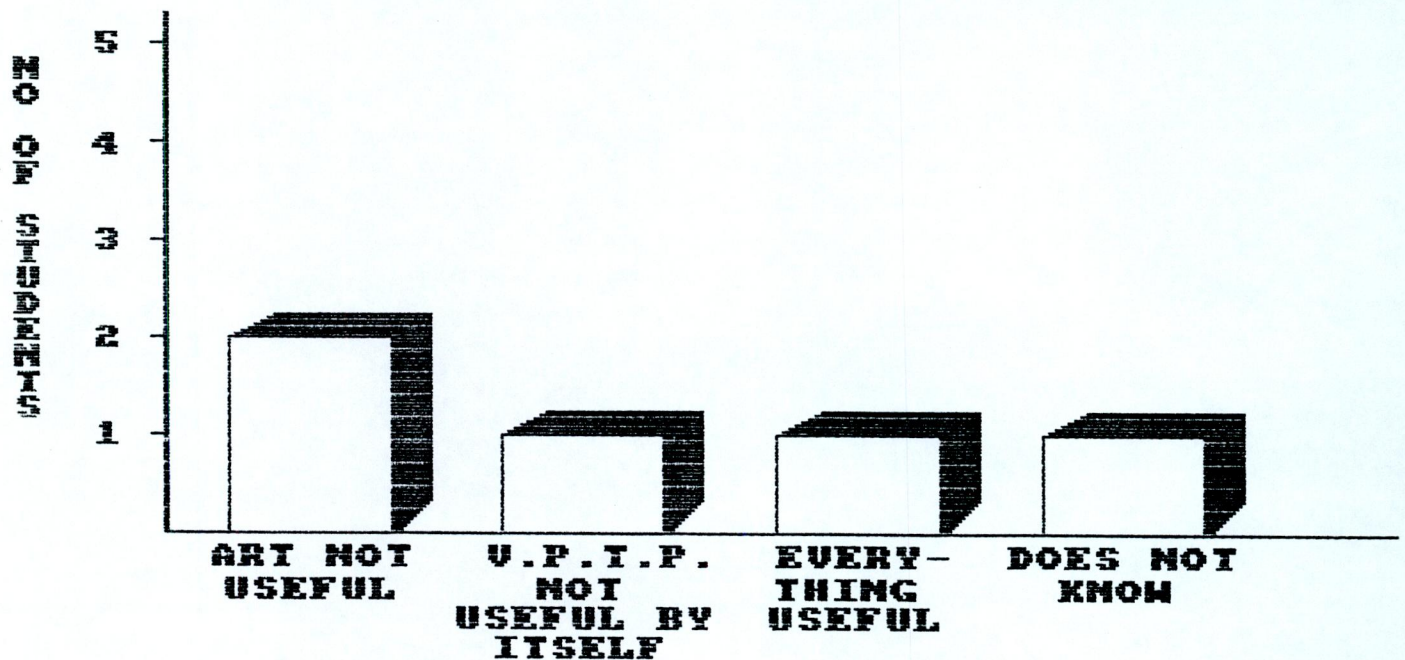
Students were Asked what they Think is not Useful
about the Programme

2 students - thought art is not useful.

1 student - thought the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is not useful by itself. It needs another course with it.

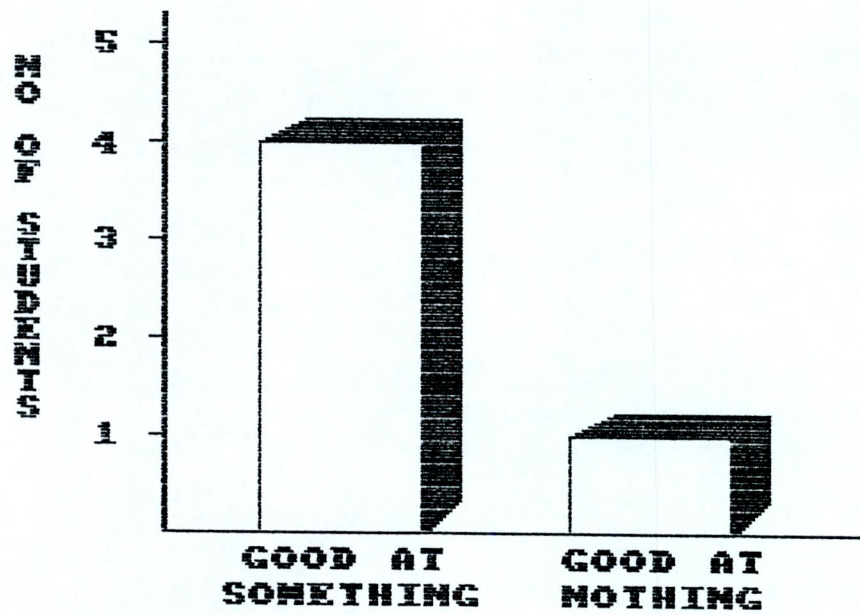
1 student - thought everything in the Programme is useful.

1 student - did not know.



Students were Asked How they View Themselves

- 1 student - thought he/she was good at nothing.
4 students - thought they were good at something.

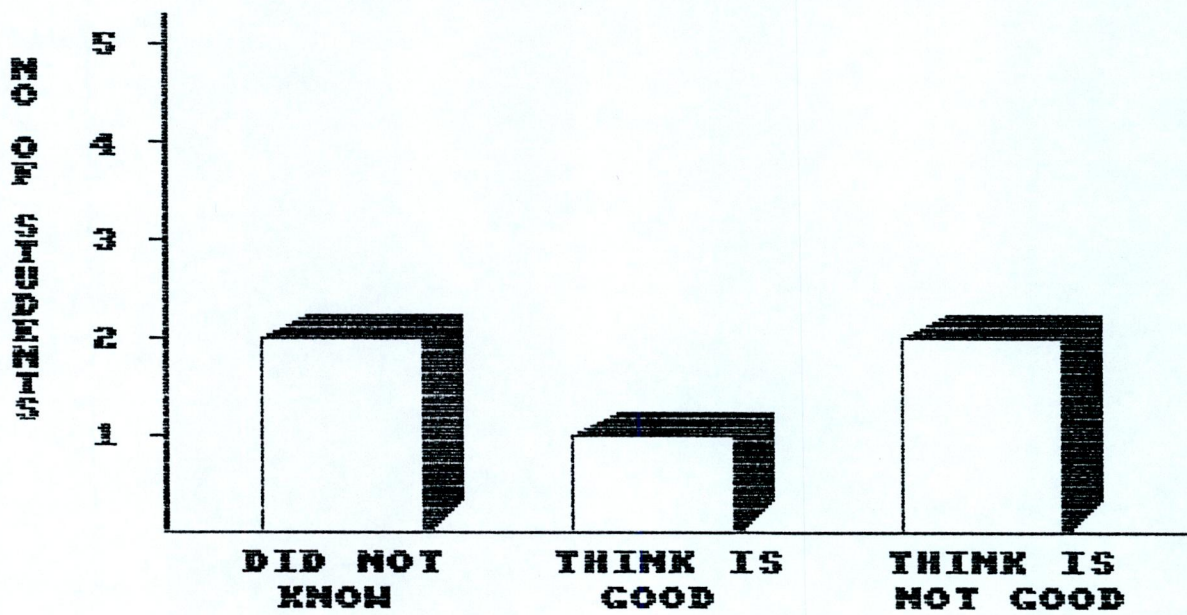


Students were Asked How they Feel Others View Them

2 students - did not know

2 students - thought teachers think students are not good.

1 student - thought teachers think student is good.



From the results of the interviews it can be ascertained that all students interviewed believed, for a number of very valid reasons, that the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is of more value to them than the Junior cycle programme was. Three out of the five students interviewed considered it to be of more value to them because there was less pressure from exams and study. One out of the five students believed that what is being covered this year is much more practical compared to what was taught last year. This reflects the practical emphasis placed on learning in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. One of the students thought that the size of the class compared to those last year is important.

From the results it is possible to see that most of the students interviewed think that the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is of benefit to them and that the work experience element is also of value to them in their preparation for future life. Two of the students interviewed consider the Programme to be a year out from the ordinary curriculum. These students may have thoughts of continuing with their schooling by entering the Leaving Certificate cycle in the school. These students may have been viewed by the school as students who could benefit from a year out. This year could be used to improve the students' confidence and maturity before continuing to the Leaving Certificate.

When the students were asked why they chose art as one of their Vocational Studies options three students said that they chose art because they did not want to do the other option which is

engineering/metal craft studies. Two of the students chose art because they liked it. It would be interesting to see if the choice of options had been larger would these three students still have chosen art as one of their options. Their opinion of art is important and has an influence on the subsequent answers shown below.

The students were questioned about the usefulness of art when they finish their Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. Two of the students believe that art would not be useful. Another two students consider that art will come in useful as a hobby. The remaining student "did not know". It appears that the students do not have, or maybe have not realised, the far reaching effects of art. This is quite possibly not the fault of the students as the more far reaching effects and influences of art may never have been pointed out to them or have been understood by the students.

Out of the five students interviewed, three considered that the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme prepared them for the future. When asked what changes they would make to the Programme if they had the opportunity, two students believed that the Programme should be left as it is. One student would prefer the work experience day be Thursday because a Tuesday is too slack. One did not know and one would include Irish.

When the students were asked what they found least useful about the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme the findings were as follows. Two of the students considered art to be of

little use. One student considered the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme to be of little use on its own. One student considered that everything about the Programme is useful, as has been noted already. One student did not know. It is significant to note that two of the students considered that art is the least useful subject in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. This helps to re-emphasise the point made earlier. The students fail to see the relevance of art in education. As a result of this these students may be closed to the positive influences of art in education and in the world of work and leisure.

The next section of the interview concerned the students' opinions of themselves. Of the five students interviewed four considered themselves to be good at something. The remaining student considers him/herself good at nothing. This answer seems to indicate that four of the students have a higher level of self-esteem than the student who believes him/herself good at nothing.

When the students were asked how they feel others view them, one student considered that the teachers think that she (the student in question) is good. The remaining four students consider that the teachers think they are not good or they do not know.

When the results of those questions are considered together it appears that the students in question have low self-esteem. The students lack confidence in their ability and feel, as the

findings show, that others view them as being poor in different areas. The students' confidence could be increased and this would help to increase their self-esteem. The art class offers an ideal situation to increase the self-esteem of students. The role of the teacher is very important. The teacher can increase the confidence of the students through praise and by setting tasks which are a challenge to the students but which are realistic achievements. With the completion of tasks the students come to realise that they can succeed at something and this may give them the confidence to go on and take something else. When the self-esteem of the students increases this may change how they feel others view them.

It has been shown in the previous chapter that the art class has a lot to offer to students. But it is only by integrating it in the context of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme that the students will come to recognise its relevance to almost everything in everyday life. This could be done by drawing links between the different areas, i.e., General Studies and work experience and art. By combining art and areas like woodwork and engineering the importance of design is stressed and this increases the students' visual awareness. The art class could also become concerned with more practical learning experiences such as consumer issues, packaging, colour co-ordination, display - all of which could be useful to the student in work and everyday life. This type of aesthetic awareness, when combined with the skills the students have acquired in the other areas, would result in a better end result. This aesthetic awareness is not only suitable for

Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students, but is of value to all students even those going on to study medicine.

The importance of co-ordination in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is crucial, as has been noted. Before the importance and relevance of art in everyday life is recognised by the students it has to be recognised by all the teaching staff involved in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. All the teaching staff could be informed of this through various meetings both before and during the year. This lack of integration is the fault of those directly involved with the students. Art teachers would have to take a lot of the blame if they did not make their views known. This integration could be achieved by doing joint projects between the different practical areas, by using more visual references in the General Studies section. This would have the effect of making what is being taught more visually exciting and easier to understand.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this work the origins of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme have been noted; from its conception in 1930 with the Vocational Education Act; the Pre-employment courses; the E.C. Council resolution adopted on 13 December 1976 to the present system - the 1983 E.C. Council of Ministers resolution providing for the development of Vocational Preparation and Training policies in the member states. This training, as has been noted, is hoped to make students more suitable for employment.

Guidelines were also issued by the Department of Education. The Programmes have to be relevant to the needs and abilities of the students and should, according to the guidelines, be relevant to present day requirements of industry and everyday life. After tracing the origins of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme it was considered important to look at its structure and the organisation. The Programme is divided up into three main areas which are: Vocational Studies, General Studies and Work Experience. Each section has a different role to play in the Programme. General Studies tries to develop the personal and social skills of the student and also tries to improve their communication and literacy skills. Vocational Studies section gives the students a taste of different vocational areas such as building construction or art. It offers students a chance to learn the basic skills in these areas, upon which further training may follow. Work experience offers students a chance to recognise what work demands of them

and the difference between the world of work and school.

The organisation of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme was also looked at. It was, according to the Department of Education guidelines, important that everyone involved in the Programme had a clear understanding of the aims of the Programme. It was proposed in the guidelines that each school should appoint a Programme Co-Ordinator who could act as a focal point for staff and also liase between the school and those involved outside the school, such as parents, trade unions, employers and FAS. Without this type of understanding and organisation the Programme would not run as successfully.

Having looked at the structure of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme it was important to look at a Programme in operation in a school. The availability of subjects, the amount of time allocated to each area and the selection procedure employed by the school were examined. One very interesting point to note about the selection procedure is that the school does not allow students with discipline problems enter the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme. The number doing the Programme in any year in School A is, on average, 12. This would be of benefit to all students as smaller numbers mean teachers have more time to give students. This is a very practical idea and the students benefit from it.

The role of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme is also looked at to see how relevant it is perceived to be by students and other relevant organisations. It is

clear from the interview with Mr. Liam Lee and from the literature from the Department of Education that art is considered very relevant to the Programme and that it has a great deal to offer. As has been noted art offers an ideal way to help increase the self-esteem of students. Art also develops an aesthetic awareness in students which can be applied to almost everything in life.

It is clear from what has been noted that art offers numerous practical and positive benefits to students - not only Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students but all students. In the interviews carried out with five Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students who are taking art as one of their Vocational Studies options this view is not reflected. Taking into account the students' ability level, they do not appear to have discovered or been helped to discover the positive benefits of art. This could be due to the fact that the links between art and everyday life have not been pointed out to these students and therefore, they do not see the importance of it. Art, for these students, is a subject they have to do for six or seven periods a week and outside of this time it is not referred to in any way.

It is now up to the school, the Co-ordinator and the other teachers to stress the links between art and the other areas of the Programme. They have to incorporate art into each area, either in practical work such as visuals for projects, or by stressing the importance of design in the other practical areas. Art is also a great motivational factor and can be used to

great benefit in all areas.

The benefits of art in the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme have been shown. The inclusion of Art in such a Programme is of paramount importance to the student. Our world is becoming an increasingly visual world and art education is nearly as important as English or Maths to understand what is seen every day, every where. Without this form of education Vocational Preparation and Training Programme students would be at a severe disadvantage in life. The same can also be said about all students.

INTERVIEWS

First Interview - Student A

I = Interviewer

S = Student

I: What class are you in?

S: V.P.T.

I: How many are in your family?

S: There's 3 4, sorry.

I: Where do you come in the family?

S: The youngest.

I: How many years have you been in this school?

S: Ah 4 years.

I: What do you think of the school?

S: The conventional school or the V.P.T. course?

I: The conventional school.

S: Never liked it.

I: Is there anything about school that you like?

S: No, there wasn't really, no. Didn't like the whole system at all.

I: Did you do your Inter Cert?

S: Yeah.

I: Why did you decide to do the V.P.T. course?

S: Well, ah in the first place, ah I didn't have a chance in passing my Inter Cert because I was never any good at academically inclined or anything like that ah, I suppose it was just, I suppose it was a transition year or something to do.

I: If you hadn't done the V.P.T. course what would you have done?

S: Really, don't know. Can't say, don't know.

I: Would you have gone on to do your Leaving?

S: Well, I wouldn't have done the Leaving Cert 'cause I didn't pass the Inter, so

I: What do you think of this V.P.T. course?

S: Pretty good, yeah.

I: What's your favourite thing on the course?

- S: Ahh I don't have a particular favourite. Its, its
I like the course, like, but just in general
- I: If you were to pick a particular thing you like best of all,
which would you pick?
- S: Ah probably English.
- I: Why is this?
- S: Ah, its just that you learn more, basically.
- I: What type of things are you learning at the moment?
- S: In English? Yeah, well, ahh basically we read stuff,
we learn we read novels the emphasis is placed
more on learning rather than passing exams, so you know
- I: Which do you prefer - this year's course (the V.P.T.
Programme) or what you were doing last year?
- S: What do you mean, this year's course?
- I: Do you prefer doing the V.P.T. Programme or would you prefer
to be doing what you did last year (your Inter)?
- S: No, I prefer this year.
- I: Is this year better than last year then?
- S: Yes.
- I: Why?
- S: Ahh well, ah, I suppose again, again because the
emphasis is placed more on learning than on exams That is
the whole that makes it so good.
- I: What do you do this year that you didn't get a chance to do
last year?
- S: Learn.
- I: But subject wise?
- S: Yeah ah, subject wise - home economics.
- I: What sort of learning are you talking about?
- S: Well, I'm talking about learning because, like, I remember
last year, last year we never really learned anything.
We the whole emphasis of the school course was on
passing exams.
- I: Did you not learn poems or anything?
- S: Yes, but you're taught to learn them, taught to learn them
off and you're told what to think. You know, the whole
emphasis is placed on exams, passing exams and it doesn't
you know

- I: Would the learning this year be more practical?
- S: It would, yeah.
- I: In what way would it be more practical?
- S: Well, ah let me think. You learn more for the sake of learning, if you know what I mean, ah rather than just passing exams.
- I: What did you like about last year? Was there anything you liked about last year?
- S: No, no, no.
- I: Nothing at all?
- S: No.
- I: Did you do construction studies, woodwork or anything like that last year?
- S: Ah, no, I didn't.
- I: What else is different about this year compared to last year?
- S: Ahh, it's more laid back. Not as much pressure there's no pressure to pass exams or pressure to do that sort of stuff. It's a lot more laid back.
- I: What subjects did you do last year?
- S: Apart from the conventional subjects like Irish, English, Science, Maths, I done, ah, German ah Art and ah, I can't My memory!
- I: What subjects do you do this year?
- S: Art and, ah, Home Economics.
- I: And do you do anything else this year?
- S: We do the usual, English, Maths, Science. Ahh, just generally all the subjects.
- I: Do you do a language this year?
- S: Yeah, we do French and Spanish.
- I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?
- S: What other differences? Ahh ... ahh ahh, I really don't, mmm I don't really there is not. I've listed them all off basically.
- I: Why did you choose Art as an option?
- S: Ahh, well, it was better than Building Construction.
- I: Do you like Building Construction?
- S: No.

I: What else could you have chosen?
S: Building Construction or Engineering.
I: Why did you not pick one of them?
S: I'm hopeless at them
I: Do you like Art?
S: Its fairly OK.
I: What is it about it that you like?
S: Oh, ahh I don't know really.
I: There must be something?
S: Ahh, I really just don't know. I really don't have a particular
I: What have you done so far this year in Art?
S: We've made puppets.
I: What else have you done?
S: Just made puppets. Did lino blocks, made them, paper people, just nothing really.
I: Which of these did you like best?
S: Ahh the puppets.
I: How did you go about making the puppets?
S: Ahh, basically sewing. Basically just sew them.
I: Did you enjoy it?
S: It was OK, yeah it wasn't too bad.
I: Do you think you would be able to do this again or show some one else how to do it?
S: Not without practice.
I: If you had the practice would you be able to show some one else how to do it?
S: Ahh, possibly.
I: How would Art come in useful when you have finished this course?
S: I don't think it will.
I: If you had the choice again what options would you pick?
S: The same, probably.
I: How long have you been doing this V.P.T. course?
S: Since September.
I: What do you think of it?
S: Its pretty OK, yeah.
I: Do you like it?

S: Yeah, quite OK, good.
I: Why?
S: It's laid back, not really that much pressure on.
I: Do you think that it is useful?
S: Very useful, yeah.
I: In what way?
S: It's practical, it's, ah, it's practical. It prepares you for the real world.
I: What have you done this year that you think is not useful?
S: Ahh I don't think there is anything really.
I: If you had the chance how would you change this course?
S: I wouldn't.
I: What do you think you are good at?
S: Nothing.
I: What's your favourite subject?
S: English.
I: Is it your favourite subject because you are good at it?
S: No.
I: Are you good at anything?
S: No.
I: Surely you must be good at something?
S: Ahh ... in a word, no.
I: Do you think the teachers think you are good?
S: No.
I: How do you know?
S: How do I know? Ahh, I just know just pick it up, instinct, you know.
I: What kind of things do they say to you?
S: You mean in general conversation? Ahh, I don't know ahh, what kind of things do teachers say to me? Ahh that's wrong, that's right. You know, the usual.
I: Well, if someone says that's right, that can't be bad? Who said to you that that was right?
S: Ah, you're not making this easy, mmm, ahh, ah.
I: Did Mr. Nelson say to you that that was right?
S: I think so, yeap.
I: So you must be good at English then?
S: No, not really.

I: You must be good at it.

S: No, it's just easy. Basically, it's not There's no pressure really.

Second Interview - Student B

I: What class are you in?

S: V.P.T.P.

I: How many in your family?

S: Four.

I: Does that include your Mam and Dad?

S: Yeah.

I: Where about in your family do you come?

S: What?

I: Where about in your family do you come? Are you the oldest or the youngest?

S: Youngest.

I: How many years have you been in this school?

S: $1\frac{1}{2}$ years.

I: Where were you before that?

S: I was in First Year and then Mr. McCann (the Principal) said I could do this V.P.T.P. course.

I: What do you think of the school?

S: Its OK

I: Is there anything about school that you like?

S: No.

I: Nothing at all?

S:

I: Did you do your Inter?

S: No.

I: Why did you decide to do the V.P.T. course?

S: 'Cause I think it'll be good, thought it'd be good anyway.

I: In what way?

S: Mmm, thought it'd be good for work experience.

I: If you hadn't done this course what would you have done?

S: Second Year.

I: What do you think of this course?

S: It's good

I: What's your favourite thing on this course?

S: Going on work experience.

I: Do you like the work experience?

S: Yeah.

I: Why is this?

S: 'Cause it helps ye when you get older - you know what it's like.

I: Which do you prefer, this year's course (the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme) or what you were doing last year?

S: I prefer this one.

I: Is this year better than last year then?

S: Yeah. It's a break.

I: Why?

S: It's a break, like, you don't have to study or all you do is the projects.

I: What do you do this year that you didn't get a chance to do last year?

S: What?

I: What do you do this year that you didn't get a chance to do last year?

S: Mmm ... the work, I suppose. 'Cause we never did the work last year - didn't get a chance.

I: What else is different about this year compared to last year?

S: Don't know.

I: There must be something else different about it.

S: Mmm, all the, some of the subjects are different, like business studies. I didn't know.

I: What subjects did you do last year?

S: Mmm, maths, english, history, geography, home economics and art.

I: What subjects do you do this year?

S: Maths, english, science, home economics, art, business studies.

I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?

S: What?

I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?

S: Don't know.

I: Why did you chose art?

S: 'Cause I liked drawing.

I: What else could you have chosen?
S: Mmm, building construction or woodwork.
I: Why didn't you pick one of them?
S: Didn't want to do any of them.
I: Do you like art?
S: Yeah.
I: What is it about it that you like?
S: Drawing.
I: Anything else?
S: No.
I: What have you done this year so far in art?
S: Did a puppet made people. That's all, I think.
I: Which did you like best?
S: Don't know.
I: Would you be able to do it again or show someone else how to do it?
S: I'd like to make it again.
I: Would you be able to show someone else how to make it?
S: Yeah.
I: How would art come in useful when you have finished this course?
S: Like, ahh mmm, like, if you wanted to do it again you can.
I: If you had the choice again would you pick art?
S: Yeah.
I: Would you like to do something else, a different option if you had the choice?
S: No.
I: How long have you been doing this Vocational Preparation and Training course now?
S: Just this year.
I: What do you think of it?
S: It's good.
I: Do you like it?
S: Yeah

I: Why?
S: It gives you a rest from the other classes, like doing maths and everything like that.

I: And do you think it is useful?
S: Yeah.
I: In what way?
S: Don't know.
I: What have you done that is not useful this year?
S: Ahh, I don't know really.
I: If you could change this whole course what would you change about it?
S: Mmm, I'd change the day for work experience because Tuesday is a slack day. I'd prefer a Thursday. That's what I would
I: What do you think you are good at?
S: I don't know.
I: There must be something you think you are good at?
S:
I: Are you good at art?
S: No.
I: What is your favourite subject?
S: Home economics.
I: Is it your favourite because you are good at it?
S: Yeah, I suppose, a bit
I: Are you good at anything else?
S: I'm a bit good at art.
I: Do you think the teachers think you are good?
S: Yeah.
I: What type of things do they say to you?
S: What?
I: What type of things do the teachers say to you?
S: When?
I: When you are doing some of this work?
S: Just try your best. Something like that.
I: Does anyone else say things like that to you?
S: No.

Third Interview - Student C

I: What class are you in?

S: Vocational Preparation and Training Programme.

I: How many in your family?

S: Five.

I: Whereabouts in the family do you come?

S: First.

I: How many years have you been in this school?

S: Three and a half.

I: Is there anything you like about this school?

S: Mmm, not really, no.

I: Did you do your Inter?

S: Yeah.

I: Why did you decide to do a Vocational Preparation and Training Programme?

S: Well, I couldn't get into French so I thought

I: Pardon?

S: I couldn't get into French so I thought it would be good to do this year.

I: If you hadn't done this course what would you have done?

S: Mmm, Fifth Year.

I: What do you think of this course?

S: Yeah, its good.

I: What's your favourite part of it?

S: Art.

I: Why is this?

S: I like it.

I: Which do you prefer, this year's course or what you were doing last year?

S: This year.

I: Is this year much better than last year?

S: Yeah.

I: Why?

S: No pressure.

I: What do you do this year that you did not get a chance to do last year?

S: More freedom, like. There aren't teachers, mmm, you know, you don't have teachers telling you to do your homework

and everything, you know. You don't have pressure from tests.

I: What did you not like about last year?

S: The Inter is hard, like. You had to study for hours.

I: Is there much of that this year?

S: No, there's nothing.

I: What else is different about this year compared to last year?

S: Mmm, there's more the teachers, they can deal with you, there's a small class, so teachers have more time to

I: What subjects did you do last year?

S: Mmm, french, science, home economics, art

I: What subjects do you do this year?

S: Art and home economics, they are my options.

I: Did you do any of these subjects last year?

S: Mmm, yeah.

I: Did you do art last year?

S: I didn't do art for my Mock or my Inter. I just

I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?

S: Mm, more freedom this year.

I: Why did you chose art?

S: Mmm, I didn't want to do metal work or woodwork.

I: Was that the only reason you chose art, because you didn't want to to metal work or woodwork?

S: Yeah.

I: What else chould you have chosen?

S: Metal work or woodwork.

I: Why did you not pick one of them?

S: Mm, I don't know.

I: Would it be because you would be the only girl in the class?

S: No. I just picked art

I: Do you like art?

S: Yeah.

I: What is it about art that you like?

S: Mm, I like I don't like doing painting or anything

- like that. I like doing puppets and lino things.
- I: What have you done so far this year in art?
- S: Mm, a lino thing, a puppet and the paper yokes.
- I: Which of these did you like the best?
- S: Puppets.
- I: How did you go about making the puppet?
- S: Draw out the pattern. Cut it out. Cut out the material and you sew them all together.
- I: Do you think you would be able to do this again and show someone else how to do it.
- S: Yeah, if I had the mmm, if I had, mmm, if I knew how to do it. If I had the pattern and ... mmm
- I: If you had all that stuff would you be able to do it?
- S: Yeah.
- I: How could art come in useful when you have finished this course?
- S: No, I'm not going to do it again.
- I: Would it come in useful in any other way?
- S: Mm, well it would probably be a hobby or something like that, but it wouldn't be a job.
- I: Why did you not pick construction studies?
- S: I don't know it would be hard.
- I: If you had the choice again would you pick the same options?
- S: I might pick woodwork.
- I: Why?
- S: I saw there, the boy did a lot of stuff, its good. I'd like to try it.
- I: How long have you been doing this Vocational Preparation and Training Programme course?
- S: Mmm, half a year.
- I: What do you think of it?
- S: Its OK.
- I: What do you like about it?
- S: Mmm, there's not pressure or anything, you know. You have good crack, like
- I: Do you think it is useful?
- S: Mmm, not really, like, the V.P.T.P. I is not really that useful. You need another course with it.

I: What have you done that you think is not useful?

S: Mmm, I don't know.

I: What do you think you are good at?

S: Mmm, French.

I: What is your favourite subject?

S: French.

I: Is it your favourite subject because you are good at it?

S: Yeah.

I: Are you good at anything else?

S: Mmm, I'm OK at English, like, mmm, OK at maths.

I: Do you think your teachers think you are good at all the subjects?

S: No.

I: How do you know this?

S: (inaudible on tape). My maths teacher knows I don't like it, ye know

I: Does anyone else say things like that to you?

S: No.

Fourth Interview - Student D

I: What class are you in?

S: V.P.T.P.

I: Whereabouts in your family do you come?

S: Youngest.

I: How many in your family?

S: Three.

I: Does that include your parents?

S: Ye.

I: How many years have you been in this school?

S: Four.

I: What do you think of this place?

S: Don't mind it.

I: Is there anything about school that you like?

S: I like catering.

I: Did you do your Inter Cert?

S: Yeah.

I: Why did you decide to do the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme course?

S: Well, I didn't know that I wanted to do and the work experience is good. You know, try different things.

I: Was there anything else?

S: No.

I: If you hadn't done this what would you have done?

S: I would have gone into Fifth Year.

I: What do you think of this course?

S: I like it.

I: What is your favourite thing on this course?

S: Catering.

I: Why is this?

S: I just like cooking.

I: Which do you prefer, this year's course or what you were doing last year?

S: This year.

I: Is this year much better than last year?

S: Yeah.

I: Why?

S: You don't have to study for exams and that

I: What do you do this year that you did not get a chance to do last year?

S: Go out on work experience.

I: Did you like that?

S: Yeah.

I: Why?

S: Because it showed ye what working is like.

I: What did you not like about last year?

S: Just didn't like studying for exams and that

I: Is there much of that this year?

S: No.

I: What else is different about this year compared to last year?

S: Just haven't got hassle of exams.

I: What subjects did you do last year?

S: Irish and we don't do Irish this year. Most of the other subjects are the same.

I: What subjects do you do this year?

S: French, spanish, catering, art, english, maths.

I: Did you do any of these subjects last year?

S: Yeah.

I: Which ones?

S: English, maths, art, catering.

I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?

S: Don't do Irish this year and we did it last year.

I: Why did you chose art?

S: Well, we didn't really have that much of a choice. There was only art or construction studies.

I: Why did you not pick construction studies?

S: I preferred art to them.

I: Do you like art then?

S: It's all right.

I: What is it about art that you like?

S: Just like drawing and making puppets.

I: What have you done so far this year in art?

S: Puppets, did lino printing and the thing you were doing with us.

I: Which of these did you like the best?
S: The puppet.
I: How did you go about doing this?
S: We just made the face out of old fabric and things
I: Was there anything else to making it?
S: No.
I: Did you enjoy doing it?
S: Yeah.
I: How would art come in useful when you have finished?
S: Don't know.
I: How long have you been doing this course now?
S: About 4 months.
I: What do you think of it?
S: I think it's good.... better than last year.
I: What is it about it that you like?
S: I like the work experience because it gives you an idea of, you know, what you would like to do.
I: Do you think it is useful?
S: Yeah.
I: In what way?
S: Helps you make up your mind.
I: What have you done this year that you think is not useful?
S: Art.
I: Why do you think this?
S: I don't think it will be much good to you when you leave school.
I: If you had a chance to change this course what would you change about it?
S: I'd like to have Irish in it.
I: What do you think you are good at?
S: Catering.
I: What's your favourite subject.
S: Catering.
I: Is it your favourite subject because you are good at it?
S: Yeah.
I: Are you good at anything else?
S: Irish, maths.
I: Do you think the teachers think you are good?

S: Yeah.

I: How do you know this?

S: Never have any complaints.

I: What kind of things would they say to you?

S: In what way, like?

I: If you were in Irish class last year, what would the teacher say to you?

S: Tell you you were good and that

I: Why would they say this?

S: I'd say they would just say it because it is the truth.

Fifth Interview - Student E

I: What class are you in?

S: V.P.T.P.

I: Where do you live?

S: Castletown.

I: How many in your family?

S: Seven kids.

I: So whereabouts in the family do you come?

S: Fourth oldest.

I: How many years have you been in this school?

S: Three and a half.

I: What do you think of the place?

S: It's OK

I: Is there anything about it that you like?

S: No.

I: Did you do your Inter?

S: Yeah.

I: Why did you decide to do the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme course?

S: I wanted to leave after doing my Inter but wasn't allowed, so this would be experience for me.

I: If you hadn't done this course what would you be doing now?

S: Gone into Fifth Year.

I: So which do you prefer, this year's course or what you were doing last year?

S: This year's.

I: Is this year much better than last year?

S: Yeah.

I: Why?

S: I don't know. It's just better.

I: What do you do this year that you didn't get a chance to do last year?

S: Work experience.

I: Is there anything else?

S: Mmm, more of the life things in maths. We do what we need in life and in english as well. We do what we need as well.

I: And is that much better?

S: Yeah.

I: What did you not like about last year?

S: Everything.

I: What in particular, though? If you were to single out one thing what would it be?

S: Teachers weren't that nice last year.

I: Is there much of that this year?

S: Yeah. They are much nicer. They are helpful as well.

I: What else is different about this year compared to last year?

S: Smaller class

I: Anything else?

S: No.

I: What subjects did you do last year?

S: Irish, geography, history, science, English, catering, art, that was it.

I: What subjects do you do this year?

S: French, Spanish, English, art, religion, home economics and careers.

I: What other differences are there between this year and last year?

S: Don't know.

I: Why did you choose art?

S: Had a choice between art or construction studies.

I: Why did you not pick construction studies?

S: No interest in it.

I: Do you like art?

S: It's OK.

I: Is there anything about art that you like?

S: No.

I: What have you done so far this year in art?

S: Made a puppet and them bodies.

I: Which of these did you like the best?

S: Puppets.

I: How did you go about making this?

S: Mmm, cut it out onto material

I: Do you think you would be able to do this again or show some one else how to do it?

S: Yeah.

- I: How could art come in useful when you have finished this course?
- S: It won't.
- I: How long have you been doing this Vocational Preparation and Training Programme course?
- S: Four months.
- I: What do you think of it?
- S: It's good.
- I: What is it about it that you really, really like?
- S: It prepares us for life.
- I: Do you think it is useful then?
- S: Yeah.
- I: What have you done that you think is not useful?
- S: Ahh, art.
- I: Why do you think this?
- S: Because we won't use it after.
- I: If you were given a chance to change this course what would you do?
- S: Wouldn't change anything.
- I: What do you think you are good at?
- S: Home economics.
- I: What's your favourite subject?
- S: Home economics.
- I: Is it your favourite because you are good at it?
- S: Yeah.
- I: Are you good at anything else?
- S: Don't think so.
- I: Do you think the teachers think you are good?
- S: Don't know if they do.

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