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An examination of the provisions made for visually
impaired pupils in Ireland, with special reference to
the Art, Craft and Design Syllabus.

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by

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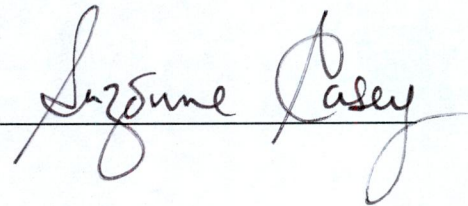
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Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Suzanne Casey", written over a horizontal line.

Date: 22.4.'94

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I hope that, as a result of research I will develop my own understanding of visual impairment, review the provision of education for visually impaired pupils in Ireland and discover the attitudes of visually impaired pupils towards the current Art, Craft and Design syllabus.

In Chapter 1 I have reviewed the literature in order to establish the many types of visual impairment. I have also discussed Lowenfeld and Brittain's visual/haptic theory. In Chapter 2 I have reviewed the literature on integration and the provisions in Ireland for special education. In Chapter 3 I have looked specifically at integrating the visually impaired and have discussed the findings and recommendations of the Special Education Review Committee. In Chapter 4 I have explored the Curriculum and its provision for people of special needs. The role of Art, Craft and Design in the lives of those not fully sighted is also discussed. Throughout this dissertation my aim is to establish the attitudes of the visually impaired to Art, Craft and Design and their attitudes towards integration. The remaining Chapters consist of my research project, its findings and my conclusions.

CHAPTER 1

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

A DISCUSSION ON THE CAUSES AND TYPES OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

INTRODUCTION

I believe that the visually impaired person is often more visually aware than the average sighted person.... They interpret their own world by touch, by their bodily feelings and by their muscular sensations. The work therefore tends to be more internal, more individualistic and more expressionistic. The work is truly their own¹.

Through researching and writing this dissertation, I hope to understand and discover more about the visually impaired, the educational resources needed and available to them in Ireland and teaching art to the visually impaired. I am fortunate that my teaching practice school is the only designated post-primary school in Ireland, integrating visually impaired boys. This unique teaching experience has created in me, a strong interest in integration of the visually impaired into mainstream education and in working, through art, with people of special needs. Padraig Naughton, a practising visually impaired sculptor states that:

The use any visually impaired person makes of their own senses is not only dependent on the amount and use they make of their sight, but also the level by which the environment they live within stimulates inquiry and their further exploration....The use of touch as a means to create tactile images clearly illustrates how senses other than sight can be used not just by visually impaired people but by the fully sighted who are becoming ever more dependent on the cramming of visual information which often denies access to the subtleties in our environment².

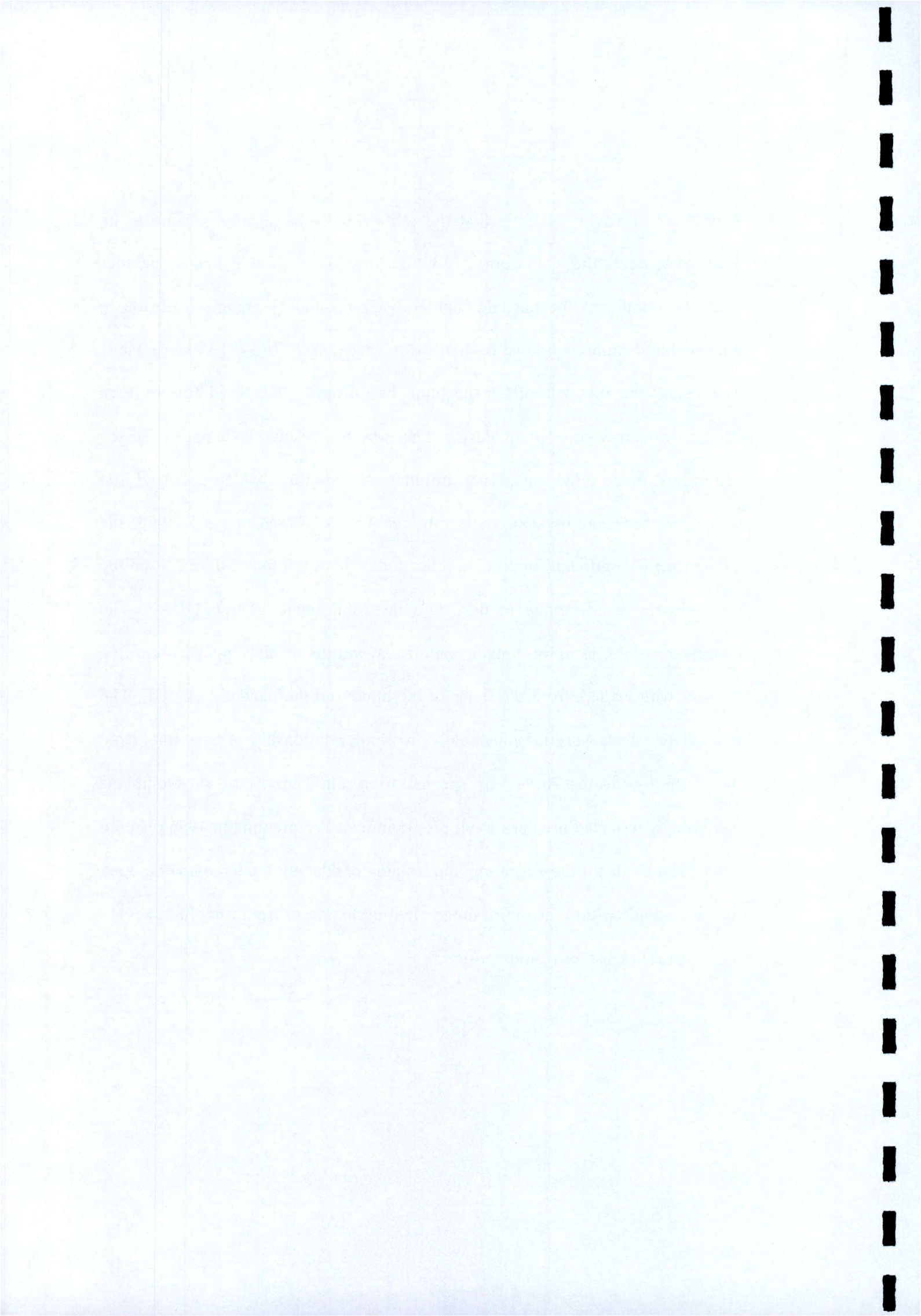
My hope therefore, is to emphasise the importance of art education for the visually impaired person. However, in order to do this, I must first look at the history and causes of visual impairment.

THE HISTORY OF BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Education must aim at giving the blind child a knowledge of the realities around him, the confidence to cope with these realities, and the feeling that he is recognised and accepted as an individual in his own right³

The historical literature reveals that in primitive societies, individuals who could not provide for themselves or take care of their own defence were generally considered a liability to the tribe or group. Berthold Lowenfeld reveals that in early Western civilisations such as Sparta, Athens and Rome, blind children and children with other handicaps were put to death. This was legally acceptable and theoretically approved by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. However, blind people such as Homer and the prophets Tiresias and Phineus were glorified but still removed from their normal place in society.

It was not until very recently that the term visually handicapped came to be adopted to cover the whole range of visual impairment so that it now includes both the blind and the partially sighted. Unfortunately organised efforts to educate blind children are of a comparatively recent date. In 1784 Valentin Haüy established the first school for the blind in Europe. It catered for fourteen children and was situated in Paris. This was the result of changes in living conditions of the blind and social attitudes towards them which occurred and developed over hundreds of years. In the United States in April 1966, the Council for Exceptional Children's publication on handicapped children⁴ used the term visually handicapped to designate the total range of visual loss. The acceptance of this term was long in coming and was the result of many committee sessions with leaders from the fields of the blind and the partially sighted. The immediate effects were the much closer working relationship of personnel from the formerly distinct areas of specialisation and important developments increasingly reflected in educational programmes. The meeting in 1966 resulted in new standards for the education and training of education personnel equipped to teach people within the entire range of visual handicap from total blindness to high degrees of useful residual vision.



TYPES OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Among children classified as blind, not all are entirely without sight, but many have variable or restricted vision⁵. The visual handicaps of the partially sighted will include the following:

Defects in eye structure

Abnormal conditions

Defects in the visual fields

Defects in colour vision

There are many causes of visual impairments and Natalie C. Barraga researched these at length. Most impairments are corrected by eye specialists if children are examined early in life. Barraga reveals, however, that children are seldom taken to specialists "unless the condition is serious or interferes with behaviour"⁶. This neglect can cause "irreversible damage"⁷ she states. It is my intention to review briefly some of the main visual disabilities.

Refractive Errors:

The most common eye error is myopia or nearsightedness, which is usually associated with the structural alignment of the eye, either because of increased curvature of the cornea or extended growth of the eyeball⁸. Myopia can now be

rectified due to the introduction of contact lenses. Another refractive error is that of hyperopia or farsightedness, because of a flattened corneal surface or a too short eyeball the refractive power is insufficient and the point of convergence of the rays of light falls beyond the retinal fovea⁹. None of the refractive errors is likely to result in a serious handicap to visual learning but if not detected or left uncorrected such errors can interfere with optimal visual perceptual development and eventual visual efficiency¹⁰.

Cataract:

Zaidee Lindsay believes that the greater proportion of visually impaired children suffer from congenital cataract "which is either hereditary or caused by the mother contracting Rubella during pregnancy". Congenital cataracts pose severe visual disabilities "restrict development of the use of the mechanism, and interfere with the quality and quantity of sensory information transmitted through the visual channel"¹². Because of limited visual capacity, children with congenital cataracts often appear as though they were unable to see at all. Chapman and Stone believe that:

Unless careful attention is given to bring objects very close they may have little opportunity to develop muscular control to attend to objects. As the child is allowed to investigate, visual learning begins and sufficient information is transmitted to contribute to visual perceptual development¹³.

Barraga observes that "the patterns of visual behaviour are thought to continue their attempted growth, even though hampered by defects, and experience and training may act as ameliorating forces in improving visual efficiency"¹⁴.

Aniridia and Albinism:

There are conditions where vision is seriously impaired because a student is particularly sensitive to light. One of these is aniridia, in which absence of the iris means that the eye can not adjust to light. Albinos also will be dazzled by ordinary light, for although the eyes are complete, they lack colour pigment. One type of albino is very easy to recognise because of fair hair, pale skin and the pinkish appearance of the eyes. Chapman and Stone discuss another form of albinism known as "ocular albinism"¹⁵ in which only the eyes are affected. Both will be distressed and even suffer pain when in bright light and most will wear dark glasses to alleviate this.

Corneal Ulcers and Scars:

These can be caused by infection, accident from injury or harmful substances entering the eye, resulting in scarring and ulceration. They can be very painful and also cause photophobia and a deficiency in the vision. Many are a temporary condition. Children with these conditions will be averse to glare and have severely reduced vision in bright sunlight.

Hemianopsia:

Damage to one side of the brain can cause visual handicap. Messages from the right hand field of vision of both eyes are received by the left hand side of the brain. Similarly, messages from the left hand field of vision of both eyes are transmitted to the right side of the brain. Describing the remaining vision as good, Linsay says that "mobility and associated activities will be affected. Reading too, will be difficult"¹⁶. Children with right-sided field loss will be looking ahead into space; left-sided hemianopsia causes difficulties in finding the beginning of a line of print. Glasses or the enlargement of print will not help this condition. Children need to be taught to move head and eyes to compensate for the field loss.

Nystagmus:

Nystagmus is an involuntary movement of the eyes which is very noticeable. Movement is usually from side to side but can be up and down. Near vision may not be affected but distance vision will be reduced, possibly severely. Frequently, those with nystagmus find their vision more stable "if the head is held on one side or slightly askew"¹⁷. Chapman and Stone state that the child should sit near the black-board and "the teacher should note that vision across the room may be lowered and the child unable to see demonstrations or materials presented"¹⁸.

Colour Blindness:

Colour blindness is due to a deficiency in the cells of the retina, making it unresponsive to the stimulation of primary colours. It occurs in approximately one person in fifty and more frequently among boys than girls. The most common form is red/green blindness which will range from those who have only some minor degree of colour loss, to those for whom bright green and red are quite indistinguishable. Linsay has reviewed cases in which the red, orange, yellow and green of the spectrum are seen as one colour, green, with the blue and violet both blue, while the bluish-green section will appear only a gap. In extreme, cases, creating with colour can bring little pleasure and many students prefer to work in black and white.

HAPTIC AND VISUAL PERCEPTION

Two types of art expression have been distinguished by Lowenfeld and Brittain¹⁹. One is the visual type, the other is "haptic" deriving from the Greek work haptos meaning laying hold of. These two types are extremes and refer to the "mode of perceptual organisation and the conceptual categorization of the external environment"²⁰. The visually minded person perceives through his/her eyes and is a spectator. Visual perception is a system of experiences which depends primarily and directly on the structure and organisation of the environment²¹. Lowenfeld and Brittain comments on those whose perceptual orientation is visual as:

The observer, who usually learns about things from their appearance. One important factor in visual observation is the ability initially to see the whole without an awareness of detail ... how something looks is of prime importance, and even tactile sensations are translated into visual form.²².

The haptic person responds to his own body sensations "what is due to his own impulses and muscular effort"²³. Certainly there are indications of environmental events, but they are always charged with subjectivity which makes Lowenfeld and Brittain say that "haptic perception brings the individual's experiences out into the environment"²⁴. The haptic person is a participant rather than a spectator and undergoes experience in a kinaesthetic way. His drawings are not literal but self-expressive. Lowenfeld and Brittain believe that an extreme visual type would be "inhibited if he were to be limited to haptic impression, if he were asked not to

use sight, but to orient himself by means of touch, bodily feelings, muscular sensations and kinaesthetic functions"²⁵. An extremely haptic individual, although normally sighted, uses his eyes only when compelled to do so and relies completely on the senses as a means of becoming acquainted with his environment.

Lowenfeld and Brittain claim that visual perception does not develop in such a way as to dominate and exclude haptic perception in all children. Excluding the totally and partially blind.

Haptic perception is predominant in early years of childhood and visual perception certainly displaces it in most children, at least before the age of puberty when reality demands and interests displace and exclude the fantasy interests of childhood²⁶.

With a series of tests in 1945, Lowenfeld with Brittain²⁷ studied 1,128 American children for visual or haptic aptitude. They found that 47 percent were clearly visual, 23 percent were clearly haptic and the remainder not clearly identifiable in type. They agreed that many people are mixed visual and haptic perceivers.

Their tests included the following:

- a) A test of integration of successive impressions
- b) A test of subjective impressions
- c) A test of visual versus haptic word associations
- d) Visualisation of kinaesthetic experience
- e) A test of tactile impressions²⁸

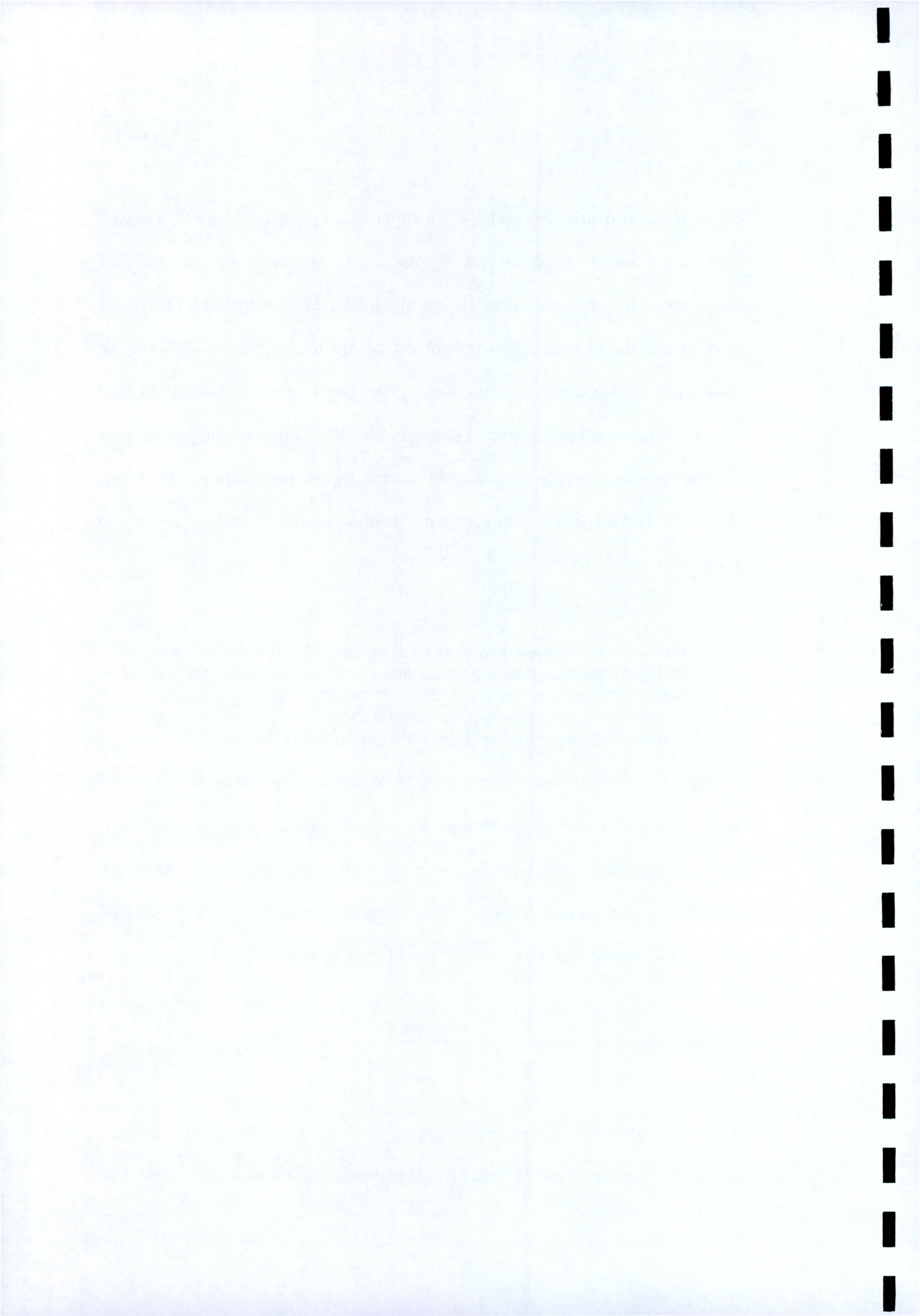
Lowenfeld and Brittain also refer to an unpublished study by Henry W. Drews²⁹ who used a variety of techniques, among which was the Rorschach Ink-Blot technique. The subject is shown a series of ten ink blots, one by one. Visualisers tend to see the blot as a concrete object or 3D form. Non-visualisers give movement or Kinaesthetic responses. The implication of Lowenfeld and Brittain's studies is that visual and haptic modes of perception tend to exist side by side and many people remain of the mixed haptic/visual variety. However, there still remain those of the extreme haptic perception and, according to Lowenfeld and Brittain:

this accounts to some extent at least for the difficulty which some children have in continuing their studies of art successfully after the adolescent age at which vision takes over for the majority and visual modes of perception are assumed to be dominant by the teacher and visual methods are relied upon in art teaching³⁰.

It seems that Revész had great difficulty in understanding and appreciating the ways in which haptic functions could continue to operate, interact with visual functions and sometimes even dominate them after their normal development. He believes that "all perception of sighted persons as visually dominated and all its valuable artistic qualities as those contributed by vision"³¹.

Haptic Perception and the Blind:

There have also been differences of opinion about the art of the blind or visually impaired. Lowenfeld and Brittain advocated the idea that there were two creative



types, visual and haptic, and that the art of the blind was essentially an expression of the haptic creative type. Revész objected that the art of the blind was of no aesthetic value in so far as it depended on visual experience³². Lowenfeld and Brittain have stressed the interest of the art of those people who are weak sighted, for whom haptic perception plays a larger part than it does for those with normal sight. Different problems are raised by the art of the blind. In connection with these problems Revész has pointed out that there are two kinds of haptic persons namely:

- a) Those who are haptic of an essential optical character
- b) Those who are pure or autonomous haptic



Figure 1.1.1.

"PAIN" sculptured by a sixteen year old blind boy who is haptically minded.

- (A) The chin is constructed.
- (B) The teeth and tongue are put in.
- (C) The month is closed, hiding inside features.
- (D) The nose is added, eye sockets are made.
- (E) Eyeballs are put in from inside, head is closed.
- (F) Ears, muscles and hair are added.
- (G) The head is finished.
- (H) All features remain isolated as partial impression on final product.



Figure 1.1.2.

Final piece by haptically minded blind boy.

Source: Viktor lowenfeld and Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, 6th Ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1975), P.361.

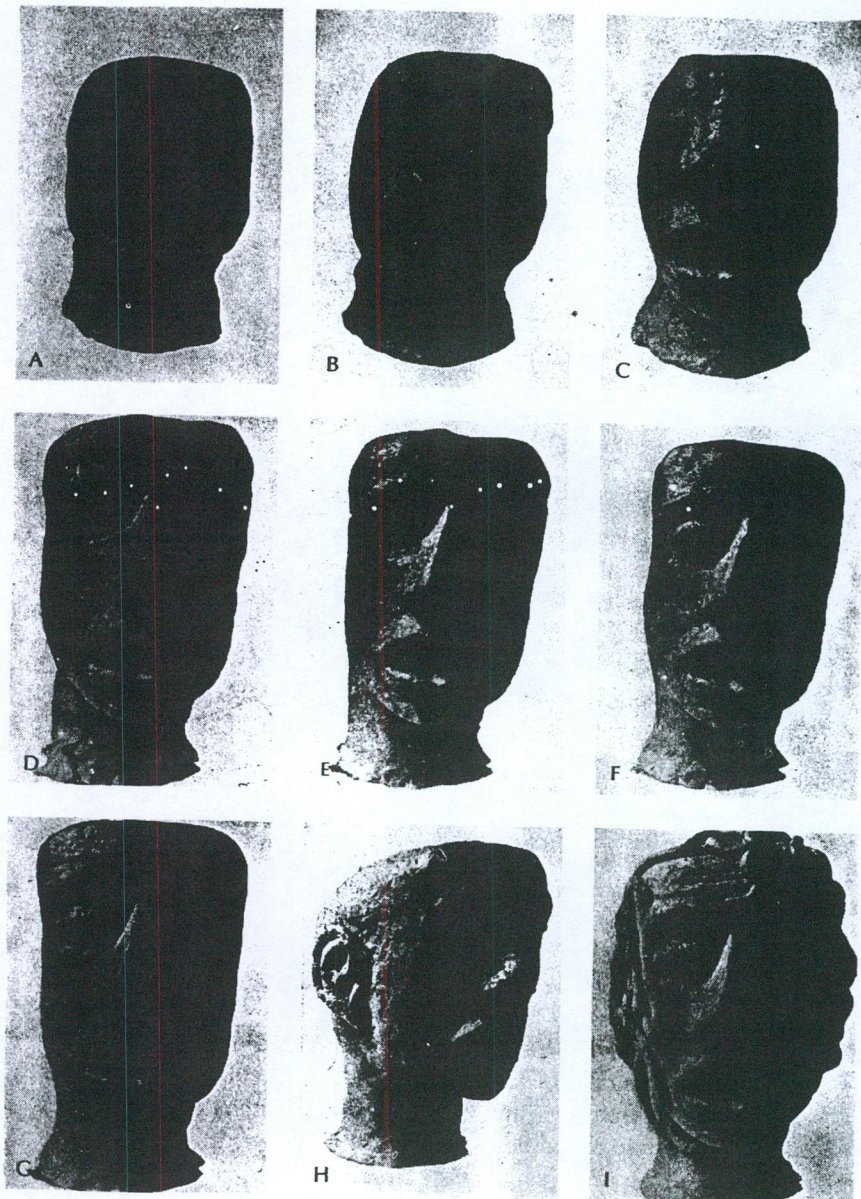


Figure 1.2.1

"PAIN", sculpted by a sixteen year old blind girl who is visually minded.

- (A) The general outline is made.
- (B) The cavity of the mouth is formed.
- (C) The nose is added.
- (D) Eye sockets are hollowed out.
- (E) Eyeballs are put in.
- (F) Lids are pulled in.
- (G) Wrinkles are formed.
- (H) Ears are added.
- (I) Hair is added.
- (J) In the finished product, all features are incorporated into a unified surface.



Figure 1.2.2.

"PAIN" - final piece by visually minded blind girl.

Source: Viktor Lowenfeld and Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, 6th Ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p.359.

It is important at this stage to consider the causes and levels of blindness. Revész says that from the point of view of the aesthetic experiences of the blind:

It does not make any difference whether we are dealing with sighted subjects trained in haptic methods, or subjects born blind or with those who have lost their sight early or late in life, or with the degree of education among observers³³.

Admittedly, there are differences of type, but there is a complete similarity in respect of haptic perception, recognition and interpretation. Revész comments:

In view of the fact that a total image of haptically observed objects, representing the complete morphological and phenomenological significance of the data, cannot be obtained, it seems justifiable to assume that in the field of haptics one can hardly speak of an aesthetic appreciation in the stricter sense³⁴.

Essentially, according to Revész the purely haptic processes could not lead to convincing aesthetic creation or application, but purely visual processes could, so could haptic processes if they interfuse with visual processes and are integrated and organised visually.

Revész gives numerous examples of the art of the blind, comparing them in many cases with corresponding works of sighted subjects. In his opinion the outcome of these comparisons is that the work of the blind, whether they are trained or not, is always artistically inferior to that of the sighted. Work of the blind is:

Less accurate and represents the human figure and other objects with incorrect proportions or in a way which results from the piecemeal fitting together of parts or items each first apprehended separately, without the unity of perception given by sight³⁵.

Comparing the theories of Viktor Lowenfeld and Revész, it is apparent that Revész has been unduly influenced by his own predominantly visual conceptions of art and what he thinks is to be considered of the greatest aesthetic value. Revész would not be likely to accept as significant contributions to art the works showing expressive "distortions" so fascinating aesthetically and shown in many of the illustrations in Lowenfeld and Brittain's book and in much modern art. Revész, however may be right in thinking that purely haptic artists born blind will not be likely to be successful in producing works of art to be appreciated by normally sighted persons.

The history of art, according to Lowenfeld and Brittain³⁶ is filled with examples of art of both the haptic and visual types. Michelangelo's "David" is a type of expression very different from a piece of sculpture from the South Pacific islands. Both, however, are true art expression and sincere forms of art. Contrary to Revész's beliefs³⁷, a recent exhibition of ceramic sculpture presented by the pupils

of St. Joseph's School for Visually Impaired Boys, Dublin³⁸ met with great critical acclaim - the perception behind this work is generally classified as haptic. As the art work of the haptic and visual types are exhibited along side each other, I hope to look towards the education system and the debate on integration - with special reference to educating the visually impaired with their normal sighted peers.



Figure 1.3.

Obviously one does not have to be blind to show haptic or visual tendencies (as in Figures 1.3. and 1.4.). Here a twelve year old has constructed a head by starting with a lump of clay the general shape of a head; details were fashioned by pulling out or pushing in for the various features.

Source: Viktor Lowenfeld and Lambert Brittain, Creative and Mental Growth, 6th Ed., (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p.363.

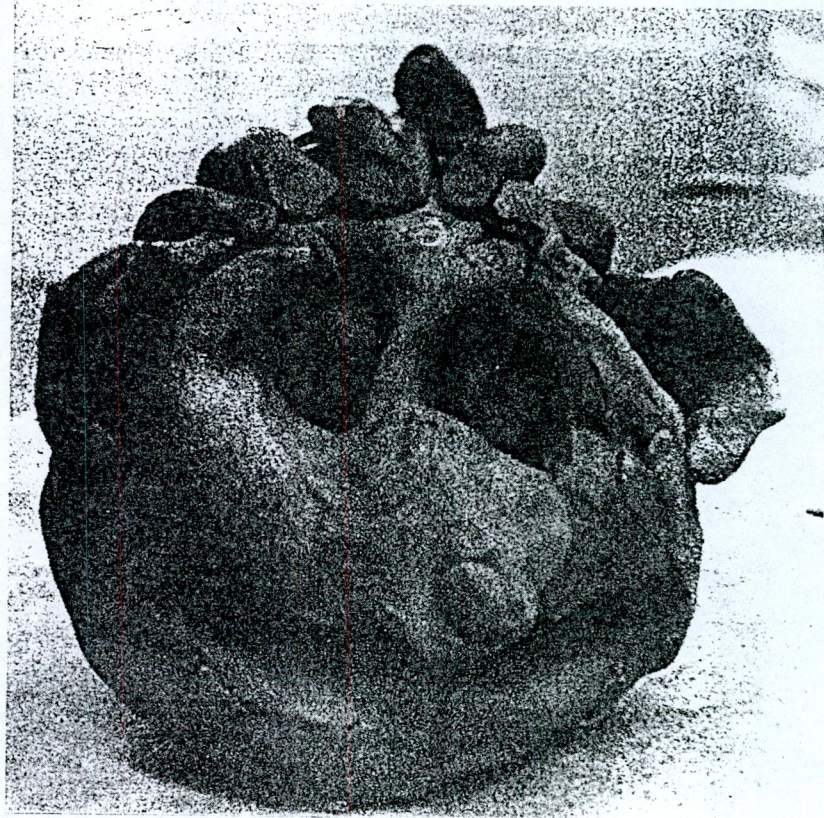


Figure 1.4.

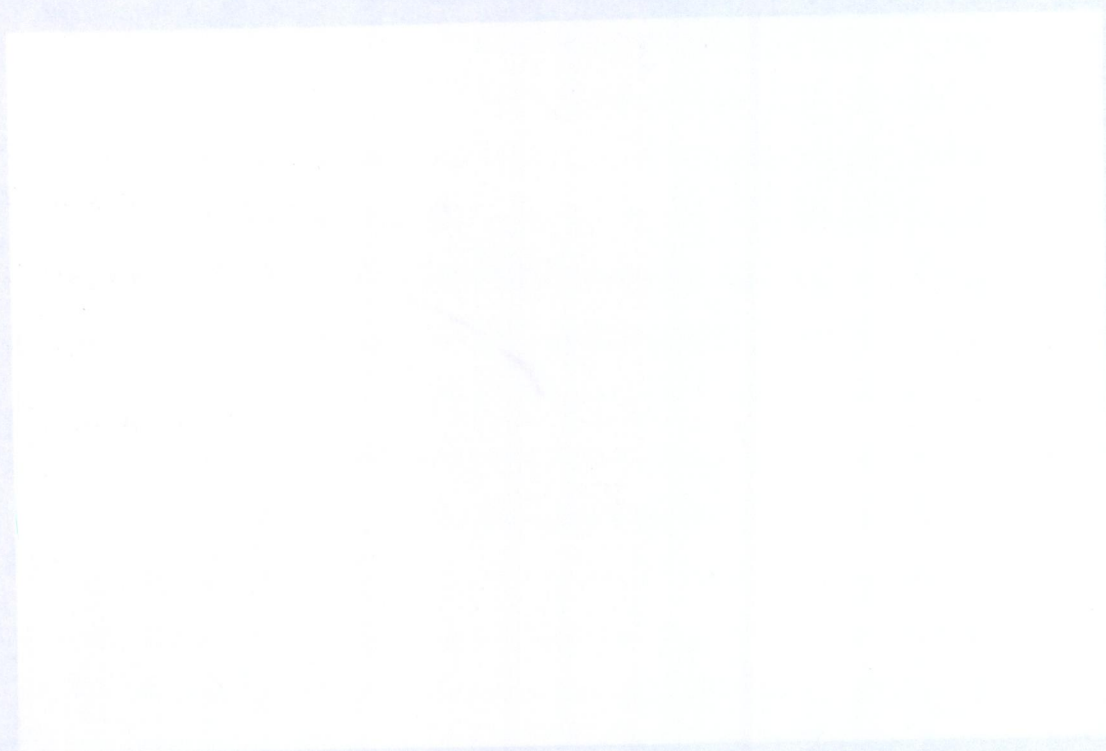
Here a twelve year old has added separate parts to make a whimsical head. This is more typical of children who tend towards haptic expression.



Figure 1.5.

"HEAD" forms through modelling chicken wire and papier mache.

Three examples of my own pupils' work, two of which are made by pupils with visual tendencies, the centre piece modelled by a pupil with haptic tendencies.



CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I have reviewed the literature on the history of blindness and visual impairment. I have also described Lowenfeld and Brittain's haptic and visual aptitude and hope to distinguish the two perceptions within the classroom situation in a later chapter. In Chapter 2, I will discuss integration and its significance in educating pupils with special needs.

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CHAPTER 2

INTEGRATION

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTEGRATION: THE GREAT DEBATE

When they told me that my child was blind, and he would never see, I said, then I will be his eyes, he'll see through mine. I'll lead him by the hand and comfort him as long as I shall live.

As long as I shall live? Then when I die He'll be twice blinded. No! My son must not depend on me. Man does not see with his eyes alone: I must find schools, and teachers who will bring to him the message of his ears and feeling fingertips, It will be my task to give him courage, Love of all living things.

Desire for truth, so that at last my son may stand alone, serene, A man, ready for all that life may offer him and by his spirits never dimming light, my son shall see¹

Mary Redmond

Mary Redmond is a mother in New Zealand who had to come to terms with her son's disability. Her poem shows much courage on her part, and great love for her son.

Mary Redmond's desire is for her son to become more self-reliant and this independence can be encouraged by teachers. The first stage of this process is to consult these pupils about their own needs and views.

Integration is essentially about schooling. Pupils with special needs, just like other pupils, go to school in order to learn and to be taught. The task of schools is to promote pupils' learning and to create a climate under which appropriate learning takes place - for all pupils. The principle of integration has made great strides in recent years. It is special schools that have to justify their existence now, not integrated initiatives. Integration is a "social as well as an educational trend, reflecting more positive attitudes to disabled people and their families in the wider community as well as in professional services"².

A Definition of Integration:

Integration for the disabled means a thousand things. It means being able to be treated like everybody else. It means the right to work, to go to cinemas, to enjoy outdoor sport, to have a family life and a social life and a love life, to contribute materially to the community, to have the usual choices of association, movement and activity, to go on holidays to the usual places, to be educated up to university level with one's unhandicapped peers, to travel without fuss on public transport...³.

The INTO has defined integration as:

A system for the education of children with disabilities within the main school framework which caters for the special needs of those children by providing additional facilities and resources to support them. A fundamental aspect of any integrated approach must be the provision of additional teaching time to the individual children with disabilities. The INTO is of the view that there are some categories of children with disabilities who, due to a variety of reasons cannot be integrated, under any circumstances, into mainstream schools⁴.

This view implies that children with disabilities have the right to participate in the everyday activities of the school and to be granted every possible opportunity

towards self-fulfilment, enjoyed by other children. It further implies that the purpose of integration is the education of such children and should, therefore be limited to those for whom integration is in their best educational interest. The concept of integration needs to be defined by the Department of Education as "its failure to formulate a clear integration policy, is creating difficulties for teachers coping with unsupported integration in schools"⁵. The placement of children with disabilities in schools without providing the necessary support services and in particular additional teaching resources, cannot be construed as integration.

In Britain, the authorities have been encouraging the integration of children with special needs since the publication of the Warnock Report (1978), the subsequent enactment of the 1981 Education Act and the 1988 Education Reform Act⁶. Though the Warnock Report recognised that there would always be a need for special schools, in practice many of them have been closed down since the early eighties. In an article in the Observer in October 1992, however, Baroness Warnock stated:

.....that there is evidence that the system as envisaged by the Warnock Committee never worked as we hoped and that it could not have done. We assumed that the Local Education Authorities would want to educate properly all the other children in their schools according to their needs, that they would have the funds to do so and that they would gradually train teachers to take on the task. This was our naivety⁷.

Warnock believes that the system of special needs assessment which the 1978 report brought about, is now failing thousands of children. Warnock currently

argues that two way traffic between special schools and ordinary schools is the best form of integration for children of special needs. She also states that "one must avoid talking about children with disabilities as if all the problems of integrating them were the same. Nor must it be assumed without question that integration is the goal for all children"⁸.

The Warnock Report outlined four main criteria for assessing whether a child with special needs should be educated in a special or mainstream school. They were:

1. The wishes of parents
2. The ability of the school to meet the educational needs of the individual child
3. The efficient use of resources
4. The effect of the child's placement on the educational achievement of the other children in the particular classes involved⁹.

The INTO in 1983 agreed in principle with the criteria which was adopted by the Warnock Committee in Britain. It proffered the view that integration should only take place in circumstances where the child's educational needs could be adequately met, and where the educational needs of the other children in the class were not unduly affected. However, teacher's experience since then has shown that "the Department has not been in a position to provide the resources necessary to support integration"¹⁰.

Towards A Basis for Integration:

Arguments in support of integration include the following:

1. The child is educated in close proximity to home and community
2. Integrated settings to promote peer acceptance of disability
3. The child with disability is educated in as normal an environment as possible
4. Integrated education is more egalitarian than segregated provision
5. Educational integration promotes social integration
6. Segregation provides for an aggravation of handicap
7. Segregative systems do not respect person hood in all its diversity.¹¹

These arguments are supported by two organisations of people with visual disabilities in Britain - the National Federation of the Blind in the United Kingdom, and the Association of Blind and Partially Sighted Teachers and Students. They argue that integrated education is both desirable and practicable and propose a particular model of supported integration based on "units" or "resource centres" to be established on a permanent basis in selected ordinary schools¹².

Yet the claim that integrated education is a natural good has been dismissed as nonsense by Hegarty et al who argue that the primary concern of educators must

be with individual development and that considerations of placement have relevance only in relation to it¹³.

In an Irish context Smyth has argues that:

If organisational structures can be developed to ensure that these components are provided in mainstream schools, to all children with special needs, then the case for integration is surely watertight. If, on the other hand, these criteria cannot be met, then we must analyse what normal schools can make available in terms of special provision and we must attempt to clarify precisely how the educational system could be changed or developed in order that special provision can become a reality in mainstream schools¹⁴.

Integration is never ending process. There will always be ways in which the participation of handicapped or non-handicapped children in the social and educational life of their schools can be increased.

However, consideration of integration must be made in the specific context of the educational reality of the school and must take into account the ability of the school to meet the needs of the child. The establishment of special classes in national schools in Ireland became a feature of the mainstream school system following the distribution of circular 23/77 (October 1977) from the Department of Education. The Circular outlined the criteria for admission to the special class; assessment, review of placement, parental consent and stated that decisions on suitability of placement rested with educationalists¹⁵.

Evolution of integration in Ireland:

The beginning of special educational provision in Ireland can be traced back to the nineteenth Century. Hyland and Milne state:

Schools for deaf mutes were established at Cabra, Dublin by the Irish Christian Brothers and the Dominican Sisters under the auspices of the Catholic Committee for the deaf, in the middle of the nineteenth Century, but they did not become national schools until 1926 and 1952, respectively. Schools for blind children were opened by the Irish Sisters. Charity and a community of Carmelite Brothers in Dublin shortly after 1870 but they did not enter the national school system until 1918. It was not until 1952 when the schools for the blind were given a special teacher-pupil ratio of 1:15 and a grant for special equipment that these schools became in any real sense special schools. This seems to have been the first occasion on which the Department gave official recognition of the special needs of handicapped children. Special staffing arrangements for the schools for the deaf followed a few years later¹⁶.

The historical literature reveals that schools for pupils of mental and physical handicaps were slower to develop. It was the 1960's before educational services for children in this category began to grow substantially. Special schools were the preferred form of provision in the 1960's and early 1970's. The Report of the Special Education Review Committee states:

Since then, there has been significant expansion of special classes in ordinary schools. Today, about 0.9% of all primary and post-primary pupils are receiving their education in special schools. This compares to an approximate 4% for the Netherlands and Belgium. These figures must not be seen as implying that the educational

provision being made for all students in ordinary schools is appropriate and adequate. They do mean however, that at a time when the impetus is towards providing an appropriate education for as many as possible in ordinary schools, Ireland is not faced with the problem of restructuring a separate parallel system of education such as has developed in many Western European Countries over the last half century¹⁷.

The Review Committee acknowledges the positive aspects of provisions being made for pupils of special needs which include the following:

- a) Providing for the largest groups with special needs - many of these pupils do not necessarily have a disability and include pupils in need of remedial teaching, disadvantaged pupils and children of travellers. The priority being accorded to these is reflected in the level of provision made to date and also in the commitments contained in the Programme for Partnership Government (1993 - 1997)¹⁸.
- b) The smaller number of special schools: Another positive feature considered by the Review Committee is the small percentage number of pupils segregated from the normal school system, which is only 0.9%.
- c) The quality of teachers and their training: An international comparative study has shown that "Irish teachers as a group are drawn from a cohort of students which is higher achieving, in terms of exam success, than in the case of many other developed countries"¹⁹. The setting up in 1961 of a

special education department in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, providing a diploma course in special education has made a major contribution to teacher development and to the progress of the pupils in need of special education.

- d) **Contribution of voluntary bodies:** The religious orders were the first to educate pupils with disabilities in Ireland when no other service-providers were available. The lay voluntary bodies, which developed from the 1950's onwards had a particular strength in that they invariably developed in response to local demands for a service and were comprised to a significant degree of the parents of their client-populations. As the population they served matured and grew, so did the services they offered, some extending into post-school training and sheltered employment. While known as voluntary bodies, these organisations receive the bulk of their funding from the Health Boards the Government and the European Community, and this is supplemented by voluntary contributions.

From an education point of view, however, it is worth knowing that the schools under the management of voluntary bodies are almost totally segregated from mainstream schooling. Despite this short-coming, their contribution to the expansion of special education services throughout the country has been crucial.

Deficiencies:

While acknowledging the positive aspects of the provision being made for pupils with special needs and disabilities, the Review Committee highlights what it perceives to be the main deficiencies of the present system. These comprise of the following:

- a) Lack of legislation governing education;
- b) Lack of local educational administrative structures;
- c) Gaps in provision;
- d) Gaps in curriculum development;
- e) Lack of contact and interchange between the ordinary and special educational systems;
- f) Constraints on integration at primary level;
- g) Inadequacy of provision of post-primary level;
- h) Drop-out at post-primary level;
- i) An uneven allocation of resources;
- j) Inadequacies in the senior curriculum in certain special schools;
- k) Insufficient specialist training for teachers;
- l) The absence of a post-primary Special Education Section within the Department of Education²⁰.

Recommendations by the Special Education Review Committee have been proposed to the Government with a view to positive response and change.

It is my belief having taught at an integrated school, that integration can work successfully when proper resources and staff are provided. All pupils should be treated as equal, study the same subjects and recognise the same discipline codes. The child with special needs should have no problem in functioning under these rules, providing that back-up from the Department of Education is there when required. There should be an individualised approach to all the pupils different needs and a recognition that needs vary from pupil to pupil, and from time to time. Integration of the visually impaired into the ordinary school is what most interests me and I will discuss this top further in Chapter 3.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 2

1. Barrie Wade and Maggie Moore, Experiencing Special Education, (Bristol: Open University Press, 1993), p.59.
2. P. Russell, "Concern", The Education Act 1981, No. 49.
3. Wade and Moore, Pattern Of Educational Integration (Bristol: Open University Press, 1992), p.1.
4. Irish National Teachers Organisation, Accommodating Differences: INTO Policy Document On Integration Of Children With Disabilities Into Mainstream National Schools, No. 8, 1993, p.2.
5. Ibid.
6. Ian Copeland, "Special Educational Needs And The Educational Reform Act, 1988", The British Journal Of Educational Studies, Vol. XXXIX, May 1991, No. 2.
7. Baroness Warnock, "Special Cases In Need Of Reform", The Observer (October 1992), p7.

8. Ibid.
9. Department of Education and Science, Special Education Needs, (Warnock Report), (London: HMSO, 1978), p.19.
10. I.N.T.O., Accommodating Differences, p.X.
11. Terry Moody, Inertia Resistance And Change: Educational Policy For Pupils With Visual Disabilities in Including Pupils With Disabilities Curricula For All eds. Tony Booth and Will Swann, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), p.239.
12. Ibid.
13. Seamus Hegarty, Keith Podilington and Dorothy Lucas, Educating Pupils With Special Needs In The Ordinary School, (Berhshire: Nfer Nelson, 1981), p.12.
14. F. Smyth "Integration In Special Education: Case Proven Or Case Dismissed?" in Concepts And Controversies In Services For People With Mental Handicap, (Woodlands Centre, Galway, 1988), p.219.
15. Ibid.

16. 8. Hyland and K. Milne, Irish Educational Documents, Vol II, cited in Accomodating Differences, (INTO Document, No.8, 1933), p.7.
17. Special Education Review Committee, Report of the Special Education Review Committee, (Dublin: Government Publication, 1993), pp.51, 52, 55.
18. Ibid., p.55.
19. Greany, Burke and McCann: International Journal of Teacher Education, (Vol. X: 1987), p9.
20. Special Education Review Committee Report, pp. 55, 56.

CHAPTER THREE

INTEGRATING THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Visually impaired pupils are those who have been formally identified by an ophthalmologist in accordance with agreed criteria. Such children's visual impairment is so serious as to reduce significantly their capacity to see, thus interfering with their ability to perceive visually-presented materials such as pictures, diagrams and the written word. Visual impairment can affect the child's use of language since blind children tend not to attach the same meaning to words as their sighted peers. In extreme cases, they may use some words without having any real understanding of their meaning. The inability to see shapes or groups of objects clearly means that children of severe visual handicap have a less informed background against which to develop an understanding of mathematical concepts than in the case of their fully-sighted peers. Visually impaired children also experience great difficulties in acquiring skills in mobility, direction and travel¹.

Attitudes towards educating the visually impaired meets with the same debate on the integration issue. Consistent and closely argued support for the adoption of a large scale programme on integrated education comes from two organisations of people with visual disabilities in Britain the National Federation of the Blind in the United Kingdom and the Association of Blind and Partially Sighted teachers and students. They believe that:

Supported integration into ordinary schools teaches children with visual disabilities to grow up naturally as part of the normally sighted community of which they would wish, and need, to be a part in later life, and likewise engenders in other children, their teachers and parents, an appreciation and understanding of people with visual disabilities and their capacity to play a full part in the life of the school and the community²

C. Low agrees with this view and states that:

Unnecessary segregation from the community represents a derogation from full humanity and citizenship. Separate socialization breeds attitudes of prejudice, intolerance and self-denigration and integration, particularly at the formative stage of development, can do much to sweep away the barriers of ignorance and misunderstanding that keep the handicapped and unhandicapped apart, and ultimately lead to discrimination, dependence and an inability to cope³.

Others such as the Royal Institute for the Blind a voluntary body involved in education in Britain, argue in favour of provision in special schools, at least for a substantial number of children with visual disabilities. They fear a lack of adequate specialized resources and a commitment in ordinary schools and that individual children might either be "swamped" or over-protected there. They also argue that special schools provide support and protection within which children with visual disabilities will develop the skills and attainments and the sense of independence which will enable them to integrate into the community after they leave school⁴.

Present Educational Provision in Ireland:

At present there are some 5,500 persons, drawn from all age groups on the register of the National Council for the Blind in Ireland⁵. The council estimates that this figure represents 40% of the total of those visually impaired. It is believed that old people account for the majority of those not registered. The Report of the Special Education Review Committee states:

Department of Education statistics for 1990/1991 indicate that the total number of pupils availing of special education services specifically designated for pupils with visual impairment was 532. Of these, 115 were in two special schools in Dublin, 40 were enrolled in Pobalscoil Rosmini, Drumcondra, a designated post-primary school, and 377 were included in the case load of the visiting teacher service⁶.

The Special Education Review Committee has made suggestions and comments about present educational provision under the following headings (see Appendix I):

- a) Special schools for visually-impaired pupils
- b) Children with visual impairment in ordinary first and second-level schools
- c) Boys with visual impairment attending Pobalscoil Rosmini, Drumcondra
- d) Concessions relating to the certificate examinations
- e) Braille of text-books
- f) Third-level education and vocational training

The Review Committee wishes also to draw attention to a number of anomalies in the system under the following headings:

- a) The visiting teacher service
- b) Special schools
- c) Ordinary schools

The Review Committee also makes specific recommendations in respect of pupils with visual impairment. These recommendations are listed in Appendix I⁷.

In Chapter 3 I have discussed and recorded the Special Education Review Committee's findings and reviewed the literature on integrating the visually impaired. This will act as a basis for my further studies on art and the visually impaired and the curriculum and special needs.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 3

1. Special Education Review Committee, "Pupils With Visual Impairment" in Report Of The Special Education Review Committee, (Dublin: Government Publications, 1993), p.111
2. T. Moody, "Inertia, Resistance And Change: Educational Policies For Pupils With Visual Disabilities", cited in Swann in Including Pupils With Disabilities, Curricula For All, eds. T. Booth and W. Swann, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987), p.234.
3. C. Low, "Integrating The Visually Handicapped" in T. Booth and P. Potts (eds.) Integrating Special Education (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1983), p.33.
4. Moody "Inertia, Resistance and Change", p.239.
5. Special Education Review Committee, Report, p.112.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., pp. 112-117.

CHAPTER 4

CURRICULUM AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Whatever their other special needs, pupils' educational needs must remain paramount as far as schools are concerned. The view of the curriculum as a set of teaching plans predominates special education. A British DES booklet described the curriculum, typically as "a school's plan for facilitating a child's growth and for selected skills, ideas, attitudes and values"¹. It is important to distinguish between the entire curriculum of a school and the effective curriculum for pupils with special needs, from which their programmes of work are selected.

Hegarty finds it:

Vacuous to speak of pupils with moderate learning difficulties, having full access to the curriculum in a secondary school if they spend most of their time on basic skills work and receive only token teaching in science or music².

The curriculum in integration rests on two opposing principles: giving pupils the same or similar access to the curriculum as their peers; and providing appropriate help to meet their special needs. Hegarty found that:

Applying these principles and finding a balance between them occasioned much difficulty. The particular problem was how to capitalize on the curricular opportunities of the main school, while providing programmes of work that were differentiated according to individual need³.

Swann believes that:

The curriculum should be concerned to develop a community in which handicapped people can participate at all levels and in all spheres of life. We may succeed in teaching handicapped children the skill that will help them to be independent, but their future independence also relies on other people allowing them the resources to use those skills. One of the goals of schooling should be the elimination of prejudice against handicap as well as racism and sexism from the curriculum⁴.

The Special Education Review Committee acknowledges the good work done in the area of modifying the post-primary curriculum in the interests of less able pupils. The Review Committee realises that:

At or about the age of transfer to the post-primary school, many changes occur within the pupil, centring on the maturation process and the new challenges and tasks of adolescence. In addition, the child had to learn to adapt to and cope with a new educational environment and a broader curriculum. However, students with special educational needs have considerably greater difficulty. This is due particularly to the wide range of attainment among pupils at age of transfer, the levels of attainment expected from them by the system, the emphasis on examination success and the constraints imposed by the organisational structures of post-primary schools⁵.

Most post-primary schools make every effort to support students with learning difficulties. Some schools have succeeded, many more have difficulty in adjusting to the special requirements of these pupils. It has been acknowledged that a significant number of these students, who find themselves incapable of adapting to the system, drop out at far too early an age.

The Review Committee recommends that:

- i) The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should set up curriculum development projects for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, in association with appropriate schools, colleges, institutes and organisations.
- ii) The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment should re-examine the curricular structure in post-primary schools having particular regard to the estimated 15% to 18% of students with special learning needs. The courses offered should be made more appropriate to their abilities and more relevant to their lives both in and out of school⁶.

Curriculum For Art, Craft and Design:

The Curriculum and Examinations Board see visual arts education as "An active process through which the student learns to see and to think visually. This learning process involves both the artistic and aesthetic experience"⁷. "It is commonly accepted", say Chapman and Stone:

that art can contribute to a full enjoyment of human experience and it is a sensual as well as an intellectual activity, its value is considerable for all pupils. The child cannot be compelled to express feeling and experience through art but this will be facilitated through an increased mastery of technique⁸.

The Curriculum and Examination Board states that:

The visual arts help to develop self-esteem, self-reliance and personal identity through creative achievement. A good visual arts education enables students to create and master their world in order to understand it and to affect it positively⁹.

They also claim that a well-planned visual arts education helps students:

- * To make decisions regarding subject, content, shape and form
- * To consider materials and possible responses to them
- * To make further decisions as the work grows and changes
- * To persist sensitively and with determination to a point of completion

This active process involves the whole person - mental, physical and emotional. All pupils, irrespective of their levels of academic achievement, would benefit from a good visual arts education. Such an education is welcoming to all and can be sufficiently flexible to cater for individual needs and abilities¹⁰.

The Place of Art, Craft and Design for Visually Impaired Pupils:

Offering any sensory stimulation fills the mind with ideas concerning the relationship between a person and that person's world. Art materials have qualities that excite senses rather than sight. Clay and paint both have a feel, a texture, and movement can be sensed when materials are manipulated. A partially sighted or even non-sighted individual can still map an internal image because of the quality of these materials¹¹.

Chapman and Stone say that:

"Art is not necessarily synonymous with visual art, although visual aspects of creativity can be stimulating for those who have even a small amount of sight"¹².

Stress and tension can be experienced by visually handicapped pupils because of the effort and concentration to operate in a world where the majority are fully-sighted. Art and craft sessions should be times when pupils can feel relaxed and eased from tension and pressure. Chapman and Stone say, however:

Unfortunately, this does not always apply. Sometimes children can approach these lessons with timidity, lack of interest, or even dislike if they are anxious about what is expected of them¹³.

An absence of competition can be an advantage of the art class; pre-conceived notions of excellence and competitiveness are out of place¹⁴. Visually impaired

children can be somewhat too dependent on others, especially on teachers and parents. Chapman and Stone recommend that:

The availability of a variety of media and processes can encourage children to experiment freely with materials and ideas, and to decide after experimentation to try to follow through an idea and to express it⁸¹.

With regard to the art curriculum and the visually impaired child, Zaidee Lindsay recommends that:

The curriculum in the schools for the partially sighted thus avoids all activities which could cause violent jerks. This to some extent curtails the physical education programme, as there can be no high jump, leap-frogging or diving. In creative activity, too, hammering and the pounding method for preparing papier-maché must be avoided¹⁶.

The above mentioned activities to be avoided can seriously affect cases with detached retina, and so great care must be taken by schools and teachers. Albinos will be dazzled by ordinary light and this "sensitivity to light can be alleviated by providing tinted background papers for drawing and painting instead of white, which reflect the light more strongly"¹⁷.

Materials which can be moulded or manipulated into relief and left to set hard have specific value for the blind, because this type of creation will enable pupils to retrace their hands and finger movements at a future time¹⁸. Zaidee Lindsay believes that:

A blind pupil may learn the general outline and structure of a face by feeling his own features with his hands. When learning to model one, as in all situations, he must be encouraged to use any other residual sense. In this instance, it could be an awareness of his own facial movements that will help him to model the features in their correct relationship¹⁹.

There is also a place for drawing in the arts programme, some children with defective vision, especially in the case of myopia, excel in fine-line drawings and produce graphic work of a high standard²⁰. Chapman and Stone recommend that:

Strongly coloured crayons, poster paints and felt tipped pens can be used for drawing too, and children with no sight at all can be encouraged to draw, using techniques of plastic film on a rubber mat²¹.

It is unhelpful to impose visual ideas on blind children as they draw, and better to elicit through discussion and discoveries the ideas that they want to express.

In this chapter I have explored the curriculum the necessary changes in order to make it effective for pupils of special needs, and the role that art has to play in the education of those with special needs. Art education involves the whole person - mental, emotional and physical; a vital link in our education system. Through my own research in Chapter 5, I hope to establish the attitudes of those visually impaired in my teaching practice school, towards art, craft and design as a subject.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 4

1. Department of Education and Science, "Educating Mentally Handicapped Children", Education Pamphlet No. 60, 1975, p. 14-16, H.M.S.O.
2. S. Hegarty, "Meeting Special Educational Needs In The Ordinary School", Educational Research, Vol. 24, No. 3., pp., 174,181.
3. Ibid.
4. W. Swann, "Curriculum Principles For Integration", in Booth and Potts (eds.), Integrating Special Education, p.122.
5. Special Education Review Committee, Report, p.62.
6. Ibid.
7. Curriculum And Examinations Board, The Arts In Education, (Dublin: Government Publications, 1985), p.16,
8. Chapman and Stone, "Curriculum Access And Adaption" in The Visually Handicapped Child In Your Classroom, (London: Cassell 1988), p.125.
9. curriculum and Examinations Board, The Arts in Education, p.16.

10. Ibid.
11. Chapman and Stone, The Visually Handicapped Child In Your Classroom, p.19.
12. Ibid., p.124.
13. Ibid., p.19.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Zaidee Lindsay, Art And The Handicapped Child, p.16.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Chapman and Stone, The Visually Handicapped Child In Your Classroom, p.127.

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY

Background Information on School

Pobalscoil Rosmini, Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, which incorporates the former Rosmini College was established in 1982. It is situated in a predominantly middle-class area and on a site adjacent to St. Joseph's Home and School for the Visually Impaired. It is a single-sexed boys' community school.

There are 450 boys in the school, 10% are visually impaired.

In common with all community schools, Pobalscoil Rosmini is under the direction of a Board of Management which includes representatives of the Rosminian Order, the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, parents and teachers. The school operates according to the terms of the Deed of Trust which is the instrument of management.

The ethos of the school is adapted from that of the former Rosmini College and is based on the educational thought of Antonio Rosmini who believed that the education of the individual must have a perfect unity catering for physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic needs.

The school fully subscribes to the policy of community and comprehensive schooling - the provision of free second level education for all children irrespective of ability.

Integration

In order to fully understand the pupils that I teach, and especially the pupils answering my questionnaire, it is important to place them in and relate them to their school environment. The school is on a site adjacent to St. Joseph's Home and School for the visually impaired and caters for the second level education of their pupils. This provides an unique and challenging school situation for all concerned; a system of integration is used whereby sighted and visually impaired students participate fully in curricular and extra curricular activities.

Visually impaired pupils are treated no different from their fully-sighted peers. They study the same subjects and practice the same codes of discipline. The school believes that no distinction need be made - providing back-up from the Department of Education is there when required. The school promotes an individualised approach to each pupil's needs. Every case is different, needs vary from pupil to pupil and from time to time.

Population

Approximately 10% of the pupil population is physically handicapped, mainly visually impaired, and facilities are provided to cater for their special needs, e.g. a mobility teacher works with pupils on an individual basis to help them acquire full mobility in the local area and city centre.

The emphasis of the school means that the visually impaired pupils are generally involved in integrated groups rather than in special groups or on an individual isolated basis.

Policy

The school authorities believe that the school is a microcosm of society and should reflect the various aspects of society. Therefore, it is the policy of the school to accept pupils of all abilities and to cater for their needs accordingly; this includes pupils who have various physical handicaps but who can participate in, and benefit from school activities. The policy has proved to be extremely successful and has resulted in a socially aware school population.

The Curriculum in Pobalscoil Rosmini

Junior Cycle Examination Programmes:

The school offers a broad range of curriculum options reflecting the diverse needs of the students. There is a three year junior cycle programme leading to Department of Education certificate examinations.

The range of subjects offered at this level is as follows:

Irish	Music	Mechanical Drawing
Mathematics	Humanities	Geography
Italian	History	Commerce
Woodwork	Art	Spanish
English	German	Metalwork
Science	French	

All classes follow programmes in Physical Education and Religious Studies.

Leaving Certificate Programme:

The school operates a two year senior cycle programme leading to Leaving Certificate examination. The students take Irish, English, Mathematics, Physical Education, Guidance and Religious Studies as core subjects and select four options. The range of options offered is as follows:

History	Economics	German
Chemistry	Spanish	Music
Home Economics	Physics	Agricultural Science
French	Accountancy	Business Organisation
Geography	Art	Technical Drawing
Biology	Building Construction	Italian

The option bands from which the students select would contain a science, business and humanities subject so that each student could choose the most suitable combination for his own career needs.

Curriculum Projects:

Pobalscoil Rosmini is a pilot school for the Curriculum Development Unit based at Trinity College Dublin and sponsored by the University, the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee and the Department of Education. The school is involved in various curriculum projects including:

Humanities:- this project involves the integration of English, History, Geography and Civics at junior cycle level, with students taking Junior Cycle Certificate Examination. The project focuses on the student, his family and local area, contrast societies and world issues. The examination includes a major element of continuous teacher assessment and of project work. At the completion of the programme students are equipped to follow a senior cycle programme.

Vocational Preparation and Training Programme I (VPT):- this programme is a one year senior cycle programme designed to bridge the transition from school to work. It caters for students who have completed their course but who would be unlikely to benefit from the traditional academic Leaving Certificate Programme. The course involves the study of Social Mathematics, Communications, Industrial Relations and vocational subjects such as electronics, retail studies and woodwork/building construction. A key part of the course is arrangement, by the school, of work placements on the basis of one day per week during the school year. This allows the student an opportunity to gain real experience of various work situations. On satisfactory completion of the course the student receives an assessment portfolio which includes school and employer references, a record of achievement and a certificate from the Department of Education.

Vocational Preparation and Training Programme II (VPT):- is a post senior cycle course which prepares students who have taken their Leaving Certificate for the world of work. Currently the course focuses on preparing students for work in the area of information and business studies.

Transition Year:- The school is considering a well planned transition year programme after Junior Certificate. It is hoped to implement it for the 5th year group in September 1994.

The Art Room

There is one spacious art room in the school with facilities for drawing, painting, print-making and clay modelling. Clay is an important part of the art programme, with many of the visually impaired wanting to express themselves through form and texture. There are some photographic facilities and the store room is a make-shift dark room. (See figure 5.1)

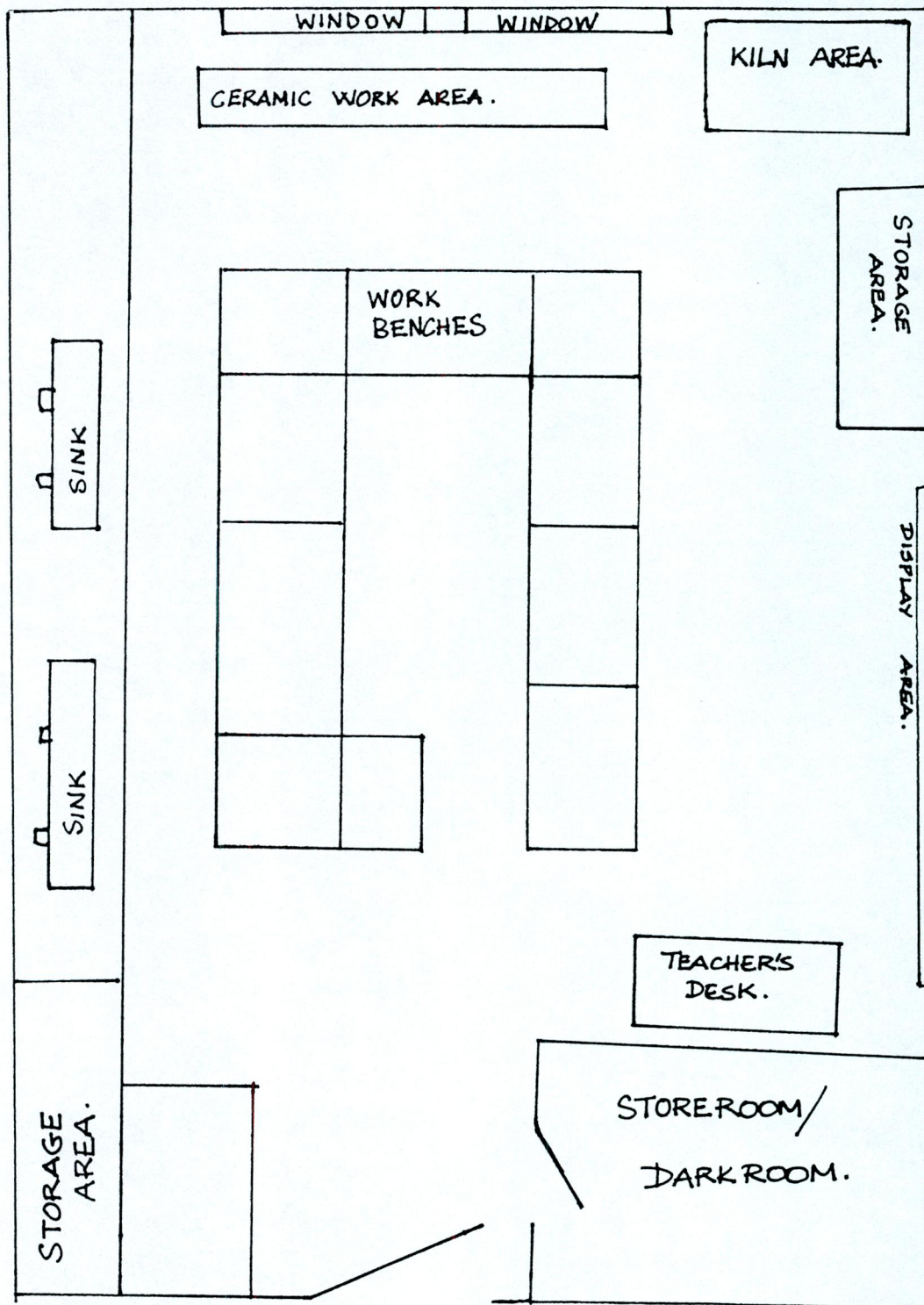


Figure 5.1.

PLAN OF ART ROOM: POBALSCOIL ROSMINI.

The Importance of Art Within the School

As mentioned above, great emphasis is placed on the pupils' personal development in this school. It is felt that art provides an opportunity for the pupils to express themselves and to be creative, thus developing the pupils' personality. The Art Department plays a significant role in the school's Open Days, which are held to promote the school and ensure continuing roll numbers. 160 pupils study art - which is 35.5% of the school population. Of the 45 visually impaired boys, 13 are taking art, which is 28.5%. Almost 50% of visually impaired boys have studied Art/Craft/Design to Junior Certificate level. From these numbers it is evident that Art, Craft and Design is held in high esteem within the school.

It is because of the large percentage of visually impaired boys studying art that I have set my questionnaire to discover about their attitudes to the Art Curriculum, Art Room, etc.

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROJECT

There are 45 visually impaired boys in Pobalscoil Rosmini, 13 study art which is approximately 28.5 of visually impaired boys. My questionnaire was aimed at this 28.5%. There was a 77% response rate.

In order to acquire the information needed to access the attitudes towards Art, Craft and Design, a structured questionnaire was distributed to pupils with visual impairments studying the subject.

The Questionnaire

The aims of the Questionnaire:

1. To establish if the current Art, Craft and Design Curriculum in Ireland is accessible to the visually impaired pupil.
2. To highlight the difficulties, dislikes and attitudes of visually impaired pupils towards the current syllabus in Art, Craft and Design.

The questionnaire was explained thoroughly and type size was big to make it easier for them to read and understand. This survey could have biased results due to hostility on the pupils' part. This hostility was due to the fact that I segregated the visually impaired pupils from their fully-sighted peers, in order for them to answer the questionnaire. This hostility is noticeable in some of the answers, where one pupil claimed "what special needs?", when it is known that he is registered as visually impaired. This proves that these pupils want integration, they do not want to be classed as different from their sighted peers. It also, however, proves a lack of acceptance of their particular disability which is something they must learn to accept.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was drawn up in an effort to focus my attention on the pupils and to get some concrete information. In previous chapters I have discussed various definitions of visual impairment, integration, integrating the visually impaired and curriculum and special needs. The aim of the questionnaire is to establish if the current Art, Craft and Design Curriculum in Ireland is accessible to the visually impaired pupil and to emphasise the attitudes of the pupils to Art, Craft and Design.

The questionnaire consists of six basic questions and my aim is to establish, through pupils' answers, their likes, dislikes and difficulties with Art, Craft and Design as a school subject.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly outlined the methods I used in my research project, the results of which will be analysed and described in greater detail in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter I have included tables analysing responses to the questionnaire (see Appendix 2). For those questions that cannot be measured in tables, I have briefly described their results. Further conclusions will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Question 2(a): Do you like Art, Craft and Design as a subject?

Answer: See Table 6.1

Question 2(b): Why?

Answer: The most popular reasons for liking Art were:

1. I like to work with my hands - I like drawing and pottery and making things.
2. Because drawing is good and art history is interesting.
3. Because it is an interesting subject and when doing your Junior Cert you have more time.

Reasons for not liking Art:

1. Because it is boring, because it doesn't seem to be in touch with the outside world.

Question 3(a): What aspects (of Art, Craft and Design) do you most enjoy?

Answer: See Table 6.2

Question 3(b): Why?

Answer: The following are a sample of the answers:

1. I like to work with clay because it is easy to do what you want with it.
2. I like drawing because you can get to draw objects like bottles and draw people and I think it is good.
3. I like working with hard cardboard because it looks good and is easy to work with.
4. I like drawing because it is a good way of expressing yourself by drawing a picture or shapes.
5. I like making things in pottery.
6. I like making shapes and forms.

Question 4(a): Do you find 3-dimensional work (e.g. clay) easier than 2-dimensional work (e.g. painting and drawing).

Answer: See Table 6.3

Question 4(b): Why?

Answer: The most common reasons for saying "yes" were:

1. It just seems to come easier to me.
2. 'Cause it's easier and you can spend more time.
3. I would rather work clay than any other materials.
4. Because you get to model shape and form.

The most common reasons for saying "no" were:

1. I am good at drawing and I don't have any problems.
2. I like to draw and paint. I never did clay before.

Question 5(a): Do you have any problems getting around the Art Room?

Answer: No, on all counts.

Question 6: What changes, if any, would you make to the design of the Art Room?

Comment:

Answer: The following are a sample of the answers:

1. I would cut off an area of the room for crafts like pottery and lino as in a craft room.
2. I don't think I would make a change to the Art Room - if I had to I would move the tables a little bit in because it would be easier to walk by people.
3. All the tables are placed out good.

Question 7(a): Is Art, Craft and Design difficult for you because of your special needs?

Answer: See Table 6.4

Question 7(b): Why?

Answer: The following are a sample of the answers:

1. Sometimes it does be difficult, like drawing a model, sometimes I cannot see the right light for shading on the body and face.
2. I can mainly manage with the work except for design.

TABLE 6.1

Percentage Yes/No who like Art, Craft and Design as a subject.

Overall result from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th Years.

Total number of pupils = 10, Table is shown in percentages.

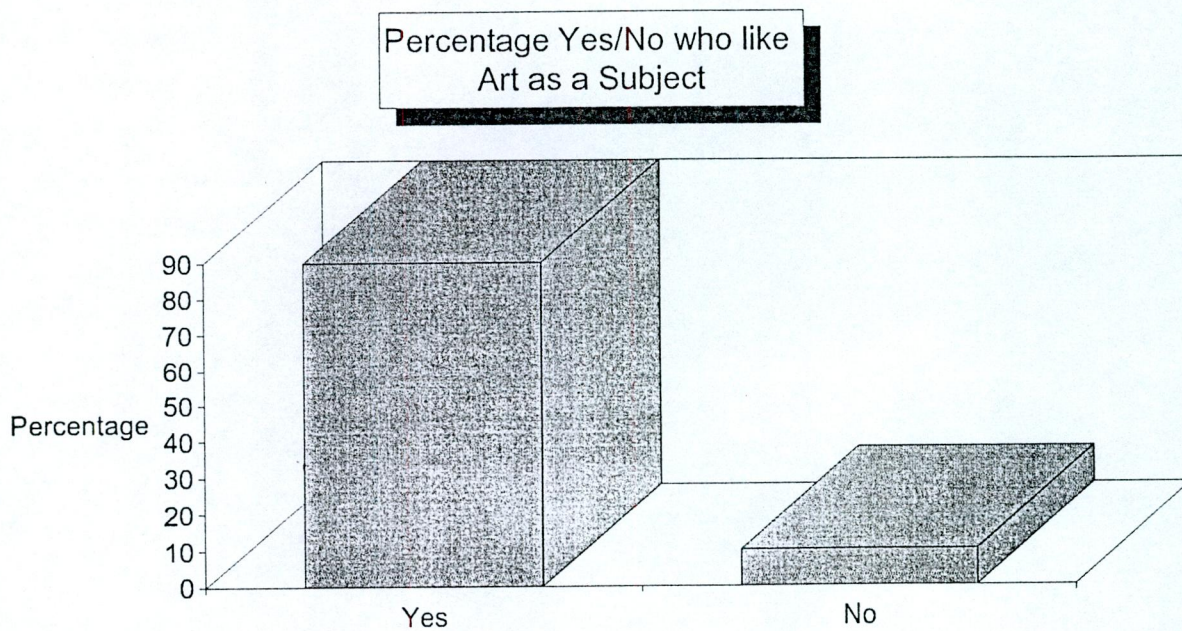
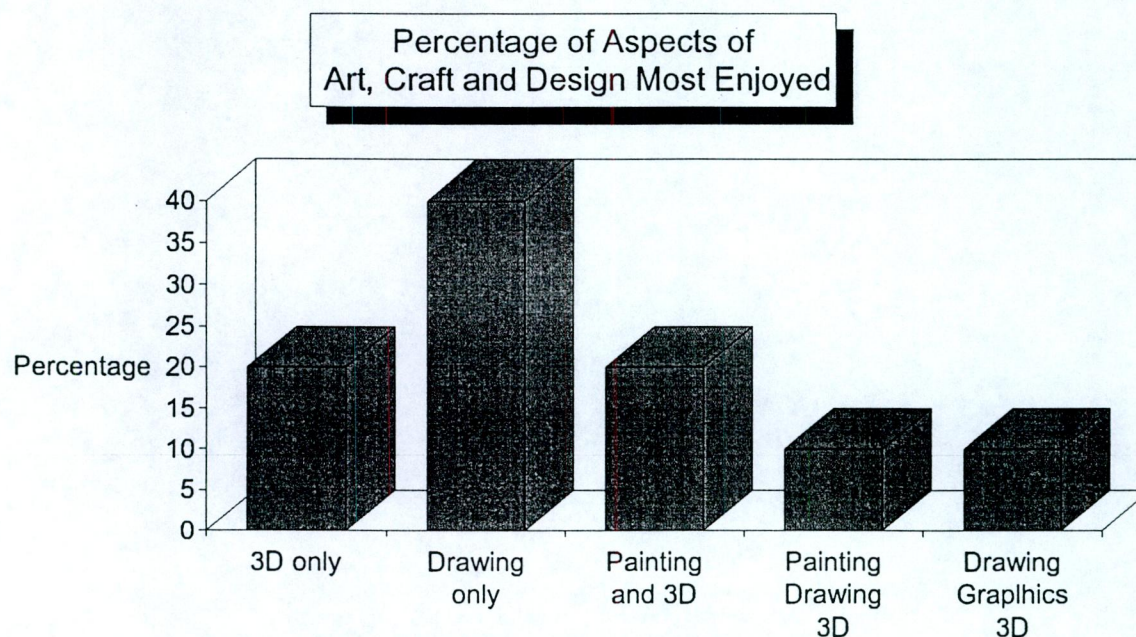


TABLE 6.2

Percentage of aspects of Art, Craft and Design most enjoyed.

Overall result from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th Years.

Total number of pupils = 10. Table is shown in percentages.



From these results it is evident that:

- 60% of visually impaired boys enjoy 3D work, i.e. clay modelling, cardboard modelling etc.
- 60% enjoy drawing.
- 30% enjoy painting.
- 10% enjoy graphic design.

From this survey it was discovered that:

- None of the pupils thought that graphics and painting together were suitable courses of study.
- Graphics registered significantly unpopular with the majority of those visually impaired.

TABLE 6.3

Percentage of Visually Impaired that find 3-dimensional easier than 2-dimensional work.

Overall result from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th Years.

Total number of pupils = 10. Table is shown in percentages.

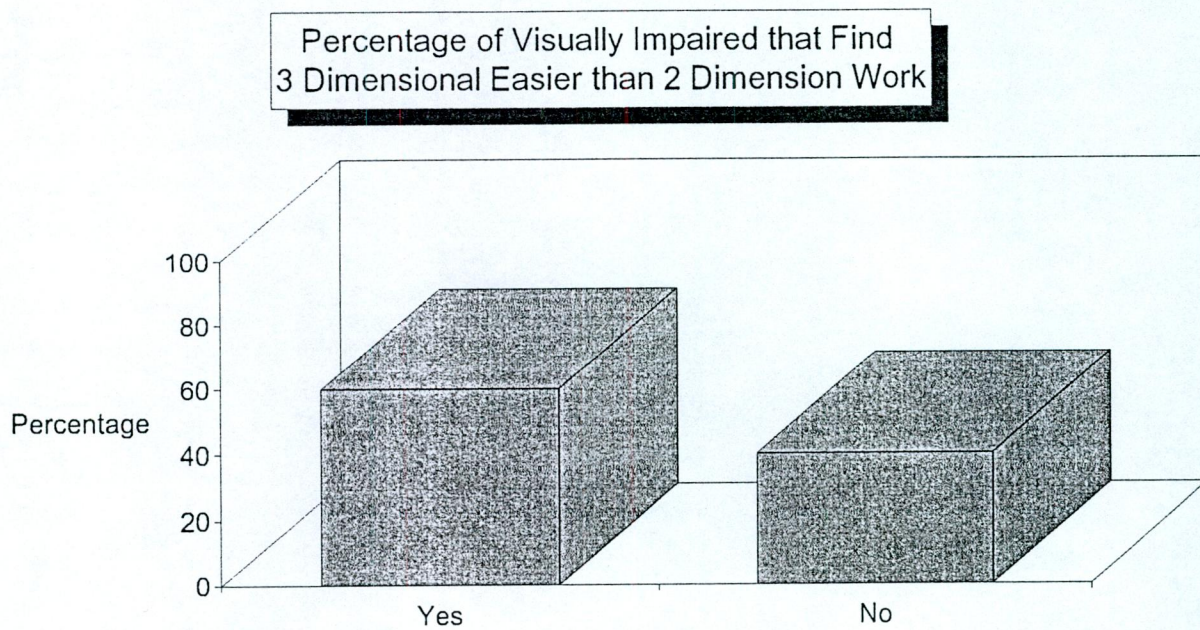


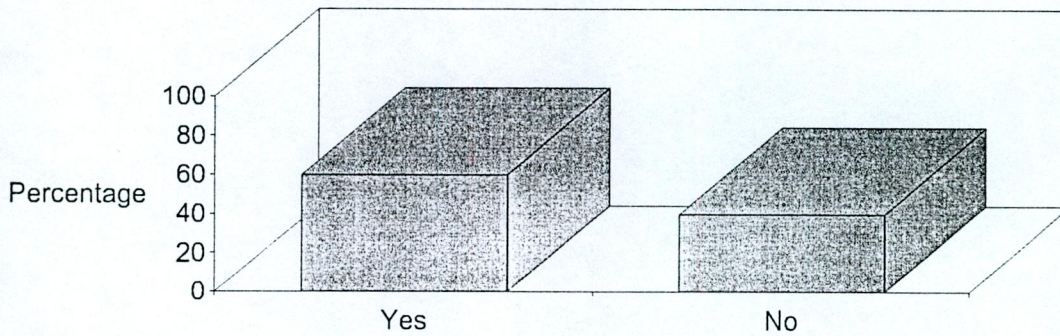
TABLE 6.4

Percentage of Visually Impaired that find Art, Craft and Design difficult.

Overall results from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th Years.

Total number of pupils = 10. Table is shown in percentages.

Percentage of Visually Impaired that Find Art,
Craft and Design Difficult.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my introduction I stated that my aims for this dissertation were to understand about visual impairment, the educational resources available in Ireland and the suitability of the Art, Craft and Design Curriculum for the visually impaired pupil.

My questionnaire gave me good insight into the attitudes and fears of the visually impaired pupils within the Art Room situation. As a result of the questionnaire, my own understanding of these pupils has increased, helping me to structure my lessons to suit them as well as the other pupils in the class, through working more with tactile texture and form rather than two dimensionally. Through analysing the questionnaire it was evident that many of the boys were dyslexic. This was an area that I had not intended discussing but now feel it is a significant factor and should be briefly discussed.

Characteristics of Dyslexic Pupils

There is quite a clearly defined group of backward readers who persistently confuse the up-down, left-right sequencing of reading. They reverse the order of words in sentences, they reverse letters in words, e.g. was, saw, and they misread the reversible letters and numbers : t/f : n/u : m/w : b/p/d : 2/5 : 6/9.¹

The basic characteristics of a dyslexic pupil includes:

1. Bizarre spelling.
2. Write slowly.
3. Written work poorly presented.
4. Certain letters and numbers reversed.
5. Left-right direction are confused.
6. Reasoning and conversational skills can be very good.
7. Poor visual and auditory memory.

Source: various sources and paraphrased.

The above information can be identified with many of the visually impaired boys answering the questionnaire. The following sample answers will indicate this.

2. Do you like Art, Craft and Design as a subject. (Tick as appropriate.)

Yes ✓

Why?

Because it is an interesting subject and when doing your Junior Certificate you get more time.

Because it is an interesting
subject. And when doing your
Junior ~~same~~ ^{same} you more time.

3. What aspect (if any) do you most enjoy. (Tick as appropriate.)

Painting _____

Drawing _____

Graphics _____

Textiles _____

3D Work ☒

Other -----

Why?

Because I like doing it

I like making things in pottery

cause i like doing it
i like making things in pottery

4. Do you find 3 dimensional work (e.g. clay) easier than 2 dimensional work (e.g. painting and drawing). (Tick as appropriate.)

Yes ☒

Why?

Cause it is easier and you can spend more time

cause it is easier and you can
spend more time

Dyslexic children can have a "mirror image syndrome".²

girl/gril;

brid/bird;

form/from;

god/dog³

From this brief research into dyslexia it is apparent that the type of visual impairment plays a major role in determining whether that pupil be dyslexic or not. Pupils with nystagmus (see Chapter 1), which is an involuntary movement of the eyes from side to side or up and down have great difficulty in reading and writing. This eye disorder, as well as the other common visual impairments and the History of Blindness are discussed in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 1 I discussed Lowenfeld and Brittain's visual and haptic theory and mentioned briefly about a scheme of work which showed evidence of both perceptions. I also tried to discuss the haptic theory in relation to the work of the blind.

In Chapter 2 I discussed integration, its advantages and disadvantages, the provisions made by the Department of Education in Ireland to special education and the recommendations made by the Special Education Review Committee.

In Chapter 3 I tried to focus on integrating visually impaired pupils by reviewing the literature and discussing the findings and recommendations (see Appendix 1) of the Special Education Review Committee.

In Chapter 4 I have explored the Curriculum, the necessary changes in order to make it effective for pupils of special needs, and the role that Art has to play in the education of those not fully sighted.

In Chapter 5 I have discussed the background of the school and the methodology used to carry out my survey. Results of the questionnaire are documented in Chapter 6.

The Visually Impaired in the Art Room

In order to help visually impaired pupils in the Art Room, it is necessary to be informed of their individual needs. The physical layout of the Art Room should be spacious with large printed labels indicating storage of materials. Awareness that some pupils need strong light sources, while others need shaded working conditions must be taken into consideration when seating the pupils at the beginning of term.

The arrangement of the classroom furniture should remain unchanged to create trust and safety for the visually impaired or blind person.

A successful Art programme for the visually impaired should:

1. Cater for haptic and visual types.
2. Include practical step-by-step demonstrations.
3. Emphasise 3D modelling, structure and carving (which suits the haptic individuals).
4. Encourage pupils to paint with textured paint, making full use of whatever sight they have.
5. Include more demonstrations and less instruction.

Zaidee Lindsay believes that:

Creative activities must help them (visually impaired) develop maximum sensitivity in the hands and fingers, besides a better co-ordination of the body movement, that they may derive the fullest experience from the immediate environment and, by so doing, extend their knowledge of the world beyond the visual barriers.⁴

The current Junior Certificate Art Syllabus is thought to be very suitable by the visually impaired boys questioned. They find the longer time limit and producing work in project form a great advantage. They believe that it is a fairer system than the Leaving Certificate Art Syllabus, which is marked completely on exam situation work.

I feel that the current Leaving Certificate Art, Craft and Design Curriculum does not cater for the visually impaired pupil. My attitude is reinforced by both the pupils and their Art Teacher's responses. The Life Drawing Examination comes under a lot of criticism by pupils complaining that they can only see vague shapes or shadows of figures in front of them and that it is very difficult therefore to compete with fully sighted peers.

Suggestions to overcome this problem included drawing with wire and using wire to build up form. Closer proximity to model was also an established definite. Pupils felt that for the Still-life/Imaginative Composition Examination they should be allowed to work in relief using self hardening clay and tactile textures, concentrating on form and texture rather than being limited to visual representation.

I believe that the visually impaired pupil needs to be integrated into the normal school setting where he can learn to work in close proximity to his fully sighted peers. It is a preparation for life after school and is needed if he is to survive independently in society. Attending the

same lessons, partaking in the same sports activities is preparation for team work in later years. The fully sighted peers also benefit and the notion of "them" and "us" can only be lessened. However, problems can arise when the visually impaired pupil convinces himself that he has perfect eyesight as with two responses to my questionnaire:

"What special needs?"

"My eyesight is perfect!"

What happens then in an exam situation when he is segregated from his fully sighted peers?

However, one can also look at the above responses and realise that these pupils really do want to be integrated into society and the reluctance to believe that they are visually impaired can only mean a fear that they will be thought of as being different.

FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER 7

1. Geoff Sewell, Coping with Special Needs, (Kent: Mackays, 1986), p.41.
2. Margaret Newton and Michael Thomson, Dyslexia: a Guide for Teachers, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, second edition, 1976, 1975), p.39.
3. Ibid.
4. Zaidee Lindsay, Art and the Handicapped Child, p.19.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Provision of education for the visually impaired in Ireland and recommendations by the Special Education Review Committee.

Source: Special Education Review Committee, Report of the Special Education Review Committee, (Dublin: Government Publication, 1993), p.p. 112- 117.

4.3.4 *Present Educational Provision*

(a) *Special Schools for Visually-impaired Pupils*

The 115 pupils attending the two special schools in Dublin represent about 36% of pupils with visual impairment in the 4-18 year age-group. The pupil-teacher appointment ratio for these schools is 10:1 and they both have been allocated additional part-time teaching hours by the Department of Education directly and through the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee. In addition, each school has the services of a Special Needs Assistant funded by the Department of Education.

St. Mary's Special School for Visually-impaired Pupils, Merrion, has a total enrolment of 72 and caters for junior boys (4-8 years) and for girls between the ages of 4 and 18 years. Staffing comprises a Principal and 9 permanent assistant teachers as well as part-time teachers. The school is organised on the basis of 49 pupils in primary classes and 29 in post-primary classes, who prepare for the Certificate Examinations of the Department of Education. For a brief period the girls were integrated into an ordinary school for post-primary education, but this practice was discontinued in the early 1980's.

St. Joseph's Special School for Visually-impaired Boys, Drumcondra, caters for 43 boys in the age-range of 4-13 years (formerly 8-13 years). Staffing comprises a Principal and 5 permanent assistant teachers as well as part-time teachers. On completion of their primary schooling, students transfer to Pobalscoil Rosmini, a community post-primary school on the same campus.

It should be noted that there are 111 pupils with visual impairment enrolled in special schools for pupils with other disabilities. These include schools for pupils with mental and physical handicaps.

(b) *Children with Visual Impairment in Ordinary First- and Second-Level Schools*

A total of 251 pupils with visual impairment attend ordinary primary or post-primary schools, where they are given a service by Visiting Teachers as frequently as their needs require and the level of staffing allows; 211 of these students are partially-sighted. Primary schools cater for 134 of them, 77 attend post-primary schools and 40 are enrolled in Pobalscoil Rosmini (see <c> below).

The Visiting Teacher Service for visually-impaired children was established by the Department of Education in 1976. Until recently, there have been three teachers providing this service on a nationwide basis. They act as liaison persons and as counsellors for parents of pre-school and school-going children. They may give help and advice to class-teachers in relation, for example, to the pupil's working position, lighting, adaptations needed to facilitate the learning process, eye conditions, the use and care of optical aids, technology or educational equipment. They also teach braille, as necessary, and undertake limited teaching assignments in one-to-one situations in order to demonstrate helpful strategies.

As it was difficult to provide an adequate nationwide and reasonably frequent service for this small and scattered population by means of a specialist service consisting of three teachers only, the Department has recently restructured the Visiting Teacher service. This will enable pupils with visual impairment in ordinary schools to receive visits from local visiting teachers on a much more frequent basis, while retaining access to the specialist teacher of the visually-impaired, as required.

(c) *Boys with Visual Impairment attending Pobalscoil Rosmini, Drumcondra*

This designated second-level community school with some 450 sighted pupils and 40 with visual impairment has been catering for visually-impaired boys since the early 1980's. These boys transfer from St. Joseph's and are supported by four resource teachers with training and expertise in visual impairment. The students with visual impairment can be grouped as follows:

- those of average intelligence, who follow an academic programme;
- those who follow programmes in vocational preparation and practical subjects;
- those with mild mental handicap or borderline mental handicap for whom individual programmes are planned and implemented.

As well as special support from the resource teachers, the visually-impaired students attend ordinary classes and study alongside their sighted peers in a variety of subjects. This school caters for boys only.

(d) *Concessions relating to the Certificate Examinations*

Applications in respect of special consideration for visually-impaired candidates at the Junior and Leaving Certificate Examinations are made by principals of schools and supported by an ophthalmologist's report. The Visiting Teacher then makes a recommendation which is referred to an inspector for his/her final advice.

Examinations can be taken through the medium of braille or typewriting, or with the help of an amanuensis in the case of candidates whose speech is not adequately intelligible on cassette recordings. Grants are not payable by the Department of Education towards the cost of such a service. In 1992, a total of 39 visually-impaired students presented for the Junior Certificate and concessions were granted in 38 cases. In the Leaving Certificate, concessions were granted to 43 out of a total of 45 applications.

(e) *Braille of Text-Books*

Braille versions of text-books for first- and second-level pupils with visual impairment are prepared by long-term prisoners at Arbour Hill Prison, Dublin, by arrangement between the Departments of Education and Justice.

(f) *Third-level Education and Vocational Training*

There is no overall figure available on the number of visually-impaired students in third-level colleges or institutions. The Rehabilitation Institute offers a pre-university course for students with disabilities, including visual impairment, at its college at Roslyn Park, Dublin. During the academic year 1991-92, there were 24 persons with visual impairment attending the 7 constituent colleges of the 4 universities. University College Dublin, in association with the Rehabilitation Institute, launched a programme in 1989 to encourage students with visual impairment and other disabilities to attend university and other third-level institutions. Special facilities have been made available for visually-impaired students in relation to braille and tapes, while electronic signals have been installed on campus to facilitate mobility, orientation and access.

Unlike other special populations, such as the mentally handicapped, no specific training exists for post-school visually-impaired persons who do not proceed to third-level education. Many of them attend training centres run by the Rehabilitation Institute, the Health Boards or other agencies. Many of the trainees concerned would be functioning intellectually in the mild mental handicap or borderline dull normal range. A small number with moderate mental handicap attend vocational training centres for the mentally handicapped. Traditionally, the National League of the Blind has operated workshops in which visually-impaired people were trained in crafts such as weaving and canework as well as printing. The general tendency throughout Europe nowadays is to encourage visually-impaired people to undertake vocational training in mainstream settings, the emphasis being on skill-based programmes.

4.3.5 *Review of Present Provision*

The Review Committee, while paying tribute to the work done for pupils with impaired vision in ordinary schools and in special schools for over 120 years, wishes to draw attention to a number of anomalies in the system.

(a) *The Visiting Teacher Service*

Because visual impairment is a condition with a low-level incidence, the number of Visiting Teachers with specialist qualifications employed in this capacity has necessarily been small. Only three such teachers are at present employed by the Department. It is obvious that such a small team would find it impossible to give a regular service to these pupils on a countrywide basis. About half such pupils in ordinary schools are visited only once a term or less. Because of this, the Department has decided to restructure the existing service so that all visiting teachers would provide a service in their local areas to pupils with milder forms of disabilities other than those for which the teachers in question had specialist qualifications. Visiting Teachers with the required specialist qualification would be available on a consultative basis to advise the local visiting teacher and the pupil's parents and teachers, as necessary. It is the view of the Review Committee that this restructuring could not but benefit visually-impaired students throughout the country and we unreservedly support this development, provided that appropriate training is given to all the Visiting Teachers involved.

(b) *Special Schools*

The Review Committee has reservations about the present arrangement of special school provision for pupils with visual impairment. Firstly, both schools are located in Dublin. This means that, of the 115 pupils attending St. Joseph's and St. Mary's special schools, about 50 are in residential placement. Secondly, the service available to girls does not appear to match that being provided for boys, in that boys have the opportunity to transfer to Pobalscoil Rosmini for their post-primary schooling, while there is no such option available to girls. The 74 girls on rolls in St. Mary's School, Merrion range in age from 4 to 19 years of age, with about half of them being of post-primary age. Although the school makes every effort to provide post-primary education for the latter group by means of its own permanent teaching staff and of part-time teaching hours through the Department of Education and the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, the Review Committee considers that it would be of considerable advantage to the girls if they could be given the opportunity of transferring to a designated ordinary post-primary school at the appropriate age.

(c) *Ordinary Schools*

Some mainstream schools which cater for pupils with visual impairment have indicated that they have experienced some difficulty in having necessary items of specialist equipment supplied. Some would also need to be allocated specialist staff to act as trainers in mobility and orientation, such as is provided in the special schools. Their teachers should also be given access to specialist training, including instruction in Braille, if required.

4.3.6 Recommendations

The Review Committee makes the following specific recommendations in respect of pupils with visual impairment:

- (a) *The Department of Education, in consultation with the relevant school authorities, should examine the feasibility of restructuring the present arrangement of special school provision for pupils with visual impairment;*
- (b) *it must be ensured that girls as well as boys with visual impairment have access to mainstream post-primary education;*
- (c) *the pupil-teacher appointment ratio in special schools and classes for pupils with visual impairment should be that set out in Table 7.1.1 below;*
- (d) *the appointment ratio for Special Needs Assistants in special schools and classes for pupils with visual impairment should be that set out in Table 7.2.4 below;*
- (e) *ordinary schools having pupils with visual impairment on rolls should be provided, as a matter of urgency, with necessary items of specialist equipment and given access to specialist teachers of mobility, if required;*
- (f) *where such a service is deemed to be necessary, grants should be payable by the Department of Education towards the cost of providing the services of an amanuensis for pupils with visual impairment sitting the public examinations.*

APPENDIX II

Adaptability of Art, Craft and Design to pupils with visual impairment within a school which integrates the visually impaired with their fully sighted peers.

AGE: _____

YEAR: _____

1. Do you study Art, Craft and Design as a subject (Tick as appropriate)

Yes _____

No _____

If you ticked "Yes" please answer questions two to seven.

2. Do you like Art, Craft and Design as a subject. (Tick as appropriate)

Yes _____

Why?

No _____

Why?

3. What aspect (if any) do you most enjoy. (Tick as appropriate)

Painting _____

Drawing _____

Graphics _____

Textiles _____

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3 D Work _____

Other _____

What?

Why?

4. Do you find 3 dimensional work (e.g. clay) easier than 2 dimensional work (e.g. painting and drawing). (Tick as appropriate)

Yes _____

Why?

No _____

Why?

THE ART ROOM

5. Do you have any problems getting around the the art room? (Tick as appropriate)

Yes _____

Why?

No _____

Why?

6. What changes, if any, would you make to the design of the art room?

Comment:

7. Is Art, Craft and Design difficult for you because of your special needs?

If so, why?

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