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The Slow Learner
and
The New Junior Certificate Examination

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I wish to show that the new Junior Certificate examination provides a much more accurate estimate of a student's ability (in Art class) than the previous Intermediate Certificate examination, from the point of view of an overall Art education for both the average student and especially the weaker students. The projects which have been set for the new Junior Certificate are much more extensive and practical, and give students of all abilities a better chance.

My dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter consists of an exploration into the psychological development of the child. In the second chapter, I will be defining the slow learner in greater detail and discussing the development of this type of student in the Art room and the obstacles they may come up against in a normal class environment. The third chapter will demonstrate the advantages of the Junior Certificate syllabus over the old Intermediate Certificate examination. It will also show how the new Art, Craft and Design syllabus shows an understanding of both the power of the environment and the positive aspects of using

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creativity as a main source to stimulate and encourage both the average student and the slower student to achieve their natural potential.

Chapter 1.

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE SLOW LEARNER.

In this chapter I explore the different factors which constitute the normal development of a child. These factors which contribute to normal development are many and varied. I will deal with cognition, intelligence, the affective factors, perception, language, personality, the effect of the home environment and finally innate factors. Having briefly defined and explored current theories on the above aspects of the child's psychological development, I will then go on to discuss how a slow learner functions within these definitions and theories of development.

Cognition

Cognition may be defined as "an action or faculty of knowing, perceiving and conceiving distinct from emotional knowledge or feeling." (1) The term cognitive, which comes from the Latin 'cognito' - to know, refers to all psychological abilities associated with thinking and with knowing. Fontana says that - "The cognitive process allows us to identify, interpret, organise and apply information in the solving of problems and the attainment

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of desired goals." (2) However cognition also involves the creative and constructive process of relating new information to existing knowledge so without normal cognitive development, a child's creative ability will be hindered or impaired in some way.

Bruner sees cognitive learning or cognition as comprising of three major processes:

1. The acquisition of information.
2. The transformation or manipulation of this information into a form suitable for dealing with the task in hand.
3. The testing or checking the inadequacy of this transformation. (3)

This is another way of saying that a well adjusted child has an innate or built in process which will absorb, transform and finally check all material or problems it is asked to deal with. Cognition is therefore a vital process for educational progress.

Intelligence

Intelligence is not something that can be directly gauged. In 1958 David Weschler, one of the most influential figures in the current intelligence testing movement, defined intelligence as - "the global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally and to deal effectively with his environment." (4) I would also

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define it as the ability to see relationships and to then use this ability to solve problems that may occur in any area of life. Some psychologists define intelligence as proficiency in Intelligence Quotient tests, a process where mental ages are matched with chronological ages. But the defining of intelligence as the ability to score highly in I.Q. tests falls down because it is now widely accepted that measured intelligence is a consequence of both genetic and environmental factors. I.Q. tests themselves have shown that a child's I.Q. score can improve with a stimulating environment.

Early researchers believed that intelligence was inherited, but this view changed in the 1930's with the Behaviourist movement. The Behaviourists shifted the emphasis from genetics to environment. They believed that we become what we are as a result of the learning experiences we are subject to from birth. Here the whole nature versus nurture dispute came about, but it is now widely accepted that intelligence is an interaction of environment and genetics.

What we must never forget while trying to define the personality and development of the child, is that each child is unique and the knowledge made available for each

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child through their environment is unique, that the cognitive faculty of each child is unique and the ability of each child to interpret, organise and transform information is unique. (5) The information given (for example in a class situation) may be the same, but each child may use a different cognitive process to arrive at an answer or an understanding of that information. For example, if a child is asked twelve multiplied by twelve in a Mathematics class, one child may know the correct answer straight away. Another child may have to say the twelve times table to arrive at it, and another may add all the twelves together. And again another may use association with his or her twelve times division - twelve into one hundred and forty four and reach the correct answer. They will all eventually arrive at the answer but the methods they use are very different.

The process is as varied in Art. For example, the Art teacher may give a class on perspective. The interpretation given by each child will be different depending on their history (i.e. genetics and environment). It is my belief that every child's ability in this will be largely dictated by their environment. Now this is a huge statement, but I believe it to be true. I will give an example from a classroom situation that I

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found myself in last year. I asked my students to draw two converging lines with a ruler. The ability to draw two converging lines involves a cognitive process in that the student must understand what 'converging' means and understand how to use a ruler and must also understand the number, two. However the execution of the two converging lines will depend on the environment of the student if for a moment we include language, i.e. the significance of the ruler to the child. One student used the ruler as a violent weapon and began pointing it as a gun at his fellow students, thus causing discipline problems. At this point, I had two choices - to correct the student and insist he draw two converging lines so that the class could continue uniformly, or allow his environment and associations to be expressed by telling him to forget the converging lines and draw a gun. I chose the latter and the student did a good drawing of a gun and the class continued smoothly. Another child drew the two converging lines, listened attentively, but seemed to be devoid of the imagination and free association of the more disruptive child. The obedient student was acting from environmental conditioning. He did not question and did not disrupt probably what he has been taught at home. One could argue that both children were skilled in different ways. The 'good' child seemed to lack imagination, while

the 'undisciplined' child was imaginative. This showed that a very ordered environment may not be very stimulating and could stunt a child's cognitive development so that their natural or innate intelligence may be thwarted in some way.

The Affective Factor

The Affective factor is extremely important and plays a huge part in the psychological development of the child.

The affective factor applies to the emotional factors associated with human behaviour. It includes attitudes and value systems, emotions and feelings, ambitions, aspirations, personal complexes and self regard. It takes in both the conscious and unconscious and incorporates many of the things which helps define individuals. (6)

The affective factor is always in operation in the student. For example, if the teacher tells the students to draw their own houses, one student may draw his/her house much bigger than it actually is. They may not necessarily be boasting, but may be expressing their emotional attachment to their house because their parents live there and the size of the house appears bigger in their mind than it really is. So the simple exercise of drawing one's house has a very complex outcome and the main reason for this is the affective factor intermingling with the cognitive process.

It can be argued that the distinction between the cognitive and affective factor is merely an artificial one because the two are so intertwined. A crude distinction is to define cognition as pure thought and to define the affective factor as pure feeling. These are absolutes and philosophical principles and I do not think it is possible for anyone to act purely from pure thought or pure feeling but somewhere in between. The cognitive is always modified by the affective factor and vice versa, but for the sake of psychological or philosophical theories, they must be allowed a functional independence.

Perception

Gearhart notes that perception is the process whereby sensory data is identified, organised and translated into meaningful information. (7) We are bombarded with stimuli from the environment every moment and we can only attend to a small part of this stimuli by coding, i.e. classifying the information into categories of importance. The interesting thing is that the way we classify this information depends on our experience of the world. So a 'slow learner' may be a child who, because of personal history, gives importance to minor or irrelevant details. For example, in class a child who is more intent on ruling the page of his/her copybook than on solving the problem

set by the teacher, would show an inability to perceive and classify information in order of importance.

Attention

Attention is closely connected to perception and is the cognitive process that enables us to attend to selective features of environmental stimuli. (8) Attention can be divided into two components: 1. Selective attention and 2. Sustained attention. Selective attention is the ability to survey all environmental information and then focus on what is relevant or pertinent at that given moment. Sustained attention is the ability to refocus attention onto new relevant stimuli. Hallahan (1975) states that: "Many students who have learning problems do not have properly trained cognitive abilities with regard to the attention functions." (9) They may fail to concentrate on the central learning task, may respond impulsively or may fail to consider alternatives when solving problems thus proving that a highly developed selective and sustained attention system is necessary if the child is to learn properly.

Memory

Memory is also crucial for the learning process and is a highly complex cognitive system whereby information is

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stored and called upon when needed. (10) It is also divided into two types - short term and long term. Short term is more limited and deals with the immediate or the temporary, while long term memory stores meaningful and more permanent information. Research in the area of learning disabilities indicate that many students who are considered slow are unable to associate new information with an existing knowledge base. In other words, there is a link missing between short term and long term memory, or some process in the brain which finds difficulty assimilating and linking new information with information that is already there. This association is essential for the learning process, because otherwise new information cannot be integrated in a meaningful constructive way.

Language

As Fontana observes - "The world without language is a world without complex thought." (11)

It is through language that the child begins to learn the complexity of the world. As the child grows, speech develops out of early experiments with sound. The child repeats certain sounds that people make and drops other sounds from his/her repertoire. Linguistic development comes in fits and starts and by four years of age, a child should have a command of everyday language. At school the child should improve greatly and with this vocabulary

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growth, there also comes the development of thinking and the ability to communicate feelings with more articulation.

Fontana says: "It is clear that language does not just happen but comes about as a result of the child's environment." (12) Research shows that children from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to have more complex and elaborate verbal codes than those children from less well off backgrounds.

Once at school, children come to rely more and more upon language as the principal means of communication and increasingly their academic progress becomes tied to their ability to use the spoken word. It follows therefore that all teachers, no matter what their subject, are teachers of language. The good teacher will be able to assess the child's progress by the child's ability to grasp new concepts through the medium of language.

Personality

It states in the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology that "Personality is the organisation of the physical, mental, moral and social qualities of the individual that manifests itself to other people in the give and take of social life." (13)

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I would define personality as the form of behaviour, whether hereditary or environmental, that makes us unique. However, psychologists tend to argue as to whether personality is innate or learned, or a mixture of both. The three American paediatricians - Thomas, Chess and Birch, who undertook a study of a hundred and forty one babies seem to believe that the consistency in the behaviour of these children suggested that personality is hereditary. (14)

Freud, on the other hand, believes that personality is learned or is formed by the environment the baby is born into. (15)

Whether personality is hereditary or learned, there is still room for the interaction of personality with environment. A proper environment will help mould the child's personality, placing emphasis on all the better human endeavours, while a bad environment will emphasise endeavours of less importance, or may neglect and abuse the child thus interfering in a harmful way with the child's basic personality. (16)

H.J. Eysenck proposed the existence of three major personality dimensions. These are: 1) Extraversion, 2) Neuroticism and 3) Psychoticism. Extraversion

indicates an individual orientation towards the external world. Neuroticism indicates that the individual is prone to anxiety and fear, and psychoticism describes an individual who is independent, tough, aggressive and cold. From these three main types he constructs several personality types. (17)

I believe the function of education is to modify or develop the child's personality in a structured environment. Thus a good teacher will encourage the shy introverted child to be more outspoken and articulate and will encourage the extroverted outspoken child to think more and perhaps not feel the need to always speak first or longest. These are simplistic examples, but serve well enough to prove my point that in order to be an effective teacher, one must believe that the teacher plays some part in the formation and development of the child's personality.

Self Esteem

Research shows that children with high self esteem come from homes where they are considered to be significant and interesting individuals. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been found to have a lower confidence level and appear tougher in order to protect their self image. It is also noted that self esteem is

usually linked to parental behaviour and undoubtedly affects a student's behaviour in the school environment. It is vital that the teacher at all times protects the self esteem of the student, even while disciplining. It is well known that children flourish when praised and become problematic when corrected. In my experience, a positive attitude from the teacher always elicits a positive response from the student whether they suffer from learning disabilities or are of average intelligence.

The Slow Learner

Having outlined and discussed the different factors which constitute the psychological development of the child, I now wish to focus on the slow learner, as the main thrust of this dissertation in the exploration of an assessment system (i.e. The New Junior Certificate) which can accommodate the slow learner.

By 'The slow learner' it is generally meant any child who is unable to cope with the work of his or her age group to the satisfaction of teachers. The slow learner is defined by the Department of Education and Science 1964 as -

"Children of any degree of ability who are unable to do work commonly done by children of their age." (18)

Having identified a child as a slow learner, the next task of the school is to find out why that child is struggling

academically. Some children whose I.Q. score is average, or above, can fall into the slow learner category, but this is usually because of some external factor and does not reflect on the child's intelligence. In most cases like this, the child can be helped and then returned to normal classes. But the 'slow learner' that I am interested in is the child whose I.Q. is between 70 -80 and who, in some subjects (i.e. Art), is integrated with students of average or above average I.Q. I believe this intermingling to be a good procedure (where possible) as it allows the slow learner to integrate with students of average intelligence instead of isolating them in another part of the school.

In many cases, this mingling of students also helps the academic development of the slow learner, as they are with students whose standard is higher and this may improve their learning standard. I think also that the intermingling is a good idea for the slow learner's self esteem. Children, whatever their I.Q., are sensitive to slights on their intelligence and for progress need to feel that they are making progress, and can achieve success at however low a level.



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This is the main reason why I think the Junior Certificate is a vast improvement on the Intermediate Certificate.

The Junior Certificate accommodates the slow learner and allows the student to work towards a specific academic goal.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SLOW LEARNER IN THE ART ROOM

In this chapter I will discuss the development of the slow learner in the Art room and how his/her approach to Art may differ from that of a student of average ability.

Slow learners may be defined as "...children of any degree of ability who are unable to do work commonly done by children of their age." (1)

Others have defined slow learners as children who are of limited intelligence. (2) I do not agree with this definition as I have previously explained that it is a difficult task to define intelligence and we are all aware of people who have low I.Q's but who may have an exceptional talent at dancing, for example, or some other activity.

Slow learners may be detected in early childhood. The early signs may be lack of interest in toys, slow language and vocabulary development, or perhaps an inability to mix socially with other children.

These may lead on in later childhood to slowness in reading, difficulty in forming concepts or perhaps problems expressing themselves or delayed or stunted emotional development due to continued failure. (3)

Because it is illegal today for a child to leave school

before the age of fifteen, the number of students in secondary school has increased dramatically and classes may vary greatly with the ability of each student.

W.K. Brennan, who studied the development of slow learners, noted that these students' lesson preferences and hobbies are not markedly different from average students, and they may develop and mature like others but at a slower and more variable rate. (4)

However as Brennan points out, these students appear to be less stable and more directly influenced by relationships with the teacher. I have noticed that in class the weaker students with learning problems, tend to behave badly and distract others. They seem to constantly want attention and seek some kind of approval either from me or their classmates.

All teachers play a vital role in ensuring that students' self esteem is protected and when they recognise their need for help, feel comfortable and secure enough to seek it. If a child encounters learning difficulties at school, they should be approached with much care and consideration because it is at this crucial stage that a child's personality, confidence and self resilience could be seriously damaged - "For the development of a healthy

personality, it is the utmost significance that a balance be kept between emotional, growth and intellectual growth." (5) This statement not only applies to a healthy personality but a general feeling of well being in terms of emotional growth. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure and guide positive development of personality as well as academic progress.

If a teacher has one or more slow learners in a normal Art class who need special attention, this should not create problems. All successful teaching in Art rests on a methodology that demands that the teacher treats all pupils as individuals. (6) The fact that the slow learners are given special attention should in no way make them feel different or inferior in front of their classmates. Whether a child is of average or weak intelligence, they require individual attention.

Art education has now become an important subject in the school curriculum. In the past, teachers believed that artistic talent and creative ability only applied to a gifted minority due to innate factors. However this has changed. W.H. Kilpatrick remarks - "Creativeness is a characteristic of all learning although it differs in degree from one situation to another." (7)

Creativity may be defined as - "The ability to generate fluent and novel ways of tackling problems." (8)

And "The very act of taking into account a number of alternatives compromise the impulse to create." (9)

This last quotation implies that when a student is presented with a problem, there may be a number of solutions and the student may discover his/her own unique solution.

I have noted in Art class that all the students whom I have taught, no matter what their academic level, have the ability to produce something that for them is new or unique compared to previous work. However, the level of creativity may differ widely from one student to another. Creativity is part of the cognitive process and surely if a student's cognitive ability is well developed, his/her creative ability will be at a higher level. If a student's cognition is disfunctional in some way, it must affect their performance in the Art room. This is one of my points in this chapter - that academically bright students (from my experience) usually perform well in the Art room; slow learners usually excel in different and somewhat more intuitive areas in Art, for example, dealing with colour.

The visual arts deal with forming and expressing ideas, thoughts and feelings through the reality of materials.

(10) In doing so, students become more aware of and sensitive to the environment around them and how they relate to it. The Art room should provide plenty of opportunities for direct sensory experience through handling materials. The nature of these Art and especially craft experiences, can involve the student in learning situations that are tactile, sensory and stimulating, physically as well as mentally.

The slow learner encompasses many types of students that a teacher is likely to encounter, because the tendency nowadays is to move these students out of specialised schools into the more normal environment of an ordinary school. The area that has been provided for the below average child is generally known as 'special education'. Special classes are provided to facilitate students with learning problems. In the last decade these have developed as part of the educational system and more attention seems to have been given to the below average student than to the gifted child.

Slow learners starting their education in a normal school classroom begin by manipulating art materials, rather than by drawing or modelling recognisable objects. They are

sometimes slower to play with the materials given to them than the average learners, and may not explore their possibilities fully. Once they have begun manipulating a medium, they are often reluctant to branch out into the use of symbols.

A five year old child may arrive at the symbol stage within a period of three weeks to six months, whereas the slow learner, who has an I.Q. of about 70 - 80, may not reach this stage until a year or more later. Once this has been reached, the symbols usually resemble that of an average child. Repetition that requires little thought suits slow learners and tends to give their work a characteristic rhythmic quality. However this tendency of repetition may interfere with the creation of new symbols and may retard their development of the symbols already discovered.

Regression from the symbol stage to that of manipulation may occur in the work of all children, as a result of such factors as fatigue, ill health, emotional disturbances etc. Reversion of this kind tends to occur more with slow learners than with average children.

Forms, used by slow learners to extend the meanings of their symbols, sometimes show peculiar characteristics.

The length of limbs in human symbols may be greatly exaggerated. Details added may not show uniform development and slow learners may leave out some items that normal children would probably include in their symbols.

However these students may use relatively complicated conventions but only after much practice. Research by Gaitskell and Hurwitz shows that slow learners:

1. Tend to fail to achieve unity in their composition.
2. The rhythms they adopt may become monotonous.
3. The centres of interest that may appear as they begin to work may later be destroyed.
4. They are usually successful in achieving variety in their use of elements of design although it is rarely as interesting as that of normal children. (11)

Slow learners, in my experience, appear to have more success in the use of colour, although they do not tend to really mix tints of shades and rely on unmixed colours. It is also rare that they use light and shade in their work. (Fig. 1) Their drawings have also shown that some may use line successfully in a vigorous or sensitive way. Textural effects achieved by drawing occur extremely infrequently. However they may include some attractive detail in their work. I believe that these deficiencies may be overcome if enough attention and time is spent using easy step by step procedures. Step by step activities may present no real challenges for average students, but may give a slow learner a valuable sense of

FIGURE 1.



PLATE 1



achievement and may lead them into more creative endeavours.

For the slow learner the actual process is important and he/she must enjoy it because there is the danger that interest is lost completely. It may be difficult for these students to look ahead, work through difficult parts in a project and see it leading to an end product. I have experienced difficulties in keeping weaker students stimulated and motivated when working through projects as they often expect to see an end product straight away.

Schaefer Simmerns comments on the learning process of slow learners:

Creating order and organisation in the realm of concrete, visual experience is a discipline thoroughly suited to the nature of mentally defective individuals - these patients who are taught embroidery, weaving, rugmaking and the like often surprise one with the accuracy in their work.
(12)

He also warns us against providing such children with prepared designs, stating that:

For the sake of their inner stability and satisfaction, for the sake of their own enjoyment in the realisation of their world, they should be led to create their own cultural pattern. (13)

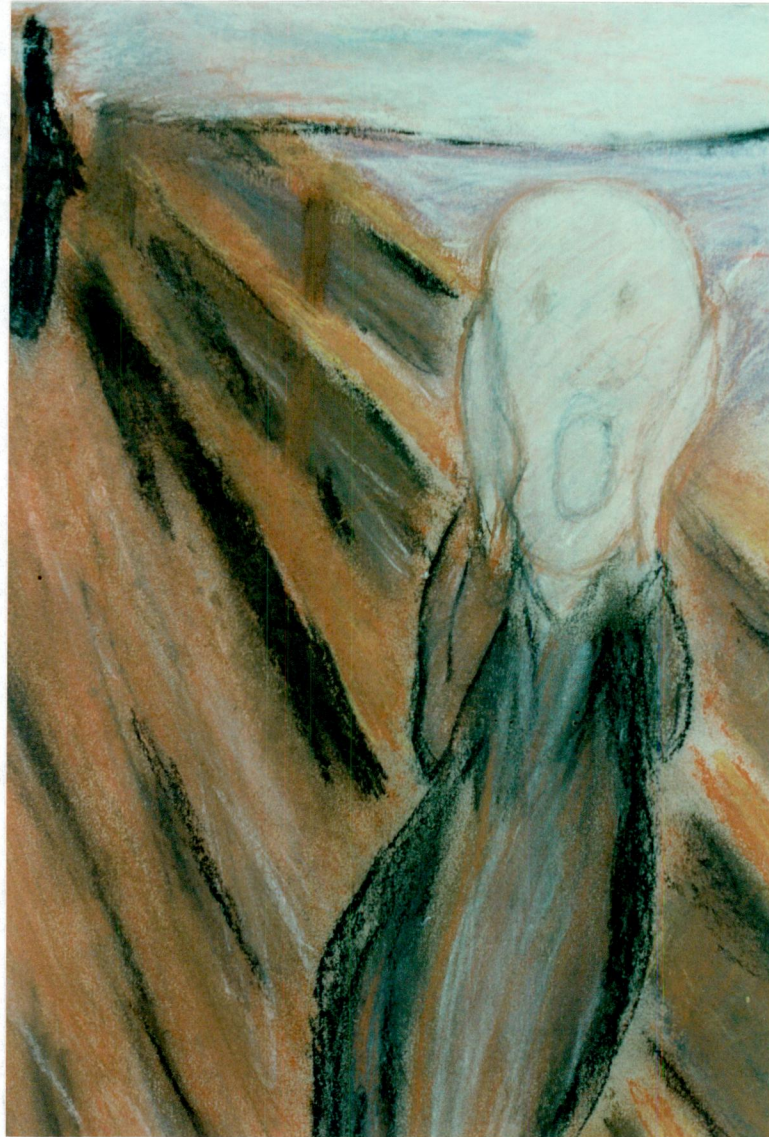
I have noted that weaker students and slow learners tend to display difficulty in working in Art projects that involve a high risk of failure and in the past I have encouraged them to copy works of famous artists. However,

it is obvious that I should have relied on a different approach that would allow them to engage in work of a more creative nature. Art activities should be offered which are flexible enough to interest them.

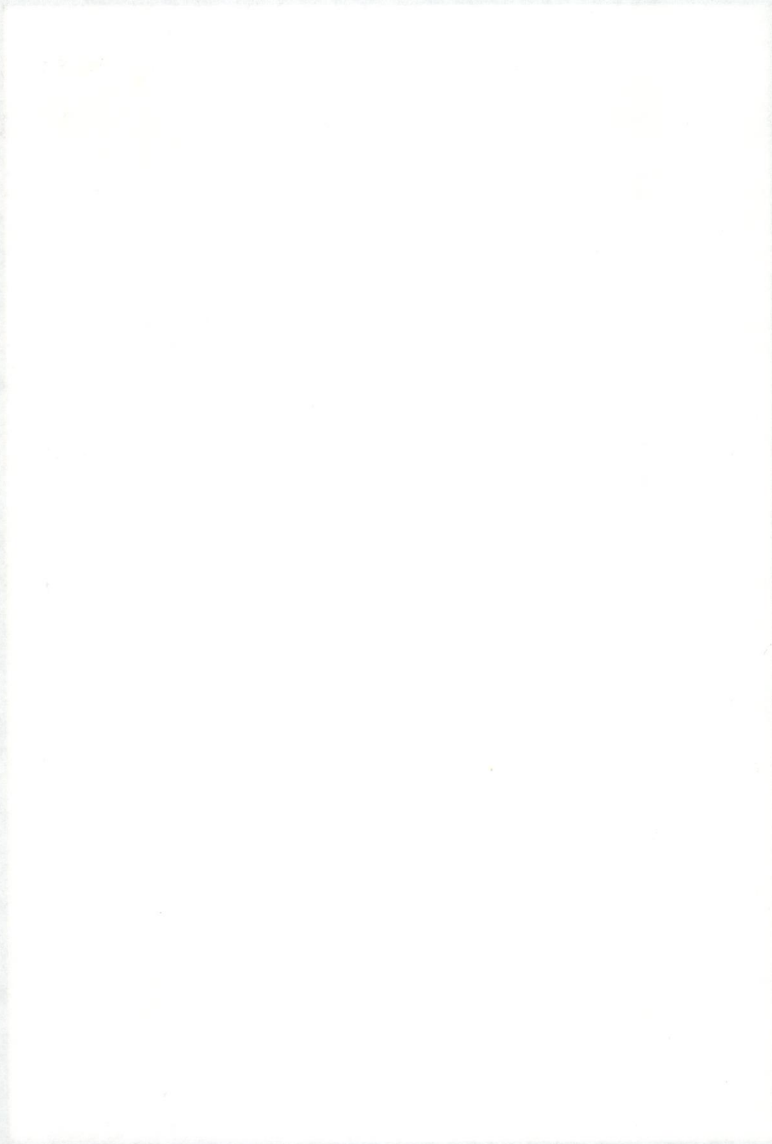
The educational value of copying for any student is not very good as it interferes with their participation in an original creative art process. I have found difficulty in encouraging students to move on to more original and personal ideas after they have been copying and the students have lost their confidence when making their own choices. (Fig. 2) As Gaitskell and Hurwitz stated - "The benefits to be achieved from approaching Art as a thinking, feeling process should be available to children of all mental ages." (14)

Art work that works well by chance can also cause problems, because the student may not understand the procedure whereby he/she has got to the end result. Art is all about learning like any other subject and the knowledge learnt from the process should allow the student to repeat it. I often compare the art process with a mathematical theorem arriving at a final result from a pattern of logical procedures.

FIGURE 2.



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Sometimes because slow learners cannot seem to benefit from or cope with more difficult Art activities, their lessons may tend to lack variety, unless they can take part in some chance activities. I know I have talked about the negative side of this type of Art work, but it may have a positive side, when students gain control through experimentation and begin to understand the procedure.

One of the most important things that I have noticed when teaching slow learners, is that I have needed great patience. They seem to progress at a slower pace with their Art work than an average child. I have had to make an extra special effort to stimulate them and to keep them as interested and as motivated as possible. I have also made the mistake of pushing them into work that has been beyond their ability - like design projects which involves much problem solving.

Bryant and Schwann were interested in seeing if the design sense of a slow learner could be improved and they developed a test to assess sensitivities to five art elements - line, shape, colour, value and texture. Based on these elements, fifteen lessons of one half hour each were given over a period of time. Their study showed that children with I.Q. scores of 28 - 80 could learn design

concepts and through systematic teaching they discovered that children can -

...learn art terminology by direct exposure to concrete objects which they are able to observe examine, manipulate, verbalise about, react to and put together in some artistic way. They can get involved in producing art that they understand and enjoy. The materials needed in the Art lessons do not have to be expensive or elaborate, rather they can be readily procured from the home, the school supply room and local shop. (15)

My problem, when introducing design to the class, was that because the weaker students have a tendency to enjoy an activity for the pleasure of the process, they lost interest with the project. The average or above average student used a more technical knowledge as a means to an end. The brighter child seems to have a better ability to develop ideas in art work and deal consciously and logically with the problem of design.

Work in the Art room comes from self expression involving both the emotions and intellect. Dewey states - "Art is a form of expression giving order to a human being's reaction to the environment." (16) This concept tends to determine the Art curriculum in our schools today and especially in the new Junior Certificate assessment. Teaching the slow learner does not require drastic reorganisation on the part of the teacher. However it does require teaching in more concrete terms, i.e. the importance of demonstrating craft processes, simplifying

and slowing down instructions and having the patience to repeat directions and breaking down the procedures into manageable stages.

Schaefer Simmerns comments on the learning process as -

Creating order and organising in the realm of concrete visual experiences and organisation in the realm of concrete visual experiences is a discipline thoroughly suited to the nature of the individual with limited intelligence. (17)

Gaitskell and Hurwitz see that the Art room has provided many positive aspects for slow learners:

1. They may make something not necessarily inferior to that of their fellow students.
2. Working in art can produce sensory and motor experiences that involve an integration of mental and physical operations. Art can be a unifying function connecting thought with feeling.
3. It may provide slow learners with experience in decision making and problem solving which is a socially useful skill.
4. Art can act as a form of therapy providing satisfaction to those with a history of failure. (18)

The above points show the importance of Art in the school curriculum, from helping the student improve mental processes, to developing confidence and self esteem which may affect the student's performance in all subjects. The positive aspects of creativity are now widely acknowledged and in my final chapter I will discuss the advantages of the New Junior Certificate course and how it facilitates the slow learner.

FOOTNOTES

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cited by Gaitskell and Hurwitz. Children and Their
Art. p.348.
18. Gaitskell and Hurwitz. Children and Their Art.
p.376.

Chapter 3

THE SLOW LEARNER AND THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

In this chapter I discuss the advantages of the new Junior Certificate and how the new Art Craft and Design syllabus encourages the slow learner to achieve his/her natural potential through offering a wide range of activities based on a variety of themes. I will also describe a modified programme that I think would be suitable for the slower student.

Between 1963 -1986 the number of students attending post-primary schools has greatly increased due to free education, free travel and the school leaving age being fifteen years. Because of these factors, the range of ability, in any one Art room, may vary greatly. The Teachers' Union of Ireland has observed - "It is often assumed that slower students can assimilate skills and perform in practical subjects, such as Art, in the same way as average or above average students." (1) However having discussed the development of the slower student in the Art room and how their approach to Art may differ from that of a student of average ability, it is clear that this assumption is not true.

All students have a right through education to develop a

positive self image and the new Junior Certificate allows all levels of students the possibility of developing psychological, physical, social and cognitive potential.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment states:

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including aesthetic, creative, critical cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, social and spiritual development for personal and family life, for working life, for living in the community and for leisure. (2)

An Art teacher dealing with a group of students, and especially those taking the Junior Certificate, must take into consideration each student's ability. For example, it is not a good idea to take an academic approach to teaching perspective and anatomy to non-academic students, or to allow complete freedom in the Art room which may cause a sense of bewilderment. A balance must be achieved whereby the student is able to experiment and explore possibilities within a structured programme.

The new Junior Certificate takes into consideration that creative art is not an end in itself and the simple processes of using a variety of materials, handling tools and working through logical procedures within a structure, is as important as coming up with a finished piece.

When facing the Junior Certificate, it is vital that the problems that slow learners may encounter are properly identified because they help the Art teacher to modify his/her expectations as well as modifying a programme to suit the specific deficits.

Golomb notes - "The slow learner's performance in the Art room may sometimes appear quite erratic and it may be difficult to assess or pinpoint the areas of difficulty."
(3)

I have encountered students who have trouble following verbal instructions or a sequence of steps in a project. Calculating measurements for one student may be difficult, while design work may give another student problems. Some students may produce good work, yet need extra time to complete a project. Keeping these problems in mind, I have devised a programme that I think would be suitable for the slow learner, who could manage to successfully complete and pass this new Junior Certificate assessment.

The Junior Certificate is divided into four areas. The first is the two dimensional part of the assessment whereby the students must do a painting and graphics project. One may be selected for ordinary level and both for higher level. The second is the three dimensional

area whereby students may work with an additive, subtractive or constructional process using a wide range of materials. The third part comes under the heading of options which include a variety of activities. One option is chosen for ordinary level and two options must be selected for higher level. All of these activities must be backed up with drawing and colour studies demonstrating a thought process and showing how the students have arrived at their final piece. Support Studies must be included in each activity which lead to an understanding and appreciation of the work of others in relation to their own. The overall project lasts from approximately November 16th to May 7th. The final part of the assessment includes a life drawing and still life examination within an allocated amount of time.

The themes that the students may select are broad enough to encourage them to work from a wide range of sources throughout the project. For example - harvest, wildlife, festival, my environment and usually a magical theme on witches or monsters is included.

It is clear to Lindsay that:

Many slow learners have a sense of personal failure and their self confidence can only be restored by teaching them methods of production which are quick and easy to do, so that a certain degree of success is assured. There is

also great satisfaction to be gained by striving to master materials and encouragement is given to experiment with a variety of media. (4)

With this in mind the programme that I have modified is divided into four parts - drawing, two dimensional work (painting), three dimensional work and options. Let us say that most weaker students will be taking ordinary level, therefore having a choice between painting and graphics. My programme only includes painting as I believe the slower student facing the problem solving process of design may encounter problems.

1. Drawing

Of all the Art processes drawing may be the most demanding and intimidating and, as mentioned, it is an essential part of all back up work for the Junior Certificate whether for two dimensional or three dimensional pieces. As Golomb notes - "Drawing demands enormous perspective and visual motor skills, a developed aesthetic eye and a range of other artistic attributes." (5) It is clear from this observation that some slow learners will have problems measuring up to the demands of drawing. With the weaker students, the Art teacher must provide both encouragement and technical guidance to work through development. Last year I was involved with one particular slow learner doing the Junior Certificate who encountered great problems with drawing. However when taught how to

use a pencil in a variety of ways and to study the source carefully, slowly but surely the student was able to record an adequate amount of information from her starting point which led her on to a further stage in the project. I also found that showing the student a variety of support studies and examining them closely, broadened her horizons with the use of the pencil.

Life Drawing

Life drawing is probably one of the most difficult problems facing the teacher with students of all levels. Most students, at Junior Certificate level, are aware of their inabilities, and become apprehensive where failure is a possibility. It is important for the teacher, especially with the slow learner, to provide clear instructions showing how to represent the basic proportion of the figure and to record tonal and textural information with a pencil. I have found the most successful way of helping the weaker students is to encourage them to break down the figure into very simple shapes and represent it in a basic way. This is probably the most difficult part of the project and constant practice throughout the academic year is needed.

2. Painting

Unlike drawing, which is relatively controlled and usually used in a representational way, painting can break all the rules. Where realism, detail and perspective are expected in drawing, the painter can experiment with abstraction and even minimalism.

It is important that the source, from which the student is working, is within his/her experience, as it is difficult to work from objects that are unfamiliar. It is also essential that the theme that has been chosen is exciting enough to stimulate the student and offers a wide range of possibilities to explore. If, for example, the student is working from a still life, interesting and brightly coloured objects will hold the attention of the student longer than a group of mundane grey objects.

Most slow learners lack confidence, so it is important, at each stage, to show them how to simplify problems. When working from a still life, it should not have to be slavishly copied, but instead arranged on the page in a pleasing way. The success of a painting is partly due to the satisfactory placing of shapes in relation to the paper.

When painting, it is better for the student to build his/her picture up as a whole using a fairly thick paintbrush and cover the large areas first. The details should be added with a smaller brush when the initial paint is dry. It is easier for the student to see details needed at a later stage without the distractions of large portions of unpainted paper. The student should also understand the basic concept of colour mixing and how to make simple tones and shades by adding black and white paint.

In the painting, collage, mosaic work and a range of other materials may be included. These can add textural qualities as well as a sense of vibrancy and excitement to the work.

Last year, I had one student who was doing a project on food. Her painting consisted of a bag of muesli being poured into a bowl. She achieved a wonderful textural effect by describing the muesli with tiny pebbles, lentils and wood chips. The spoon was made from strips of tin foil and the bowl from sheets of thin plastic. The rest of the picture was painted which contrasted very well with her collage work.

Paper mosaic is a good medium to work with for the student who enjoys the regularity and symmetry of a disciplined pattern. All types of paper may be used including colour pages of magazines. A ruler is held firmly on the paper in order to tear it into narrow strips from which small squares can be cut. The appearance of mosaic work can be varied according to whether the pieces are stuck in straight rows or made to follow a curve. Mosaic work contrasts very well with large torn strips of collage or flat paint work.

If the student wishes to describe a variety of textures, papier mache mixed with polyfilla makes a modelling material into which objects can be pressed to remain permanently or taken away so textures are impressed on its surface. When these pictures are dry, colouring may be done with paint and the work finally varnished. I have found that these exciting methods appeal to those students who are not usually interested in pure painting and may add an interesting dimension to their work.

3. Three Dimensional

This area covers additive, subtractive and constructional processes. The additive process involves making forms by adding material gradually; the subtractive process involves carving away material defining the form and the

constructional process involves cutting, shaping or fastening material, i.e. wire to build up a form or structure. My programme consists of two possibilities for the slow learner - the additive process of newspaper work and constructional process of wire work.

Modelling with Newspaper

As a modelling material, newspaper has many advantages over clay. It is easily obtained, inexpensive and comparatively clean, and with air drying only, it produces a remarkably strong material. It is important to understand that a variety of creative activities can stem from the use of paper in its various forms.

A good modelling material can be made by tearing newspaper into thumbnail size pieces which is quick and easy to do if the paper is first wet. The torn pieces are left in a basin of water to soak over night. Handfuls are then placed on a board and beaten with a thick stick into a smooth pulp. The water is squeezed out and wallpaper paste is kneaded into the pulp until a good plastic medium is obtained. Alternatively the pulped paper can be mixed with polyfilla. Both methods provide a medium suitable for making heads, figures or other objects. Projections may be obtained by using double sheets of folded newspaper which is pressed into the main form and covered with the pulped paper. A final layer of torn kitchen paper creates

a smooth finish. After the piece is dry, it may be painted and varnished. (Fig. 3)

Wire Work

Wire is a lively material for the creative experience. Large or small forms can be made according to the thickness of the wire used. A variety of wires used in one piece contrasts well with each other and portrays a variety of interesting linear qualities. (Fig 4) Strips of newspaper or scrim may be tightly wrapped and pasted around the wire shapes and painted when dry.

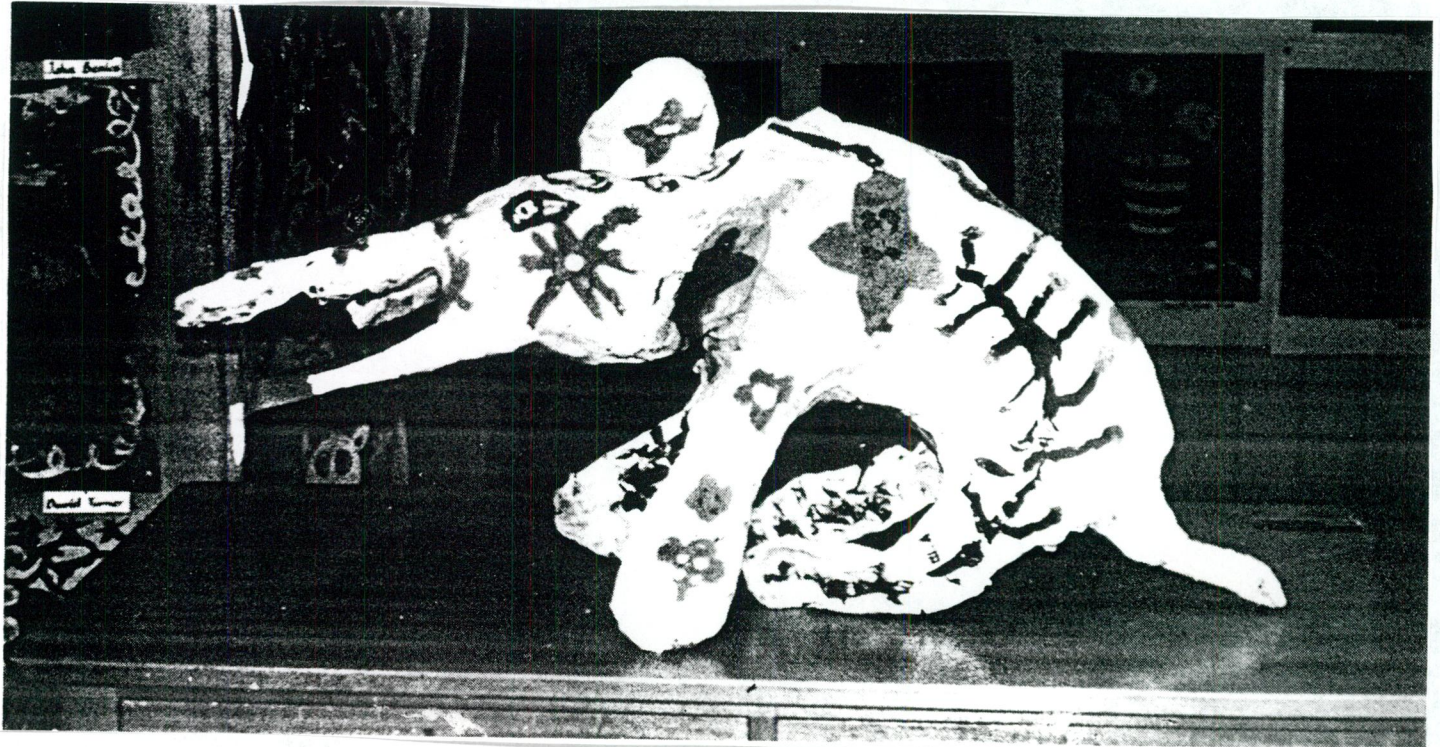
4. Options

I include two activities from this area although the student taking the ordinary level will only study one option.

Embroidery

Embroidery does not demand a knowledge of elaborate stitches for it has become an exciting craft relying on a simple design. Representational shapes cut from an image of the source, act as a reminder that all designs for embroidery have to be flat. After the shapes have been cut out, the student can select the main fabrics to be used. The colours chosen do not have to be naturalistic. it is always better to limit the colours since simple

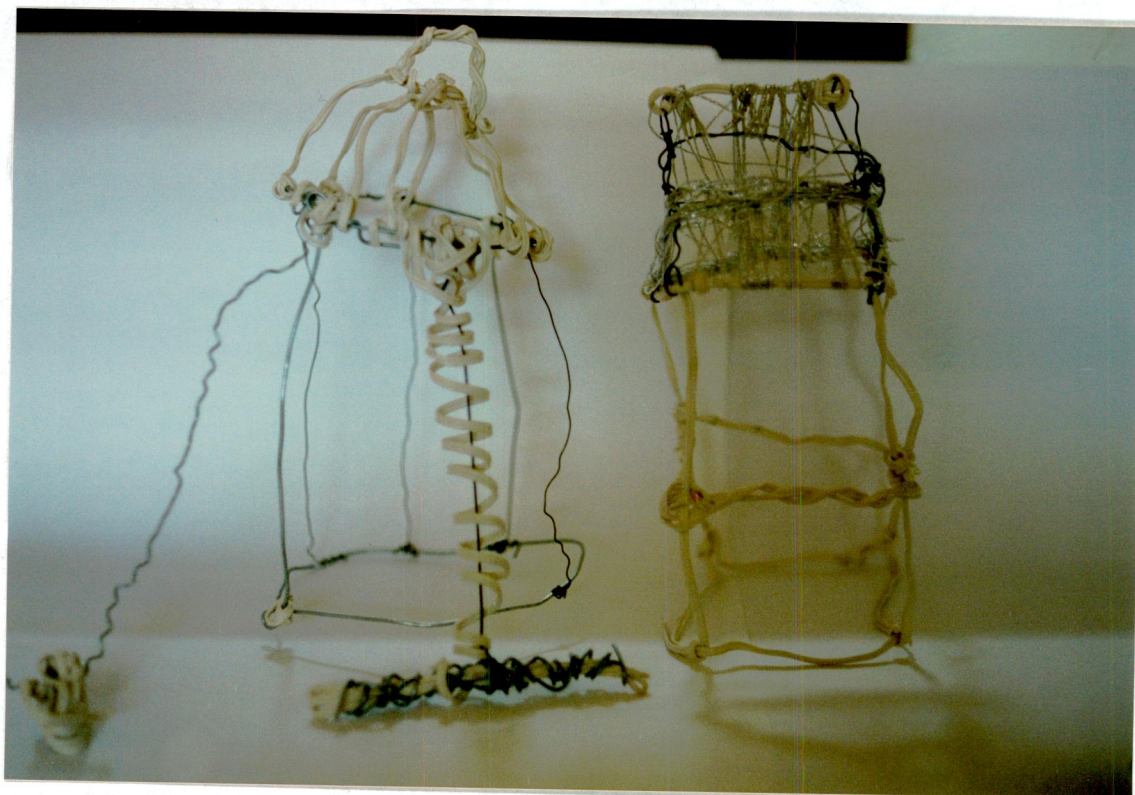
FIGURE 3.



100-100000



FIGURE 4.



14 AUG 13



colour schemes are most effective. The use of layers of different coloured net placed over more solid fabrics works well. (Fig.5)

Fabric of the same colour, but varying textures, will show as much variety of tone as though different colours were used. Apart from the variety of fabric textures used in the design, there is the additional variation of textures obtained through the use of stitches. (Fig. 6)

Students will make up their own stitches and this should be encouraged as embroidery designs require lively stitches, but not necessarily those which are technically correct. Other interesting effects can be obtained by stitching on beads or sequins.

A new and interesting approach to embroidery design is incorporating more unorthodox materials. Tin lids and milk tops may be flattened and holes pierced into them so they can be stitched to the fabric. Details can be added with screws, curtain rings and other pieces of scrap metal. Some transparent containers of firm but pliable plastic can be cut and stitched into place. I have seen some very effective work in colourless plastics on white fabric with embroidery in white and silver thread.

The main idea of an embroidery design is to plan the whole before a stitch is made or fabric cut. As the various

FIGURE 5.



FIGURE 3

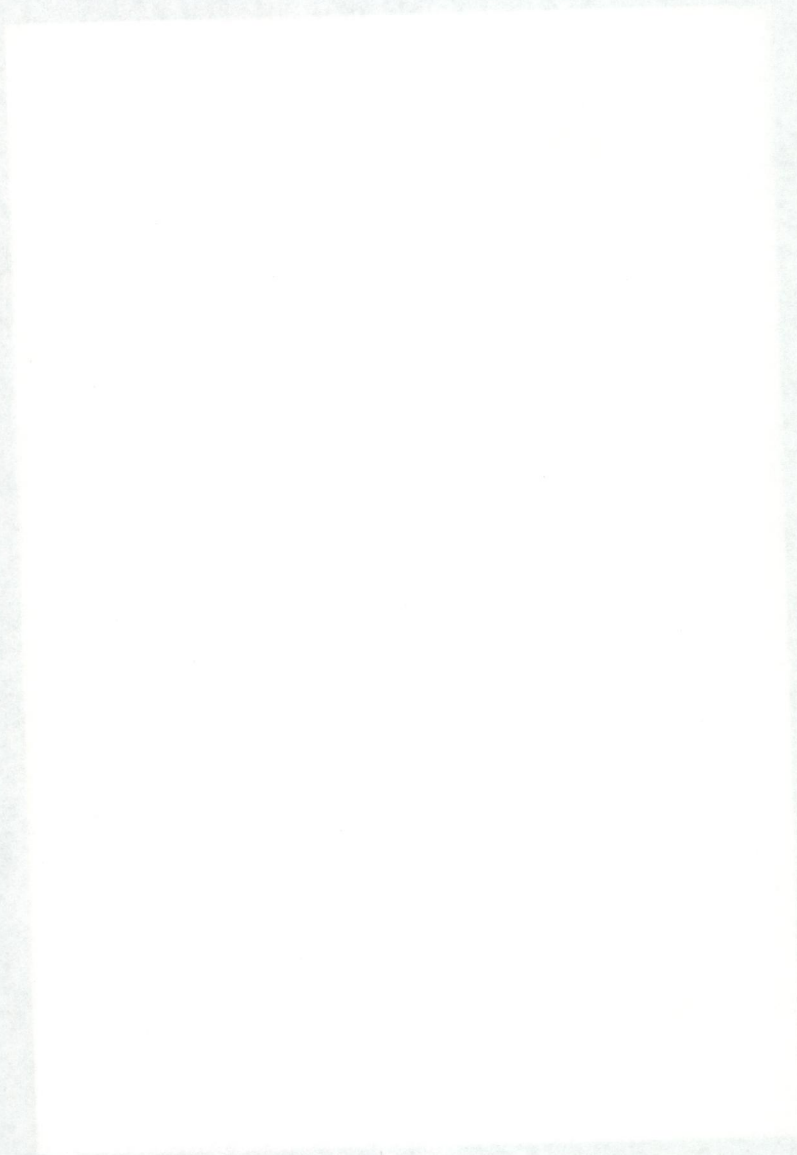


FIGURE 6.



LIBRARY



materials and stitches are added, the work is gradually brought to completion with room to experiment throughout.

Gaitskell and Hurwitz observe that:

Slow learners have little difficulty in acquiring the skills needed for stitchery and are generally very creative in this activity. They can experiment with using threads and backgrounds of varying colours, weights and textures or explore the potentialities of a newly discovered stitch. (6)

Lino Print

Out of all the Art processes, printmaking is perhaps one of the easiest techniques to adapt to all levels of students. As Lindsay states -

It is an essentially inter disciplinary medium which allows students to use the skills of drawing, painting, design and even sculpture. Because printmaking draws upon these familiar processes, children are able to experiment and cross over to different media without much confusion. (7)

In lino printing the students must develop a design or sketch, taken from their source, that lends itself to be broken down into positive and negative elements. This is the most difficult part of the process since students may be used to working with contour drawings or shading techniques. I often begin with a warm up exercise of using black paper to demonstrate the positive and negative concept. Students are instructed to cut basic shapes or other elements from their source which are pasted onto

white paper for contrast.

From my experience, most students get great satisfaction from carving but tend to hack away too much. I have, in the past, used two blocks, one for the background and the other for the foreground. The main image is cut out of paper and placed on the two blocks and drawn around. The background is gouged away on one block and the image is worked on and then printed. On the other block the image is gouged away and background worked on and printed on top of the first print. (Fig.7)

Certain deficits which students have made can be camouflaged in printmaking more so than any other medium. Artists such as Dubuffet and Miro have chosen printmaking most often when working in a naive or bizarrely figurative style. Students who are not able to work in a realistic detailed style, can shift to abstraction or a non-objective mode without taking away from their work.

A Programme for The Junior Certificate Examination:

With the theme food or wildlife in mind, I have now modified a programme based on lobsters that would suit the slow learner. Lobsters are an interesting source to work from with their exciting vibrant colours, textural variations and easily identifiable shapes. Enough

1.



2.



1. Background gouged away + main image worked on.

2. Main image gouged away + background worked on.

FIGURE 7.

information may be recorded to use in a range of stimulating and exciting activities. Lobsters may be seen in a variety of contexts, for example - the sea, the aquarium, the restaurant or even the dinner plate.

Students may be brought to an aquarium, the Zoology Department in Trinity College or the National History Museum to record information.

Aim To help promote the physical, psychological and emotional development of the student through providing a wide range of educational experiences both in and out of the Art room.

Theme Wildlife or Food.

Source Lobsters.

1. Drawing

Aim To develop the students' understanding of shape, line, dot, tone, light, texture and colour through identifying and recording information and working with a range of pencils, graphite, charcoal and pastels on a variety of paper and card.

Activity Drawing/colour studies.

Support Studies

Matisse : Still life with Oysters
 (line, colour, and tone)
 Millais : The P.R.B. Ridiculed
 (texture with pencil)
 Georgia O'Keefe : Mussel shells
 (shape)
 Luigi Russolo : The Solidity of Fog
 (tone)
 Jan Davidsz de Heem : Still Life with
 Lobster
 (colour and texture)

2. Painting

Aim To further develop a knowledge of colour and its
 harmonic and contrasting qualities, and to utilize all
 previous information recorded through devising and working
 on a suitable composition - for example, 'Lobster for
 Dinner' with mixed media.

Activity Working with paint, collage/mosaic, polyfilla
 and papier mache and varnish.

<u>Support Studies</u>	Matisse	: Still Life with Fish Bowl, (composition and colour)
	Gauguin	: The Market, (colour).
	Carlo Carra	: Pursuit, (mixed media)
	Millais	: Salmon Fishing, (pattern)
	Jan Davidsz de Heem	: Still Life with Lobster, (composition)
	Georgia O'Keefe	: The Oyster Shell, (shapes and textures)

3. Wire and Newspaper Work

Aim To develop the students' understanding of form and structure and to use a combination of the constructional and additional processes of wire and paper to make the whole or part of the Lobster in an expressive way.

Activity Working with wire and paper pulp and strips of newspaper or scrim.

Support Studies.

Picasso	:	The Big Cock
Picasso	:	The Goat
James Power	:	Salmon
Alexander		
Calder	:	Mobile
Vincent Brown	:	The Porter
Henry Moore	:	Life like form
Degas	:	The Dancer
Oisin Kelly	:	The Children of Lir
Egyptian and Indian sculpture of natural forms.		

4. Embroidery

Aim To further promote and reinforce the students' understanding of line, dot, tone, texture, colour balance, shape and pattern through making an embroidery based on the textural and abstract rhythmic patterns on the lobster shell.

Activity Working with a variety of fabrics, yarns and discarded materials.

Support Studies

Chen Mujun	: Ducks, (pattern).
William Blake	: Visioner Powers (scale, textures).
Edward Hicks	: The Peaceable Kingdom (pattern and composition)
Georgia O'Keefe	: The Clam Shell, (shape, texture and pattern)
Millais	: Salmon Fishing (pattern)
Hieronymos Bosch	: The Temptations of St. Anthony, (shapes and scale textures).

The Bayeaux Tapestry
Greek Island and Turkish embroidery.
Embroidery from past and contemporary
artists.

Chapter 3

FOOTNOTES

1. Teachers Union of Ireland Report on Remedial Education: Education and Industrial Relations Research Series 6. (Dublin T.U.I., April 1986) p.13.
2. An Roinn Oideachais. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, The Junior Certificate, Art Craft and Design Dublin. p.1.
3. Claire Golomb. The Child's Creation of a Pictorial World. (Berkely, L.A. University of California Press. p.64.
4. Zaidee Lindsay. Art Is For All. (London Mills and Boon 1967) p.53.
5. Golomb. Creation of a Pictorial World. p.35.
6. Ibid.
7. Lindsay. Art Is For All. p.60.
8. Gaitskell and Hurwitz. Children and Their Art. p. 10.

CONCLUSION

Creativity is part of a thinking process and if a child's psychological development is dysfunctional in some way, it must effect performance in the Art room. It is very important for the teacher to recognise that levels of creativity differ from one student to the next, in order to encourage and promote the development of the slow learner.

Suitable programmes may be devised for the weaker student which do not make them in any way feel 'inadequate' or 'different' from their peers. This is important in view of the fact that low self esteem is so often one of the hallmarks of the slow learner. As I have previously stated, this may require great patience on the part of the teacher as well as teaching a methodology which concentrates more on the concrete rather than the abstract. By this I mean demonstrating certain processes, giving clear instructions and breaking down procedures into manageable stages.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, page 26, the participation in artistic activity has many positive functions for the slow

learner from developing mental processes to developing confidence and self esteem.

For the slow learner, Art work in secondary school is no longer involved as much with pure self expression, but entails a thinking process that encourages the student to follow a logical pattern of procedures, so an end result is reached. Art somehow becomes an academic discipline requiring a conscious effort for results to be attained. The wonderful thing about Art is that problem solving can be scaled to a range of levels. For example, a mainstream class can work on the same element yet deal with different problems which match their needs. Therefore similar projects can have quite a different emphasis.

I had two girls last year taking the Junior Certificate, who were describing the tonal qualities of an object. One student had a high level of ability while the second was a slow learner. The first student approached the problem by using the method of pointillism with different grades of graphite and the second student identified and represented the tones through the use of collage. Both completed the lesson using very different procedures with successful results.

An advantage that I feel the new Junior Certificate offers, is to provide suitable problems for any level so the learning experience allows each student to use his/her own personal resources when tackling them.

Through the Junior Certificate Assessment, all students can experience success if suitable programmes are devised and realistic goals are set. This sense of achievement will lead to high levels of aspiration which in turn may be translated to other subjects in the school curriculum.

In the teaching of Art, we sell the students short if we are thinking only in terms of passing an examination. Yes, success in terms of the Junior Certificate Examination is important, but we should aim to give our students a broader perspective. It is essential to realise that participation in the artistic process is truly education for life as it develops the person as a whole. The new Art Craft and Design syllabus is constructed in such a way as to allow these concepts to be constantly reinforced, and here, I believe lies its greatest strength.

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