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INTRODUCTION

Developing a Rationale for Visual Education

Definitions of education often encompass the concept of giving, imposing or putting something in, and use words like 'discipline' and 'indoctrination'.

The original meaning of the word comes from the Latin 'educare' and it is revealing to note that the English translation 'to educate' has more or less become defunct. To 'educate' means to lead or draw forth, to bring out or develop from a latent condition.

The existing education system in this country (and in most western societies) tends to over-emphasise cognition and to define in terms of literacy, numeracy and the measurable aspects of scientific enterprise, all of which rely heavily on hard-headed logical thinking and retention of facts. (1) Within education, we tend to give solutions and require pupils to remember imposed established answers. This often leaves the young person with little or no experience of making decisions or of developing his or her own value judgements.

Education systems and methods reflect the values of

the societies they operate in and our present highly competitive points-dominated education system as outlined, reflects the materialistic and technological society we live in. In a recent article entitled "The Arts must have a Central Role in Education Policy" (2), Brother Mark Hederman (former principal of Glenstal Abbey) wrote that "The Green Paper on Education is Dickensian in its neglect of the Arts". (3) He reminds us of Ciaran Benson's warning in the seventies that unless something urgent was done about the arts in education

... Ireland may be faced with a future public which far from fruitfully exploiting the opportunities available to it, may be characterised by a uniform mediocrity of taste controlled by commercial interests. (4)

Brother Hederman then goes on to point out the all-important role of art education and its vital role in any education curriculum:

... I am not merely recommending a place for the arts in education for the purposes of either education or entertainment. I am claiming that art is an education in itself. Its all-important role in any curriculum should be obvious: it opens new worlds to us, it teaches us to be more fully alive, it makes us sensitive to otherness, to what is different, it pulls us out of ourselves and reveals what is new...

He goes on to say that

... Without it we could produce a generation of aggressive, boring, controlling predators. Art teaches wonder, deference, vulnerability. These too have to be learned by every generation. This Green Paper must accommodate the Arts in a central place, otherwise it will never ripen into fruit. (5)

Art and the Arts in general can provide the key to bridging the huge gaps that exist in our present education system, because art arising out of our most fundamental instincts (the senses) is by its nature a unifying principle through which we can express our total experience. (6) In turn it also tells us a lot about ourselves and the world we live in. It enables us not only to unify and make sense of our experience, but also enables us to transcend the mundane.

We tend to lay emphasis on the achievement of standards: good/bad, pass/fail, but in art what is most vital is the development of awareness through art making and doing. This development also includes development of aesthetic awareness, social, personal and intellectual awareness. Education through art can lead a child to see him/herself and his/her environment in a totally new light. "For education has not to do with the manufacturing of things but with the fostering and growth of things". (7)

The experiences central to an art activity require self-direction. Lowenfeld and Brittain, and Erickson continually stress the importance of the senses and Herbert Read has written that

...The only real experiences in life are those lived with a virgin sensibility - so that we only hear a tone once, only see a colour once, see,hear, touch, taste and smell everything but once, the first time. All life is an echo of our first sensations, and we build up our consciousness, our whole mental life, by variations and combinations of these elementary sensations. (8)

As mentioned above, we tend to confuse the process of education with certain limited pre-determined responses and to lose sight of the fact that the senses play a central role in our learning experiences. Lowenfeld and Brittain cite a 1962 report published in the United States (Association for Supervisors and Curriculum Development) which

... decried the schools' emphasis on facts, pointing out that they have no value in themselves, but are useful only as they are organized into convictions, beliefs and systems of reference. (9)

The Boyer Report on Education for the Carnegie Foundation 1986 showed that little or no change had taken place and "emphasises that it is not the facts which are important, but that students must develop the capacity to think critically and communicate effectively". (10) In 1993 we may ask yet again what effective changes have taken place in the light of these findings.

One of the main reasons for this slow pace of educational change is that society itself is very slow to change. Most of us are passive viewers of our culture rather than active participators in it. Television has become a mass means of entertainment but perhaps the indiscriminate use of advertising exemplifies the greatest misuse of the image in our culture. While to some degree we are all victims of the negative effects of the media, those without a highly developed critical awareness are particularly vulnerable.

Despite these negative and often depressing findings, there is increasing evidence of positive changes and awareness of the need to change the approaches and aims in our schools and in our outlooks and ways of

thinking. While failure to consider the arts in the Green Paper on Education is shameful, it is encouraging to note that many people involved in education in the widest sense (and not art educators alone) are aware of the fundamental place of the arts in education. Brother Hederman's article already mentioned is a very relevant example in this context.

On a recent visit to the National College of Art and Design, President Mary Robinson showed particular interest in the art education courses. She felt there was an increase in awareness of the important role of art in schools throughout the country, and said that on a recent visit to a number of rural schools she had been impressed, not alone by the work of the children, but also by the pride taken in it by the children and the teachers. (11)

The new Junior Certificate programme also reflects an awareness of the unique role of art in education and is already bringing about many changes in the system. Many of its aims and principles accord with the ideas and theories of John Dewey, who as the last of the "great educators" in the Classical mode, remains a major influence on twentieth century education. He believed that education should be child-centred

and should provide for the uniqueness of the child and the significance of experience in his life. Above all, he emphasised process over product in education and stressed the fluid nature of the child's learning and achievements. He saw art as the refinement and full manifestation of the child's expressive impulses and in this way playing an intrinsically valuable role in the education of the child. (12)

More recently, in an Irish context, the Junior Certificate programme is based on principles of:

... breadth and balance: every young person should have a wide range of educational experiences ...
relevance: curriculum provision should address the immediate and prospective needs of the young person...
quality: every young person should be challenged to achieve the highest possible standards of excellence, with due regard to different aptitudes and abilities and to international comparisons. (13)

Its general aims emphasise development of all aspects of the individual stating that

... the curriculum should provide a wide range of educational experiences within a supportive and formative environment. It should draw on the aesthetic and creative, the ethnical, the linguistic, the mathematical, the physical, the scientific and technological, the social, environmental and political and the spiritual domains. (14)

The Junior Certificate programme encourages cross-curriculum linkages and recognises that Art, Craft and Design provide a unique part of the education of the whole person, through heart, head and hand, enabling the person to shape his or her world with discernment, and to understand and appreciate the work of others. The benefits of an education in Art, Craft and Design for the student at this developmental stage extend far beyond a competence in the subject itself (and the ability to apply it through life): "Art, Craft and Design education develops a number of personal qualities, particularly those of initiative, perseverance, sensibility and self-reliance". (15)

These aims and principles challenge attitudes that have persisted (and still do) in schools where art is treated as a second class subject or is conceived of as a recreational element in the timetable.

The underlying philosophy of the Junior Certificate challenges not only the schools but equally importantly challenges the teachers and the pupils:

...Under the new approach the role of the teacher is changing from the dispenser of a corpus of knowledge to passive pupils who then simply repeat that knowledge in exams. The teacher becomes a facilitator of learning who

allows the young people to develop various skills which will help them to learn. (16)

Much of the ground work for the Junior Certificate was prepared by the Curriculum and Examination Board (CEB) which was established in 1984. In many ways the recommendations made by the CEB in its Discussion Paper: The Arts in Education and its Report of the Board of Studies: 'The Arts' are met by the new Junior Certificate Programme. Its three overall aims for the arts were to promote a love of the arts, a balance between making and appreciating art, and to encourage critical thinking. In 1987 because of a change of government the CEB was replaced by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and by September 1988 the new programme was virtually prepared.

While the Junior Certificate is very much in its infant stages, it is providing second level schools with a much needed change and challenge. Given the climate of change and transition that it has brought about, it seems a particularly appropriate time to base this dissertation upon directly gathered material from three different second level schools in Dublin. I have conducted research for this dissertation using questionnaires and interviews.

This has provided a valuable opportunity to learn about the schools in terms of the role which art plays in them and how this role is manifested in different ways and attitudes within the three schools.

CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOLS

The schools on which the research is based, while being situated in the Dublin areas, cater for very different sectors of the community. One caters for children from a working class background where there is a high level of unemployment. This school is referred to as School A in the research.

Children attending the other two schools come from middle class to upper middle class backgrounds.

These schools are referred to as Schools B and C.

They are both protestant in foundation but are in practice inter-denominational, whereas School A which in theory is non-denominational is in practice made up almost entirely of Roman Catholic pupils.

School A

School A is a co-educational second level day school run by the V.E.C. in a working class area of the city and founded in 1956. There is a high proportion of remedial pupils and as a vocational school its curriculum leans more towards practical than academic subjects. Pupils in the junior cycle do not in general aspire to a university education and many leave

(or are not accepted back) after the completion of the Junior cycle. There is a separate section of the school providing Post Leaving Certificate courses.

	<u>No. of Pupils</u>
Junior School	90
Senior School	178
Post Leaving Certificate Courses	208
Repeat Leaving Certificate	61
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme	35
	<hr/>
Total:	572
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Subjects studied in Junior Cycle

English, Irish, Maths, Science, Woodwork, Metalwork, Art, R.E., P.E., French and Geography.

Subjects studied in Senior Cycle

English, Irish, Maths, Science, Geography, French, Art, R.E., P.E., Business Organisation, Technical Drawing, Physics, Biology, Engineering.

Post Leaving Certificate Courses (P.L.C.)

Art and Drama, Design Studies, Banking and Finance, Computer Studies, Childcare, Horticulture, Marketing, Transport Engineering, Secretarial, Business Studies, Public Relations.

These courses are designed to prepare students for third level colleges or for direct employment as appropriate. All of them include one month's work experience.

The School runs one post Junior certificate course for students aged fifteen to twenty. This course is run in two sections:

1. Combined mechanical drawing/woodwork/metalwork and engineering.
2. Furniture finishing/upholstery.

The School also runs a V.T.O.S. course (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) for the long term unemployed. On this course there are two adult groups studying for the Leaving Certificate.

School B

This School is a private fee-paying girls school situated on the outskirts of the city. It is mainly a day school with one third of the pupils boarding in the school. It is under Church of Ireland management and was founded in 1866. Most of the pupils come from middle and upper class backgrounds. While there is a strong academic tradition in the school (eighty per cent of its pupils proceed to universities) it states that "we like to think that we produce

a rounded, well balanced individual with an appreciation of everything that is nice". (1) Past pupils from this School are to be found in the professions, in business, and in the creative arts. Two of its past pupils were the first women graduates of Trinity College and the National University of Ireland. Past pupil artists include: Lucinda Tynan, Joy Gerard, Ann Corrigan, Lisa Howard, Niamh Lewis, Leah Beggs, Mary Swanzy, Constance Spry, Beatrice Orpen, Monica Stokes.

There is a Junior school which is located in a separate building and is managed by its own head teacher. Its philosophy is Froebelian.

The total number of pupils in the school is 506 and as pupils rarely leave after Junior cycle, the number of pupils throughout the school remains constant.

Subjects studied in Junior cycle

Form 1 : Irish, English, History, Geography, Maths, French, Art, Science, Music, Latin, Home Economics, R.E. and P.E.

Form 11 : Pupils study the above subjects but may choose the following options:

German/Art/Music
Latin/Business Studies.

Form 111 : As above (Junior Certificate).

Form 1V : (Transition Year):
Irish, English, French, Maths, Computers, Geography, History, R.E., World of Work (includes Business Studies, Mini-companies and a work experience

programme), Education for Living (includes Health Education programme, Childcare and First Aid) Guidance, Sciences, P.E. (includes different choices for each term).

Form IV

Options 1: German/Spanish/Crafts 2/Art Appreciation and History/Musicianship/Fine Art.

Options 2: Latin/Fine Art/Crafts 1/Music Appreciation Workshop/Introductory German/E.S.P. (European Studies Programme).

Term Module in one of the following:

Architecture and Design/Home Economics/Photography/Music and Drama/Word Processing and Keyboard Skills/Gardening/Motor Maintenance.

Form V : English, Maths and Irish (unless excused Irish under Department of Education regulations). A European language is recommended and a Culture Subject and a Leisure Activity are compulsory for every student. Seven or eight subjects altogether are studied.

Form V

Options 1 : French/Biology.

Options 2 : Biology/Chemistry/Home Economics General/Accountance/History.

Options 3 : German/Spanish/Art/Applied Maths/Computer Maths (Non Leaving Certificate).

Options 4 : Art/Geography/Chemistry/Latin/Home Economics (Senior Cycle)/Business Organisation/Economics.

Options 5 : Biology/Physics/Geography/Home Economics (Senior Cycle)/Musicianship.

Form VI : Similar to above with the inclusion of Greek as an option.

School C

This school is a private fee-paying co-educational school situated on the outskirts of the city.

like School B, it is under Church of Ireland management. It was founded in 1843 and is mainly a boarding school with only twenty percent of its pupils being day pupils. It has a total of two hundred and ninety pupils.

As in School B most of these pupils come from middle to upper class backgrounds; there are a few Bursaries awarded to assist parents of strictly limited means. There is also an entrance exam held in May each year after which three or four Major Scholarships and Exhibitions are offered (each of these is tenable for four years). There are special fees for the sons and daughters of the clergy. Up to twenty per cent of pupils come from overseas. A sense of community is very important in this school and its small numbers support this. Small classes also foster the tradition of scholarship and the development of individual pupils is considered at regular staff meetings.

The school aims to give an education firmly based on the cultural heritage of Ireland drawing continually

on the best developments abroad as well as in Britain.

Subjects studied in Junior School

English, Irish, French, Latin or Classical Studies, R.E., History, Geography, Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Art, Pottery, Woodwork, Music and P.E.

In Fourth Form, pupils take the transition year where the focus is very much upon the extra curricular activities that form a necessary part of a full seven day boarding school as well as a wider ranging approach to the traditional subjects already mentioned.

Options : Drama (including stagecraft), Classics, Practical Maths, Practical Physics, Guidance, Oral Irish/Irish Culture, Oral French/French Literature, Modern Languages (Spanish and Esperanto), Pottery, Photography, Art, Graphical Communications, Woodwork, Biology (ecological studies and health education) and a wide range of P.E. activities.

Subjects studies in Senior School

In Form V students choose six or seven subjects for the Leaving Certificate from the following range:

English, Irish, Maths, French, Spanish, Geography, History, Latin, Classical Civilisation, Music, Art, Geology (T.C.D. Matriculation), Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Applied Maths, Economics, Technical Drawing.

In Form V students also take O Level and G.C.S.E. examinations in a range of appropriate subjects. These

qualifications are particularly suitable for university applications abroad.

A particular feature of the education provided in the school is the strong emphasis on the teaching of the sciences through practical demonstration. The visual arts also have always played a vital role in the school and past pupil artists include:

Henry Leech, Richard C. Orpen, Oisin Kelly, Patrick Scott, Patrick Pye, Michael Biggs, George McCaw, Bret McEntaggart, David Hone, Anthony Little, Michael Warren, Cormac Boydell, Packi Smith, Patrick Stronnach (Fine Art Furniture), Peter Watts (Ceramics), Sophie Shaw Smith (Painter), Marissa Weatherhead (Ceramics) and Claire Bigger (Sculptor).

Sculptor Claire Bigger is the first distinguished female artist to have joined this list, the school having only become co-educational over the last ten to fifteen years.

METHODOLOGY

Similar methods of research were used in each of the three schools:

1. Structured interviews with school principals.
2. Structured interviews with guidance counsellors.
3. Structured interviews with senior art teachers.
4. Structured interviews with sixth form pupils.
5. Questionnaires were distributed to all the teaching staff in the three schools. The principal aims of the questionnaire were to ascertain information relating to the teacher's attitudes to art in the following areas:
 - a) How important/if important they felt was the role art played in their school.
 - b) If they felt that this role was appropriate.
 - c) What/if any relevance or contributions on art education had to the teaching of their particular subject or subjects.
 - d) If they felt that an art education has more or less relevance to pupils in relation to gender, age and academic ability.

CHAPTER II

INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

Question 1

Is the role of art in your school

- a) not important?
- b) fairly important?
- c) important?
- d) very important?

All three Principals said that art played a very important role in their schools. They spoke of their schools as having strong traditions in art and were unanimous in stressing the importance of its role in expressing the philosophy of their school and in contributing to its ethos. This role manifests itself differently in the following ways.

School A

The importance of the role of art is very significant in the curriculum in that it is a core subject and there is a large number of pupils taking art throughout the school whereas in a lot of schools art is not at any stage a core subject. As a vocational school, the curriculum is based on providing an education where

there is equal emphasis on practical learning skills and academic attainment. For example, it is highly unlikely that metalwork could be found on the curriculum in most secondary schools, whereas school A's choice of more academic subjects is more limited (its curriculum does not include music, history or a second language). Most Vocational schools offer a choice between art and mechanical drawing dating back to the Group Certificate but this school offers both.

Facilities for art in the school are good and there is a wide range of materials available. The most obvious manifestation of the role of art in the school is the very impressive standard of art work by the seventh year Post Leaving Certificate students displayed throughout the school.

School B

The principal emphasised the role of art as being extremely important in this school. It is exemplified in a number of ways but perhaps most of all in the popularity of art for the pupils: "realistically I would say that art is by far one of the strongest options for the Junior Certificate the children all want

to do art..." (2). The school aims to develop individual abilities and to extend the pupils interests to all areas of art, craft and design, as well as aiming to "develop critical awareness so that they become aesthetically conscious of their surroundings..... it is hoped that they will carry this awareness throughout their adult lives, thus enriching their experiences and perhaps inspiring them to pursue an associated career." Out of every sixth year class there are

always some who apply for a place at Art College.

The school crest includes a palette and brush, as a symbol of the importance of art in the school. The art rooms in the school are bright and spacious and the materials available and general facilities are of a high standard, again conveying the importance of art in the school. As well as a sense of structure there is also a sense of care and trust in these rooms. This can be seen in the way materials are cared for generally and in the way that pupil's work is cared for and displayed. A selection of work from each year is displayed in the main hall and changed at frequent intervals.

School C

The principal felt that "within the curriculum it would be little more than fairly important or important, but its overall role in the life of the school is very important" (4). He explained that art is a core subject in Forms I and II but that senior pupils often do not choose art because they feel that it is more difficult to get a high grade in the Leaving Certificate in art than in other subjects. Art and design activities including photography, video, pottery and stage design feature very strongly as an extra curricular activity. Students have access to the art room in their free time and at weekends and this often provides an opportunity for those who do not do art as a subject to do so in this way. There are three school art exhibitions each year and one of these is centred around an arts evening during which a visiting artist gives a talk, speaks with the pupils about their work and adjudicates and distributes prizes. Last year the winner of the senior pottery prize was a pupil who did not study art as a subject within the timetable. Over the years the school has held a number of important outside art exhibitions including a past pupils exhibition in 1983 and an International exhibition of Children's Art in 1989.

Question 2

In your school what existing structures support the role of art?

The principal of School A felt that the strongest support came from the curriculum of the school and the art department. He felt that the head art teacher in the school had achieved a great deal and was responsible for much of the increased awareness of the importance of art in the school.

In School B the principal stressed the value she placed on the art department and its staff "the art teachers are such a wonderful team of people... despite the fact that they are overworked themselves they give a lot of their spare time to the pupils... I value the way they work so beautifully together as a team. I find that art people in general are willing to give of themselves and they know that there is more to running a school than what can be fitted in between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m." (5). She also felt that the enthusiasm of the pupils was a support despite the fact that many of their parents do not encourage art and see it as being of less importance than the more academic subjects.

In School C the principal felt that the strongest support was in the day to day life of the school and in the generally high level of awareness and appreciation of the role of art by most of the staff and pupils. This in turn is supported by a strong artistic tradition and also is reflected in and fostered by the character and architecture of the school buildings and grounds. He also felt that a high proportion of parents are very aware of the important role of art and that this too is a very real support "you don't need to have a lot of parents telling their children how important art is for that to have a spin-off effect on other children in the school" (6).

Each principal supported the value of giving pupils an opportunity to visit galleries and exhibitions which necessitated the occasional disruption of other classes.

Question 3

Are there any special difficulties in timetabling art?
If so, what, if any, solutions have you found to these problems?

Each principal agreed that the biggest difficulty was

time and that it was very difficult to give most subjects enough time in trying to cover the range of subjects offered for both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate in their schools.

School A

The principal does not have any particular difficulties in timetabling double periods for art as double periods are provided for woodwork and metalwork also. He feels that the change to the Junior Certificate demands more time for art than the timetable allows to cover the required amount of project work. This has put a lot of pressure on the school's tradition of offering both art and mechanical drawing. He feels that in the future pupils may have to choose between these subjects, but has not found any immediate solutions to the problem.

School B

The principal questions the value of single periods for any art class and tries to avoid them where possible but inevitably in timetabling for a broad range of subjects single art periods are impossible to avoid completely. Most of the junior art classes have one double and one single per week, and the Leaving Certificate pupils have two doubles and a single with an

occasional extra single arranged by the art department. She would like to be able to offer a triple period for art classes but has not been able to because of the difficulty of matching this with another suitable subject. In transition year pupils have an opportunity to study art for up to ten periods per week.

School C

The difficulties of timetabling art in this school are very similar to those discussed in School B. The principal explained that he has worked in a school where triple periods were provided for art in some classes and that these seemed to be very successful, but he has not been able to achieve this as yet in School C because of the inability to match it with another subject. He feels that it has been an achievement to timetable art as a core subject for all first and second year pupils. Most junior classes study art for two double periods and Leaving Certificate pupils have three doubles and a single period per week. He regrets the fact that since art became established as an examination subject on the official curriculum of the school, it has lost some of its prestige. In its former capacity as an extra curricular activity

it was regarded as highly prestigious and under the teaching of Frank Morris and later Oisín Kelly many pupils such as Patrick Scott, Patrick Pye, David Hone, Michael Warren and others went on to achieve highly successful careers in art.

...because it is now seen as an examination subject, the element of inspiration is much harder to foster. The thirst for points is squeezing art and leads one to question the value of exams in art. The fact that NCAD are more interested in the portfolios of applicants than their Leaving Certificate results speaks volumes. (7)

Question 4

In what way/ways does art contribute to the development of the pupils?

In the three schools the principals agreed that art was of great value to the overall development of all pupils and spoke specifically about the most important aspects of this.

School A

The principal finds that students who are weak in academic subjects often excel in the practical subjects. He stressed that "this is not to put down art in any way", and went on to say that "we have had many students here

who would not have passed their Intermediate Certificate had they not got the practical subjects. Generally the weaker student tends to get put down a lot and tends to have an inferiority complex". (8) These students can be helped enormously if they are found to be good at art or in another subject where they can make a successful piece of work with their hands. For such a pupil the discovery that they are good at something is of immeasurable value and can give a tremendous boost to his or her confidence.

... he or she may then start to believe that they are not as bad as they thought and will often put in more effort into other subjects. Seeing immediate results is very important for the weaker student; they cannot see results in academic subject but if they do something well in woodwork or art they have a very obvious result in that they have a piece of work that they made with their own hands and they take tremendous pride in it. (9)

School B

The principal feels that there are various ways in which art contributes to the development of the pupil.

... We aim to produce a rounded, well balanced education with an appreciation of everything that is nice - dance, drama, art, music, literature and the arts in general. (10)

The principal was moved by the tremendous pride that pupils took in their three pieces of work for the Junior Certificate last year. She feels that to be able to express themselves in a variety of media is very important for the pupils. She feels that less academically inclined pupils can benefit particularly from success in art

... that is not assuming that all artists are the weak academic people, because of course they are not, but it is an area where it is possible that they can shine. Recently at our debs night it was magnificent to realise that the person on the video camera was the least academic child in the whole school. She was chosen and invited to do so by the teacher who runs the video club and she will remember that for the rest of her life. (11)

School C

The principal feels that it is sometimes forgotten that for most teenagers the biggest problem is their image of themselves:

... Once they get that sorted out everything else falls into place, and art can often provide the key to that. Success in any art form is particularly satisfying and rewarding, because the pupils know that what they have done is theirs - they

have put the work in and have something good to show for it.

Pupils who are not being rewarded with success in other areas often blossom in art. If they are academically weak, art provides a unique opportunity to participate on equal terms and often they are met with unexpected success. This can have a tremendous effect and can instil confidence where there was none before and can even spread to other areas.

For the stronger academic pupil art provides a valuable and extremely important opportunity for the expression of independent thought and personal emotion. Most other formal academic subjects do not provide these and a great proportion of these pupils time is spent in absorbing, learning what they are taught and reproducing it later in an exam. (12)

He also feels that the special relationship which an art teacher has with the pupils is of great value to the pupils:

...In most subjects the teacher is instructing - because he/she knows and the pupils don't; whereas in art the teacher is sharing more directly in the learning process and this involvement is very valuable for the pupils. (13)

CHAPTER III

INTERVIEWS WITH GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS

Question 1

In what ways does an art education contribute most to the development of pupils?

School A

The guidance counsellor believes that art is a very enriching experience for the pupils and that it helps to develop their creativity in other areas. She thinks

... that art may be more important for the weaker academic pupil ... I spend the majority of my time counselling remedial pupils in the school and I feel strongly that pupils should not be discouraged from doing art because of weaker ability. Art can be done at different levels and is of enormous importance to the weaker pupil. It is particularly valuable for pupils who have poor verbal ability as art provides a means for them to express themselves in another way... I feel that these pupils would benefit greatly from art therapy and think it is appalling that it is not more widely available .. many disturbed children in the school could be helped greatly by the provision of art therapy. (1)

She went on to say that she believed that remedial pupils should be integrated into the school system and

should not be segregated as this only increased their problems, but that more provision should be made in schools to meet the needs of these children.

School B

The guidance counsellor finds that an art education "broadens the pupils views of life and creates sensitivity to things of the spirit". (2)

He witnessed the very valuable changes that took place when art was introduced into the primary curriculum and saw these pupils become enriched in terms of their awareness and development.

He feels that there is such a strong focus on academic ability in the present education system that

... there is a danger that students with strong academic ability feel that they have arrived, and know all that there is to be known, and therefore do not have a sensitivity to other areas of life. This imbalance needs to be looked at and school systems should take special care that these students are not allowed to view art as the poor relation or as something that weaker students do. Art opens young people up to spiritual and feeling values and academic pupils often need to have these values enlarged. (2)

School C

The guidance counsellor finds that art education relates to the pupils' development as people and that it contributes greatly to their overall development. He believes that it is equally valuable at all stages of school life and that it plays an essential role:

for some it provides the opportunity of achievement and success that they cannot perhaps achieve in academic subjects. (3)

Question 2

Are there any factors which encourage or discourage pupils from choosing art?

School A

"The student interested in art is often motivated from within". The guidance counsellor feels that more pupils could be encouraged to consider a career in art if they had more parental support. She finds that there is often a complete lack of parental pressure and motivation in the cases of many pupils. Another

discouraging factor is that jobs are uppermost in many pupils minds and they are not prepared to put in the years of study and commitment demanded by many art courses.

School B

The guidance counsellor states that

...at the end of transition year students parents and teachers assemble to discuss subject choices, usually on a career-related basis. The decision to pursue art at this stage has more to do with ability than interest, and pupils choose it often because it has direct implications in their area of career choice. Many students regret having to give up art at this stage but feel that they are not good enough at it to pursue a career in art. Points are very important and if pupils do not see art as producing points for them or specifically related to their career choice then they don't do it.

School C

The guidance counsellor feels that a lot of pupils drop art because of the History of Art paper in the Leaving Certificate, and believes that more pupils

would choose art if it was a practical subject only. Parental pressure also influences pupils' subject and career choice. Parents often find it difficult to accept the frequent necessity for pupils to do a portfolio preparation course in order to gain access to a third level art course.

Question 3

What information/advice do you give to pupils who express an interest in pursuing art as a career?

School A

The guidance counsellor always tries to find out the extent of the pupil's interest, by asking them to talk about their interest in art, what they do in their spare time, why they are interested in art, before giving them specific information on art courses and careers. If she feels that their interest is genuine then she will give them information related to the area of art that they are interested in.

School B

Students are usually more interested in the immediate problems of interviews and portfolios, than in discussing the fine details of specialist areas in art. Areas such as graphic art, design and fine art are discussed. Students involved in art are often highly motivated and talent-driven. Out of fifty or sixty pupils each year, there are always three or four who apply to NCAD or another art College. (4)

School C

I always ask pupils who are interested in art to consider whether they want to spend their life's work in this area or if they would prefer to keep art as a leisure activity, because I often find that the transition between doing something you like and making it into your lifetime's work can sometimes sour the imagination. (5)

As in School B, he finds that most pupils at this stage are not interested in areas of specialization, although this is sometimes the case. Most pupils want to discuss a broad range of courses; architecture, design, fine art, advertising, horticulture, ceramics etc.

Question 4

Do you find that education is increasingly viewed as a process primarily concerned with enabling pupils to get jobs?

School A

"Yes, jobs are uppermost in pupils minds". (6)

(see answer to question 2).

School B

The guidance counsellor agrees that this has been the case but he has noticed a definite change in the attitude of the pupils over the last couple of years. Increasingly he finds that pupils are going to universities to do a B.A. to open up possibilities and not necessarily in terms of a career.

They see this as being a valuable social, intellectual and educational experience. Parents are often intimidated by this. Parents are concerned about security and often see art as being risky..... a bit flamboyant..... the kind of area where people get up to no good.

This year one of the brightest pupils in the school is an extremely gifted

scientist who has won award after award and is capable of becoming the number one chemist in Ireland, but her abiding ambition is to become a film director and she is determined to realise this ambition. Her parents are a bit taken aback and it has taken a great deal of persuasion on her behalf to convince them (and I must admit myself also) that this is her calling. (7)

School C

Increasingly I find that parents are looking for value for money (some parents make huge investments in their children's education) and value is seen in terms of the results that their children can produce. They seem to be blinkered to the fact that different children have different aptitudes and abilities and this results in unrealistic expectations. The jobs with the highest status are the goals set by many parents for their children. This reflects the changing values in society and it also reflects the thinking of a large number of people that an academic third level education is a must for everybody. Many of these parents did not have a second or third level education themselves and expect their children to achieve what they did not have the opportunity to achieve. This puts enormous pressure on schools and on children. (8)

CHAPTER 1V

INTERVIEWS WITH ART TEACHERS

Question 1

What kind of role does art play in your school and are you satisfied with this role?

School A

The art teacher feels that the role of art is quite important in the school

...it is very much part of the core curriculum.... and I think they all see it as an interesting and enjoyable subject. Art is particularly important here as the pupils do not study music which is a great pity. (1)

She feels that art could come to the fore much more if it was part of an arts core in the school instead of an isolated subject. The provision of music and drama would help enormously, and she thinks that it is regrettable that the stage is only used once a year by the seventh year pupils. If the pupils were

involved in more stage productions it would help them to see the relevance of art. She also feels that the role of art could be improved with the provision of better facilities but to offset this she feels that she is

... extremely fortunate in having a very supportive and approachable principal who is very generous with his encouragement and with funding in so far as he can afford it. (2)

School B

The art teacher feels that the role of art is extremely important in the school and she is very happy with that role. She feels that it is manifested in the school in the following ways:

... in the general atmosphere, and in the attitudes of other staff members; but most of all in the attitude of the pupils themselves. They take great pride in their art. The principal is extremely supportive.

School C

The art teacher feels that

... art plays quite an important role and is seen as an integral part of the school and school life by the majority of pupils. (4)

This teacher went on to say that while he is quite happy with that role, he finds that as an extra curricular activity art is being "squeezed" by sport in the school. He felt that

as a foreigner I find it hard to accept the overwhelming attitude to sport in English speaking countries. Art is often seen as something done by pupils who are not good at sport but in this school it is often the case that pupils who are good at one thing are good at everything. Sport should not be compulsory for those who really do not want to do it and if such a pupil can prove that he or she is really keen he or she should be allowed to spend this time doing art. (5)

He feels that he is very lucky in having supportive colleagues but occasionally gets annoyed that greater ease exists in the system to allow pupils to get out of class early for rugby matches for example than it does for pupils to leave classes early to go to an exhibition.

Question 2

What are the most important aims of art education in second-level school?

In School A the teacher felt that the most important

aims are to provide a visual and artistic education that pupils can apply to the outside world.

In School B the teacher also stressed the importance of providing a basic visual education, including history and appreciation of art.

In School C the teacher felt that while it is important to provide an art education for those pupils who are good at art and may want to go on and make a career in art, the true aims extend far beyond that. He felt that

...it develops the mind of pupils in a way that no other subject can do; it broadens their horizons; it gives them a pride in developing skills. (6)

Question 3

Are you satisfied with the existing examination structures for art in the Junior and Leaving Certificate?

School A

The teacher felt that

...the Junior Certificate is a bit of a disaster in the sense that there is

far too much involved for the weaker student. I think that the people who set it up have been thinking of secondary schools and have not been looking at the remedial students that we tend to have in vocational schools. There is too much for them to cover, and while the advanced level is fine for the higher clients it needs to be simplified for the weaker student. The lower streams of first and second year are really special education pupils and a lot of the top stream would be regarded as remedial. Most of the pupils leave after the Junior cycle because they are not good enough to be accepted back to take their Leaving Certificate.

I think that the Leaving Certificate is a bit boring and needs to be looked at... it is geared very much for the academic student especially the History of Art. It is very difficult for students who do not have a great grasp of English and it has to be taught in a very simplistic way. On the other hand it is very good for them because a lot of these pupils never get any history or geography as it's not offered in the timetable. (7)

School B

The art teacher feels that while the Junior Certificate is a very ambitious programme for most junior pupils it is very good and a huge improvement on the Intermediate Certificate examination

She believes that there should be no division between higher and lower papers and that pupils at this stage should study a common level course. She also expressed concern about the area of assessment and feels that this needs to be looked at urgently.

In her opinion, the Leaving Certificate course is no longer appropriate as a continuation course for pupils who have completed the Junior Certificate. She is particularly critical of the History of Art section on the Leaving Certificate course, and feels that while it is very important for pupils to study it, the course is far too broad and needs to be narrowed down.

School C

The art teacher is basically satisfied with the Junior Certificate but feels that the assessment system needs to be reviewed and that it is not feasible to send work from all over the country to Athlone to be examined. He feels that the project-based nature of the course is very good, and hopes that this may challenge

the idea that art begins once the

pupils enter the classroom and ends when they leave it.... day pupils ought to have more resources for projects than boarders but they seem to fall in with a way of thinking that is often very regimented... environment is very important and I find that a lot of pupils who do well in art in this school come from families or backgrounds that are steeped in art. (8)

it is very unfair to expect pupils to change from doing one type of course for the Junior Certificate to a completely different course for the Leaving Certificate. He also finds that the History of Art course for the Leaving Certificate is far too broad, and hopes that the Department of Education will go ahead and plan a similar cycle course along the lines of the Junior Certificate as soon as possible.

Question 4

Is the Leaving Certificate course suitable for meeting the required standard and type of portfolio preparation required by most third leave art courses?

School A

The art teacher felt that

definitely not... they don't have

time... I have only had one student who went straight into art college from Form VI and he was very exceptional. (9)

She feels that it is not unrealistic to expect students to spend a year doing a preparation course before applying for art college

after all most of them are only seventeen when they leave here. Not many students from the school apply for the seventh year art courses in the school. (10)

School B

The art teacher feels that the Leaving Certificate course is not suitable for portfolio preparation but thinks that if a pupil is very keen and prepared to work very hard that it is possible to meet the required standard. She stressed that this demands a huge commitment of the pupil as most of the portfolio work has to be done in spare time. She supports these pupils by giving them extra teaching in her own free time, and finds that those who are good enough and prepared to work hard enough meet with success.

School C

The art teacher stated that the Leaving Certificate course is unsuitable and that pupils do not have time to prepare a portfolio in their final school year, "a course along the lines of the Junior Certificate would be more suitable". He also feels that the idea of having to do a preparatory year to apply for Art College deters some students from studying art, and parents in particular find this hard to accept.

I feel that the Art College should supply this year and demand support from the Department of Education to do so..... there are many unprofessional people taking advantage of the situation, charging huge fees for these courses, and it should not be allowed. (11)

Question 5

What are (a) the most fulfilling aspects of teaching art in your school and (b) the least fulfilling aspects?

School A

The teacher finds that the most fulfilling aspect is

running my own show within the
existing confines of time and money...
it's satisfying that things are not

too rigidly tied down... I have a free hand in taking pupils out. I enjoy running the new courses; it is enormously satisfying getting students into courses in contrast to the difficult task of teaching special education children. (12)

She feels that the least fulfilling aspects are the enormous difficulties involved in teaching remedial pupils as "they should not be at schools like this... I am not a qualified remedial teacher.... some of the children are more than remedial and should be sent to special schools". (13)

School B

The art teacher stated that she gets enormous satisfaction and fulfilment from her job and that the most fulfilling aspects were "to see the pupils really seeing and developing their work". (14)

She found it difficult to think of any negative aspects but reflected that she was very disappointed over the way that last year's Junior Certificate was examined.

School C

The art teacher finds that the most fulfilling aspects are not so much involved with watching talented pupils develop and go on to achieve great things, but

... being able to influence weaker pupils and to instil confidence and self-esteem in such pupils through art... other fulfilling aspects are that children teach you a lot, and you learn a lot about yourself from teaching. The least fulfilling aspect of teaching art is that there is no time left to develop one's own work. (15)

CHAPTER V

INTERVIEWS WITH SIXTH FORM PUPILS WHO STUDY ART

Question 1

What kind of role does art play in your school and what kind of changes (if any) do you think could be made to improve that role?

School A

The pupils felt that "it plays a very important role in the school but not to us... we have to do it, we get no choice". (1) They also felt that while all classes in the school did art, only the work of the seventh year students was good enough to hang in the corridors and that this showed where art was really considered to be important in the school. The pupils were angry because their room had been taken over by the seventh year class and they resented the fact that when they used the room they had to be careful not to disturb the seventh year work.

School B

"Art is important here, but not very important because of the strong emphasis on academic subjects". (2) They felt that the role of art could be improved by more structured organisation in the art department. For example, existing facilities were very satisfactory but could be put to better use if the management of the ceramics/pottery area was designated to one of the three art teachers. They felt that this would produce a higher standard of work in pottery/ceramics and would raise the standard of art in general.

School C

Pupils in this school felt that art did not play an important role and were despondent because they felt that art was not taken seriously and was seen as a lesser subject: "a high grade in art is not regarded as being as impressive as a high grade in other subjects. They felt that the role of art could be hugely improved by (a) attention to structure and organisation in the classroom "it's just a mess" (3) and (b) the provision of better facilities; better tables and proper storage

spaces in particular.

Question 2

Do you think an art education is important and why/why not?

School A

The pupils felt that art was important in society but could not see its relevance to their own lives: "you can see it all around you, but where does it get you.... what jobs can any of us get out of art?... it should not be compulsory... what relevance does art have to engineering?". (4)

Some of the pupils who liked art said that they would prefer to do it as a hobby because they felt they were not good enough at it to do it as an exam subject: "the seventh year are good at it but none of us are really good... I like it alright but I'm not good at it". (5)

None of them intended to apply for one of the seventh year courses and none of them was interested in a career in art.

School B

The pupils felt that one of the reasons why art was such a popular subject in their school was because pupils were aware of the relevance of art to their lives and especially to their future.

Art and appreciation of art is of enormous cultural value. For example if you get the chance to visit the Louvre the experience is greatly enriched if you know something about the historical background to art and if you can walk up to a painting such as Picasso's 'Weeping Woman' and are able to analyse it in terms of its style and meaning. Many people, when provided with this opportunity lose out because they don't know enough about art, and so the experience is only of superficial value to them. (7)

They also felt that a balanced art education is important and valued greatly the fact that their teachers do not merely help them to develop in an area they are strong in but go out of their way to help pupils develop the weaker areas of their abilities.

School C

Pupils in this school felt that the important aspects of art education were that it developed the mind in a way that no other subject could:

because it all has to come from within yourself. In art you have to think for yourself and motivate yourself entirely. (8)

Question 3

Are you satisfied with the structure of the Leaving Certificate course?

School A

Pupils felt that History of Art should not account for such a high percentage of the marks, and would prefer a project based exam along the lines of the Junior Certificate. They felt that they were not adequately prepared for the Leaving Certificate and felt that their art classes should be more structured. For example "in life drawing classes we need to be given some guidelines and not just told to go for it". (8) The boys felt that there should be more emphasis on design.

School B

The pupils felt that an exam based along the lines of the Junior Certificate would be less restrictive, but

felt that it was important to retain the History of Art as a subject in its own right. They felt that they were very lucky in having teachers who were prepared to give a lot of themselves:

If a pupil wants to do well in art and is really prepared to work, the art teachers will do all they can to help them and get them the points. If anyone wants to go to art college the teachers are prepared to give a lot of their spare time in helping pupils to prepare portfolios. (9)

School C

The pupils felt that

The percentage of marks given to the Art History paper is unrealistic and seriously downgrades the other sections of the exam... the Art History course is too broad... the presentation of a single piece of work in an art exam is not a fair or realistic evaluation of anyone's ability and a better course and method of examination would include more continuous assessment on projects - along the lines of the Junior Certificate. (10)

CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS FROM QUESTIONNAIRES DISTRIBUTED IN SCHOOLS A, B AND C

Question 1: To which of the following areas of development do you believe an art education contributes:

Social Development, Moral Development,
Intellectual Development, Aesthetic
Development, Overall Development?

The table overleaf shows the responses of the teachers in the three schools to this question, indicating also the total number of teachers in the school and the response percentages.

		Table shows the No. of teachers (other than art teachers) who believe that art education contributes to the development of pupils in the following areas:				
		Social Development	Moral Development	Intellectual Development	Aesthetic Development	Overall Development
<u>SCHOOL A</u>						
Total No. of teachers	25					
Response to Questionnaire	9 (36%)	3 (33%)	5 (56%)	6 (67%)	7 (78%)	5 (56%)
<u>SCHOOL B</u>						
Total No. of teachers	40					
Response to Questionnaire	14 (35%)	8 (57%)	1 (7%)	10 (71%)	12 (86%)	8 (57%)
<u>SCHOOL C</u>						
Total No. of teachers	30					
Response to Questionnaire	23 (77%)	7 (30%)	5 (21%)	12 (52%)	17 (74%)	21 (91%)

Question 2-

Is it more important that art should be taught to

1. Senior pupils or junior pupils or both equally?
2. Stronger academic pupils, or weaker academic pupils or both equally?
3. Girls or boys or both equally?

In School A all the teachers felt that art should be taught to "both equally" in 1,2 and 3 above, apart from one teacher who felt that it was more important that art be taught to junior pupils.

In School B all the teachers felt that art should be taught to "both equally" in the three areas apart from one teacher who felt that it was more important that art should be taught to weaker academic pupils. One teacher also felt that if a choice had to be made that "boys need art more than girls because they are subjected to so much of a macho influence."

In School C there was a little more discrepancy: all teachers felt that art should be taught to "both equally" in the three areas apart from three who believed that it was more important that it should

be taught to junior pupils and two who believed that it was more important that it should be taught to senior pupils.

Question 3

In the event of art not being a core subject, against which subjects should it be set as an option in

- a) Junior cycle?
- b) Senior cycle?

In School A there was a poor response to this question as art is a core subject: Three teachers suggested that it should be set against another technical/practical subject in both areas and two suggested languages in both areas.

In School B seven teachers stated that art should be a core subject in the junior cycle and three that it should be a core subject in both junior and senior cycles. The remaining teachers gave a wide range of subjects against which art should be set.

In School C twelve teachers stated that it was too difficult to tell and one teacher stated that it

should be a core subject. Out of the subjects suggested by the remaining ten teachers, science was the most popular choice for art to be set against in both junior and senior cycles.

Question 4

In what ways does an art education have any relevance or make any contributions to the teaching of your subject?

In School A the teacher of Geography, Communications and Drama (Post Leaving Certificate Courses) wrote

...graphic skills for geographical diagrams. Observations of features in the landscape, skills in scale, perspective etc for map reading. Imaginative skills for drama, costume, set design etc.

The Woodwork teacher stated that

basics of design principals and of aesthetics are enhanced in the art class, all of which can be used in the woodwork class.

Responses from other teachers included: "helps with drawing diagrams and encourages creativity."

In School B the strongest response came from the English teacher:

...firstly it allows expression of the imagination through colour, shapes and in general visually. Secondly it develops the right side of the brain, too much neglected already by our own academic tradition. Thirdly it complements poetry and literature as they complement life.

The Music teacher wrote:

...in many ways - influence of music and vice versa - e.g. impressionism - development of all styles of music is affected by art/architecture, e.g. baroque - very close links.

The Physical Education teacher wrote:

...the aesthetic and creative aspects of dance, gym.

The Spanish teacher wrote:

Spanish art awareness is a most pleasurable addition to the course.

The teacher of Latin and Greek wrote:

...very relevant since the study of classics involves a study of the whole culture as well as the languages. Roman and Greek architecture are an important element.

In School C all of the teachers responded positively to this question apart from one who wrote:

... not much - but it might have if I had received an education in art. (teacher of maths and languages).

The Irish teacher in School C wrote:

... Although not treated as such, it is a core subject. It develops creative intelligence and builds up the imagination of the child and his/her ability to express his/her inner world. This way it helps all other subjects within the curriculum.

The Music teacher wrote:

... very important - movements in art are the same in music e.g. expressionism etc.

The Technical Drawing/Woodwork teacher wrote:

... helps in spatial perception, proportion, scale and observation of pupils in both subjects.

The English teacher wrote:

... several poets have written about paintings, e.g. Dryden and Wordsworth. Images are common to both - in poetry classes I often refer to 'making pictures in the mind' - referring to actual paintings can be useful.

The French teacher wrote:

...History of Art is often mentioned; a pupil who can tell us something about Monet, Cezanne, Renoir... is useful. The better textbooks now say something about French artists and use them in even grammar exercises.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The findings from the research reveal both general and individual attitudes towards art in the three schools. Through holding interviews and issuing questionnaires to all groups within the schools, it is possible to compare the findings from one group with those of others in each school and also to compare different or similar attitudes between the three schools. In this way some of the most revealing findings are ascertained.

One of the most informative areas lies in the degree or absence of concurrence from group to group in each school and between the schools. For example, the views and attitudes of the principal do not always accord with those held by other groups in the schools, and the reasons for this vary from school to school. In Schools A and C the principals spoke of their schools as having strong traditions in art, and of how art played a very important role in various different ways in the schools. From my interviews with the sixth form pupils in these schools it is evident that these attitudes are not held by them.

In School A the principal feels that the strongest support for the role of art in the school is the curriculum where art is a core subject for all forms. This shows a most admirable belief in the creative and artistic ability of all children and there are few second level schools in this country who support this belief in the same way. However, from the interview with the pupils in the school it may be gathered that this provision is not realising its potential. These pupils feel that while art may be important in their school and society, it is of no importance or relevance to them. They feel that the importance of art in the school is reflected in the standard of the work of the seventh year Post Leaving Certificate pupils which is on display throughout the school "but we're not good enough" (p.42 Chapter 2). While a certain level of rebelliousness and opposition to the status quo is often part of adolescence the consistently negative attitudes regarding art from these pupils points to a serious neglect of their needs in the areas of motivation and self-esteem. The art teacher in the school speaks of the enormous difficulties involved in teaching classes where there is a high proportion of remedial pupils. On the other hand she

mentions the satisfaction and fulfilment she obtains from running the two art and design Post Leaving Certificate courses in the school. Ideally the existence of these art courses in a second level school could be a very positive experience in terms of art education for both the second and third level pupils but in this school the second level pupils are the victims, "they have even taken over our room, and when we go in there we are told to be careful and not to disturb their work".

Since most of these pupils arrive in the school with a low level of self-esteem and self-confidence they need structures and systems which are designed to meet their needs, and not the kind of structures which reinforce their negative attitudes towards art and education in the broadest sense. Their problems are not eased by the fact that the Department of Education provides funding and grants more readily for Post Leaving Certificate and Adult Education courses than it does to provide support systems to meet the needs of pupils at second level. The art teacher in School A states that the least fulfilling aspects of her job are, "the enormous

problems involved in teaching remedial pupils". (P.38 Chapter 2). Understandably she gains "fulfilment from running the Post Leaving Certificate courses and enjoys the satisfaction of enabling these students to gain access to other third level art courses". (P.38Chapter 2). However, it is regrettable that these admirable achievements come at the cost of undermining the self-esteem of the second level pupils and reinforcing their negative attitudes towards art.

The findings from the Questionnaires distributed to teachers in School A show that as a group they are very supportive and highly aware of the value of art education.

The guidance counsellor (who is also the remedial teacher in School A) also states her firm belief in the value of art education for all pupils, while she thinks that "art may be more important for the weaker academic pupil". (p.21 Chapter 2). She believes that art can be done at different levels, and in contrast to the view of the art teacher, believes that remedial pupils should be integrated into the school system. She also finds it appalling that more specialised support, particularly in the form of art therapy, is not available for the

many children with emotional and behavioural problems in the school. (P.21 Chapter 2).

Other vocational schools with similar high levels of remedial pupils have formed policies and support systems from within their schools to address the needs of remedial pupils. This includes the practice of two teachers being present in some classes. From the teacher's point of view this support can prove invaluable. Because the nature of art requires self-motivation and self-expression, it often happens that problems of many different kinds come to the fore in an art class in a way that they may not in a more rigidly structured academic class setting. The tendency for this to occur is more frequent in a remedial class or in a class with a high level of remedial pupils. While the solution of having two teachers present in the classroom may not be ideal and demands a high level of co-operation from the teachers it shows that if schools are prepared to recognise and address these problems they can call on their own resources to begin to find solutions. However, such a policy might not easily be formed in School A where the art teacher believes (a) that many of the remedial pupils should not be admitted to the school, (b) that because she does not have a remedial qualification she is not qualified to teach remedial pupils and (c) finds the

most fulfilling aspects of her job in "running her own show". (p.37 Chapter 2).

The findings from School B show a much higher level of concurrence than in Schools A or C. In general the findings show that a well functioning art department thrives on

- (a) the support of the principal (p.30 Chapter 2)
- (b) the support of the general teaching staff. School B has the highest proportion of teachers who believe that art plays an important role in the School and that it should play a very important role.
- (c) the enthusiasm and positive attitudes of the pupils
- (d) the commitment and co-operation of the art teaching staff. "I value the way they work so beautifully together as a team". (p.13 Chapter 2)
- (e) the provision of facilities and materials that are of a high standard and a high level of trust regarding the use of these facilities.

Art education in second level schools can have a bewildering variety of aims and objectives, dealing with aesthetic, perceptual, technical and personal and social aims and in School B many of these are being realized. Perhaps the only weak link in the chain is in the important area of personal development, and this is not so much a reflection on the school as on

- (a) the Leaving Certificate examination in art

which is very much centred on the art product

- (b) the limitations of the competitive points dominated education system in general.

Lowenfeld and Brittain state that

in art education, the aesthetic quality of the final product is subordinated to the creative process. It is the child's process - including thinking, feeling, perceiving, and reactions to the environment that is important ... growth cannot be measured by the tastes and standards of beauty that may be important to an adult. (1)

The interviews with the pupils in School B show that these pupils are concerned with achieving results "if a pupil wants to do well and is prepared to work hard, the teachers will do all they can to help them get the points".

It was of note to find that pupils from School B who already have the benefits of a well functioning art programme are perhaps not as keenly aware of the importance of art in terms of their personal development as pupils in School A for example who feel that their needs are not being met in the classroom and pupils in School C who feel that they have

to motivate themselves entirely. While the guidance counsellor in School B states that "art opens young people up to spiritual and feeling values,"

(p. 22 Chapter 2), the pupils themselves did not mention this area. As mentioned earlier, this points in many ways to the present Leaving Certificate art examination and a new structure or system designed along the lines of the Junior Certificate would perhaps go a long way towards perfecting the art education in School B.

In School C the findings in general show that art is valued as playing an important role in the school by everyone except the pupils. The principal, guidance counsellor and art teacher all state their awareness of the value and importance of art education and speak about the strong tradition of art in the school. The teaching staff in general believe that art plays an important role and that it should play an important role in the school. While Schools C and A are very different, in many ways the pupils from these two schools share a similar problem. A notable finding in this area is that while the pupils in both schools are very articulate and highly aware of some of the key issues which are causing the problems, their voices are not being heard in the schools.

This situation points to the hierarchical control in schools where the pupils have little or no way in the processes which affect their lives. Kathleen Lynch writes about this lack of pupil autonomy in most Irish schools and argues that

... there is a great need to review our approach to authority and control... if we wish children to grow up with a sense of responsibility, then we must give them scope to exercise freedom in a responsible manner. Furthermore, true scholarship and learning demands not only that one appreciates the tradition within one's discipline, but that one is also capable of challenging it and going beyond it. To be truly imaginative and creative in thinking, one must not be afraid of breaking with tradition and challenging it.

I believe that the hierarchical approach to authority so obvious in schools.... is anathema to the development of a mature sense of social responsibility and an imaginative and creative approach to learning. (2)

While it is the pupils who suffer most in Schools A

and C, the schools themselves suffer also. While schools need to maintain order (and this is often a difficult task where there are large numbers) the small numbers of pupils in Schools A (270 second level pupils) and C (290) could realistically allow for the provision of a structure whereby selective pupil representation could be included in some of the decision making policies in the school. From the particular problems of pupils in Schools A and C in reference to art education in these two schools, it may be concluded from the findings that pupils as the direct recipients of education policies and methods are often the best judges of the effectiveness of these processes. However, because they have no direct input at decision making levels in their schools the voices of pupils often remain unheard, or if heard, unheeded. Similarly, in School B, the pupils raised a very constructive point regarding the organisation of the art room facilities (p.41 Chapter 2) but have no power to bring about a change in this area. In defining his idea of freedom in education Pádraig Pearse writes that schools should give "a certain autonomy" to the particular parts of the school and to the various sub-divisions of the pupils", and believes that "without freedom there can be no right growth;

and education is properly the fostering of the right growth of a personality".

In this context it is relevant to note that in School C art is not so popular now that it has become an established examination subject on the official curriculum of the school, whereas in its former non-curricular capacity it was regarded as a highly prestigious and non-conformist activity. The principal believes that

because it is now seen as an examination subject, the element of inspiration is much harder to foster. The thirst for points is squeezing art and leads one to question the value of exams in art. The fact that NCAD are more interested in the portfolios of applicants than their Leaving Certificate results speaks volumes. (7)

Findings from the three schools point out the inadequacies of the Leaving Certificate examination in art in the following areas:

- (a) the inappropriate structure of the course as a follow up to the Junior Certificate course.
- (b) the high percentage of marks given to the History of Art section.
- (c) the unrealistic system of evaluating ability on a single piece of work.

The findings from the three schools show how the present highly competitive, academic points-dominated education system discussed in the Introduction have a negative influence on art education. This can be seen in the way that pupils in Schools B and C tend to view art as a "lesser" subject and are inclined to believe that a high grade in art is not as impressive as a high grade in other more academic subjects, and also in School A where pupils do not feel that art is relevant to them or their future job prospects. There is also a belief that a high grade in art is more difficult to achieve than in other subjects existing in the schools. In Schools B and C the guidance counsellors feel that parental pressure contributes to this situation whereas in School A the guidance counsellor believes that there is lack of parental pressure and support for the pupils' education in general in this school.

In reference to the point mentioned above, it is relevant to note that the guidance counsellor in School B believes that the pupils themselves are bringing about a change in attitude towards educational values in general. He has noticed that

pupils are bringing about a change in attitude towards educational values in general. He has noticed that pupils are beginning to challenge existing educational values. (p.27 Chapter 2). He cites the example of one of the most gifted pupils in the school this year deciding to pursue a career as a film director, despite parental and school expectations that she should take up a scientific career after winning numerous major awards in this field.

Another finding from the three schools is the importance of the provision of proper materials and facilities for art. In School A the art teacher felt that the role of art could be improved in the school by the provision of better facilities and the pupils in the school complained that their room had been taken over by the Post Leaving Certificate students. However, compared to School C facilities in School A are quite good. In School C pupils have been working in a cramped art room with very basic facilities and inadequate space for storing and displaying work. They also have to supply or buy most of their own materials from the school. The art department has recently moved to an empty storage shed (where there is

more space but no natural light) while awaiting funding for a new arts block. In School B, pupils benefit from the provision of a good working environment where facilities are of a high standard.

It is very difficult for schools to maintain a healthy attitude towards art and for art education to achieve its full potential in second level schools under the present education system, and it may be concluded that it is even more difficult to do so in schools where there is a high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties. While standards of educational services may be seen to be equal in all schools, many pupils do not have the required social, linguistic and intellectual capacities to avail of them and the needs of these pupils are not being met. In our highly competitive education system, schools reward those who succeed and all too often it seems that only the bright get the spoils. Our limited understanding of intelligence, as discussed in the Introduction also contributes considerably to this and in a recent article entitled Intelligence and Ability: Problems and possibilities, Kathleen Lynch notes as outlined by Professor Howard Gardner that "there are at least five discrete forms of intelligence apart

from logical-mathematical intelligence". (3) These include musical intelligence, spatial or visual intelligence, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, intra-personal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence.

If all forms of intelligence were recognised and valued equally in our education system, we might not be so likely to give up on and ignore children who are failing. The new Junior Certificate syllabus while being student centred, does not cater for the student of lower ability and achievement. In a recent article entitled "More Than One Kind of Ability - A Psychological Perspective", Breda Foy argues that the syllabi should be geared at one level only based on a hierarchy of concepts as outlined in Blooms Taxonomy. She believes that

...within such a hierarchy, educational objectives could have been specified in a way which would allow pupils of lower ability to become involved in the educational process. Evaluation based on the same hierarchy would allow the same pupils to be examinable. (4)

Alternatively, she suggests that a third level should be introduced at the lower end to cater for the needs of

these pupils. She also argues for a "developmental approach on Piagetian lines to be incorporated into the methodologies for the new syllabi". (5). She believes that this would mean that

... students would not be pushed beyond their level intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, sexually or spiritually. Such forcing means that they are put in a position of either viewing the problems presented as irrelevant; as non-problems; or forcing them into a rote-memorisation of the concepts involved. (6)

While the findings of this thesis as outlined above are varied and reveal relevant information concerning attitudes to art education in the three schools and how these attitudes are formed, the most serious findings point to the many problems of less able pupils and those with learning disabilities. How these pupils are catered for in our education system raises deep questions about our philosophy of the person and the values of our society. How we answer these questions may well provide the most serious educational challenge to be found in this country in the years ahead.

FOOTNOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth (New York: McMillan) pp 2-3.
2. The Irish Times, Brother Mark Hederman, Education Feature, 16.10.92.
3. Ibid.
4. Ciarán Benson, The Place of the Arts in Irish Education, (Dublin: The Arts Council, 1979) p 24.
5. The Irish Times, Brother Mark Hederman, 16.10.92.
6. Lowenfeld and Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, p 2.
7. Patrick Pearse, The Murder Machine, (Dublin: Mercier Press) p 373.
8. Jean Erickson, Wisdom and the Senses: The Way of Creativity, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1988) p 27.
9. Lowenfeld and Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, p 3.
10. Ibid
11. Mary Robinson, Presidential visit to N.C.A.D. November '92.
12. John Dewey, The School and Society; The School and the Life of the Child, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press) p 40.
13. The Junior Certificate, Art, Craft, Design Syllabus, Aims and Principles, Dublin: 1992.

14. Ibid.
15. The Junior Certificate, Art, Craft, Design Guidelines for Teachers, Aims and Principles, Dublin 1992.
16. John Walshe, The Irish Times, Education Section, 2.10.92.
17. The Arts in Education: A Curriculum and Examinations Board Discussion Paper, Dublin: CEB, 1985) pp 7-8.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER II

- (1) Principal in School B
- (2) Principal in School B
- (3) Prospectus of School B
- (4) Principal in School C
- (5) Principal in School B
- (6) Principal in School C
- (7) Principal in School C
- (8) Principal in School A
- (9) Principal in School A
- (10) Principal in School B
- (11) Principal in School B
- (12) Principal in School C
- (13) Principal in School C

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER III

- (1) Guidance Counsellor in School A
- (2) Guidance Counsellor in School B
- (3) Guidance Counsellor in School C
- (4) Guidance Counsellor in School B
- (5) Guidance Counsellor in School C
- (6) Guidance Counsellor in School A
- (7) Guidance Counsellor in School B
- (8) Guidance Counsellor in School C

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER IV

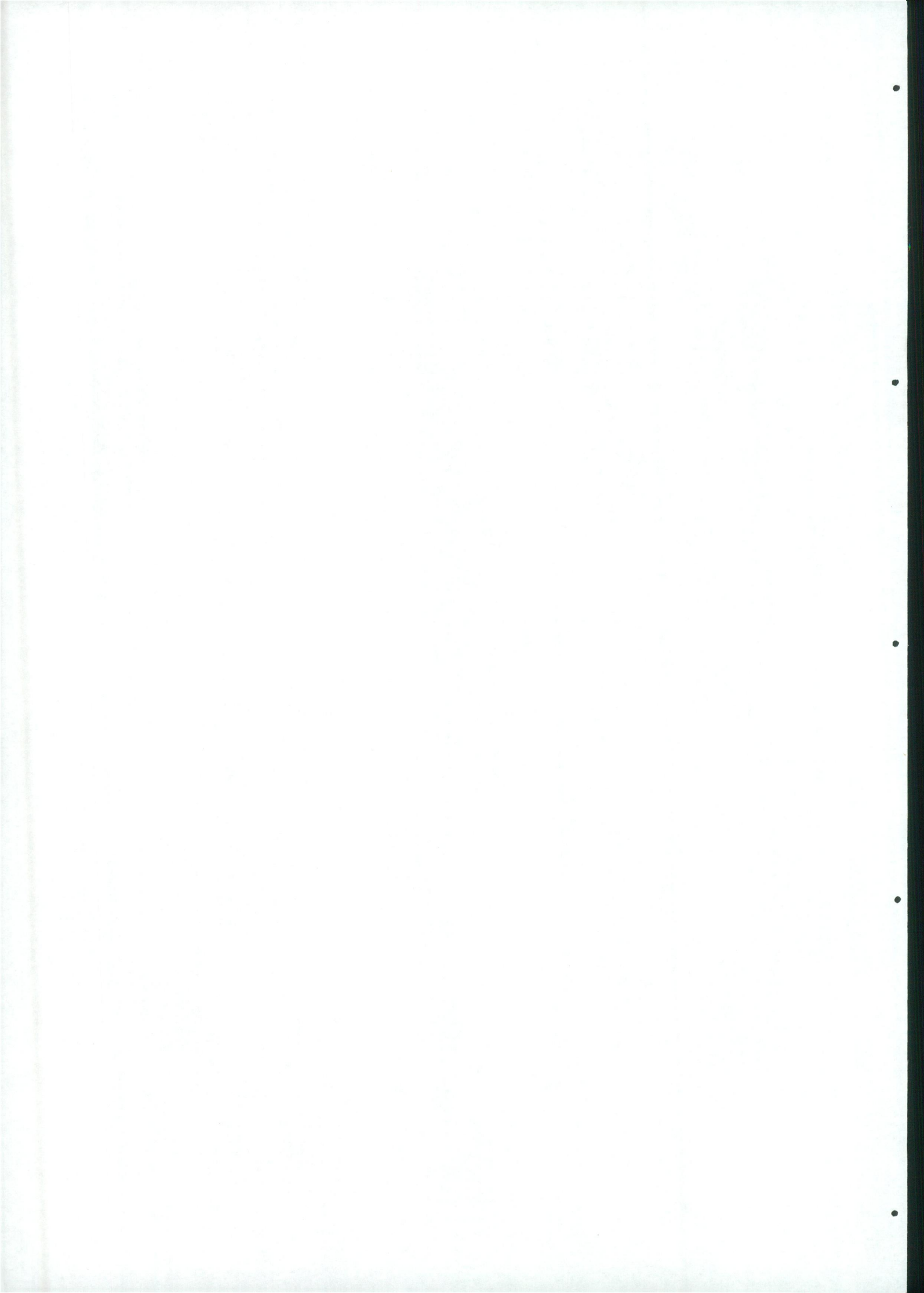
- (1) Art Teacher in School A
- (2) Art Teacher in School A
- (3) Art Teacher in School B
- (4) Art Teacher in School C
- (5) Art Teacher in School C
- (6) Art Teacher in School C
- (7) Art Teacher in School A
- (8) Art Teacher in School C
- (9) Art Teacher in School A
- (10) Art Teacher in School A
- (11) Art Teacher in School C
- (12) Art Teacher in School A
- (13) Art Teacher in School A
- (14) Art Teacher in School B
- (15) Art Teacher in School C

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER V

- (1) Sixth Form Pupils in School A
- (2) Sixth Form Pupils in School B
- (3) Sixth Form Pupils in School C
- (4) Sixth Form Pupils in School A
- (5) Sixth Form Pupils in School A
- (6) Sixth Form Pupils in School B
- (7) Sixth Form Pupils in School B
- (8) Sixth Form Pupils in School C
- (9) Sixth Form Pupils in School B
- (10) Sixth Form Pupils in School C

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER VII

1. Viktor Lowenfeld and W. Lamber Brittain,
Creative and Mental Growth (New York: MacMillan)
p. 7.
2. Compass, Journal of the Irish Association for
Curriculum Development, (Vol. 17 No. 2 Dublin 1988),
pp 58-59.
3. Ibid p 52
4. Ibid p 62
5. Ibid
6. Ibid p 76



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