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The Value of Craft in the Classroom

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Introduction

Generally, the learning values of craft are not always fully realised or understood. It is often seen to be part of the Art, Craft and Design Curriculum which acts only as an activity to fill time and keep students busy. The following investigation aims to examine craft and its place in the Junior Certificate syllabus, and to define its learning values both cognitive and motary. These studies will then be backed up by primary research work carried out between two South County Dublin secondary schools.

Chapter I defines craft and what craft education is. It also deals with the role craft plays in the Junior Certificate and how it has become an integral part of this syllabus. The present Leaving Certificate syllabus is also examined in relation to the Junior Certificate syllabus. Some suggestions are put forward for amending the Leaving Certificate to directly relate it to the Junior Certificate syllabus. It also discusses the findings of active art teachers attitudes to craft and the values they associate with craft education in the form of a questionnaire.

Chapter II is a review of relevant literature, which aims to define why craft is valuable and what its benefits are as a tool of education. The potential of craft outside the classroom and as a career is also examined.

Chapter III discusses two craft related schemes of work. It outlines the aims, objectives and educational values achieved from each scheme of work. A self

evaluation of each scheme is presented along with a student evaluation in the form of a questionnaire.

The Summary and Conclusion defines the validity of the learning from the related schemes of work. Suggestions of how craft can be integrated into all projects pursued in the art room are also examined.

Chapter I

Craft : A General Introduction

What is craft and craft education?

People are in contact with crafts every-day. Whether they are observing, using or directly involved with them, crafts are something that cannot be ignored in day to day life.

Craft is concerned with the process and techniques of designing and use of materials in the manual arts with skilled craftsmanship. The word craft may be applied to a number of things, from cooking or sewing to art associated activities like weaving or woodwork. A craft involves a skill. A dictionary definition of craft explains it as “skill in planning, making or executing dexterity; an activity or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill”(1). It is true to say that craft uses both skill and dexterity. It also requires imagination and creativity in order to put this skill and dexterity into practice.

Crafts originated because of the need for utensils and tools used in everyday life. Craft can be defined by the medium and process in achieving an end result. Types of craft include ceramics (working with clay as a medium), textiles (fibre-made products), metal and wood-work, glass making and so on. The manufacturer of these items is the craftsman, who is highly skilled in his/her particular area.

As mentioned, craft involves a skill and craft education involves the teaching and then development of various skills appropriate to different craft activities, for example, the moulding and manipulation of clay. It is often considered that the subject art caters only for motory learning. Craft education also involves the development of other qualities associated with cognitive learning - creativity, imagination and problem solving. A skill is an action that can be learned and perfected through trial and error. It takes the imaginative and creative person to put this skill into practice in a way that results in a novel and valid form of craft.

Craft and the Junior Certificate syllabus.

With the new Junior Certificate syllabus craft education is now promoted within Secondary Schools. The introduction of the new Junior Certificate in 1989 opened up the doors to the world of craft in a much more approachable manner. Craft is only one aspect of the Art, Craft and Design Junior Certificate syllabus. The values associated with craft within the Junior Certificate syllabus emphasises "the right use of tools and materials".⁽²⁾ Together with art and design it can "express and communicate ideas and feelings".⁽³⁾ It is essential that an art, craft and design syllabus involves students in hands-on creative activities, and this is what the Junior Certificate promotes. For example, an honours Junior Certificate student must complete two three-dimensional projects, and a pass student must complete one three-dimensional project for their examination. These crafts are optional - puppetry, clay modelling etc.

The Junior Certificate offers thirty-one choices in which the students can execute their projects, from animation to weaving. Of these thirty-one choices, twenty-one are craft orientated activities, e.g. lino printing, metal work. This extreme preference for the crafts alone can show not only how vast craft is, but also how valuable. I believe that craft is an area of art that has often been neglected in the classroom. This may be true for a number of reasons. The Intermediate Certificate was the recognised examination previous to the Junior Certificate. It focused primarily on two-dimensional work namely graphic design and painting compositions. Therefore, within this curriculum, crafts were often neglected. This was so for a number of reasons.

- 1) Lack of funding.
- 2) Lack of materials.
- 3) Adequate space in relation to the number of students.
- 4) Teachers knowledge within different or specific craft areas.
- 5) Time - The Intermediate Certificate allowed for an examination only (two and a half hours long) with no assessment for work completed over a space of time. It would not be possible to complete a piece of craftwork within a two and a half hour time slot.

The introduction and design of the Junior Certificate means that these so called reasons for not pursuing craft must be overcome. Craft is often the most effective way of executing work to its full potential. There is also the element that many students who do not feel confident in painting can express their work better through

craft, for example, clay modelling. Clay is a hands-on medium, giving students the opportunity to rework and expand their ideas through visual and tactile form. Hence, "verbal thinking by itself can be inadequate and frustrating, since creative and sensitive energies need to be expressed in a concrete form, through visual, tactile and spatial images". (4)

The aims and objectives set down for the Junior Certificate see craft as being equally important as art and design. I feel that this was not always the case prior to the Junior Certificate Examination, as the nature of the Intermediate Examination did not allow for full exploration of a chosen topic. It did not allow for a practical time scale, nor was it the best way to get results. On the other hand, the Junior Certificate examines on-going work, which can help show the student the importance of process and then product.

In "Learning Through Craft", Morley specifies that often the real value of craft lies in the doing or constructing. These creative values can be seen by the manner in which the student involve themselves, their use of materials and their responses to their work. He suggests that students be given an opportunity to develop their full creative potential by not setting an excessive amount of guidelines. Allowing students to select their own materials, techniques and encouraging suggestions and reactions will result in a valuable creative learning experience for the student.

The Junior Certificate as a preparation for the Leaving Certificate

The Junior Certificate syllabus for art, craft and design has been well developed and given full consideration for both aesthetic and practical art. The Junior Certificate demands support studies and full development of primary and secondary sources. These areas are essential to backup the end products, and the student is graded on both. On the other hand, the next stepping stone for the student must be examined.

The Leaving Certificate syllabus has been in existence since 1971, and has not been reviewed or updated since, even with the introduction of the new Junior Certificate syllabus in 1989. Therefore, it would seem the requirements from a Leaving Certificate candidate are from a syllabus set out on its own, rather than a development of the learning acquired from the Junior Certificate syllabus. Although the Leaving Certificate also covers art, craft and design, they are approached in a different way. The student is forced to execute his/her work in a different manner. All of the positive improvements and developments made at Junior Certificate level have been ignored and in a way have taken a step backwards. The Leaving Certificate syllabus has no set aims or objectives which means the teachers are looking towards past examination papers and allowing them to dictate what to teach and how to teach it. Gone is the project work where design, process and historical reference were of equal importance to an end product. The Leaving Certificate student must devote hours of preparation for four examinations which are totally disassociated from each other. These hours of preparation can often be in vain as it is only the work executed during the examination which is assessed.

The Leaving Certificate remains in this state as a revised solution has not been reached throughout the years of curriculum revision. However, it is at present being reviewed and updated, and the outcome is yet to be seen.

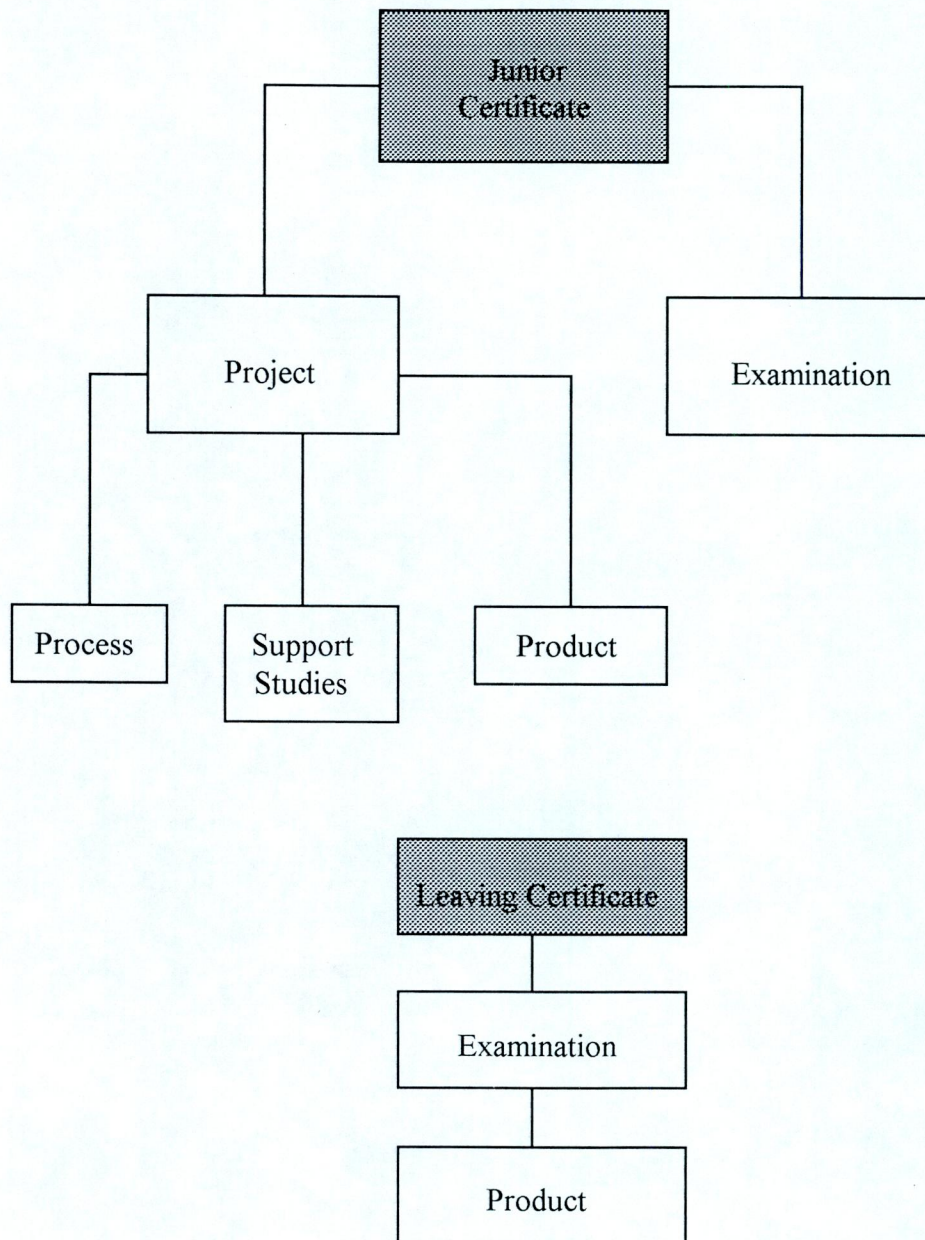


Diagram 1 : An outline of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate syllabuses.

Would it not benefit both the students and the teachers more if the Leaving Certificate was a direct lead on from the Junior Certificate? We constantly emphasise the importance of sequentiality in our schemes and project based work. It is of great importance that what has already been learned, be put into practice. Therefore, it would seem that continuing the project work from the Junior Certificate into the Leaving Certificate syllabus would be a natural progression. Project work could take place on a more advanced level for Leaving Certificate candidates. For example, the Leaving Certificate student could choose the work of an art movement, or an artist in history, and use this for a continuing source of style. Likewise, choosing a specific theme could make for a self-motivated and self-directed project, either two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Project based work could prove to be a great motivator, where the student is making most of the decisions and choices. Considerations like these would mean that the student would be developing what he/she already knows, instead of having to find their feet on new ground.

Active art teachers views on craft

Since craft is now a dominant category within the Art, Craft and Design, Junior Certificate syllabus, it is important to note active art teachers attitudes to it. In doing this I circulated a questionnaire which resulted in defining craft and the values associated with it. The results of this questionnaire have been combined together to give a broad evaluation of presently active art teachers' opinions on craft.

1) How would you define a craft?

A craft is any activity which relates design (two-dimensional or three-dimensional) to a final product. It is the intentional use of tools and materials to produce a three-dimensional piece of artistic expression.

2) What learning values and skills, both cognitive and motory, do you associate with craft?

Craft promotes problem solving. It is a means of learning the qualities and limitations of various materials and relating design to these materials. Craft develops the use of different tools and techniques. Use of various media can encourage students to develop personal creative responses. The nature of craft demands an ordering of actions or stages, self-discipline and perseverance.

3 a) Is craft as aspect of the curriculum you regularly use in the classroom?

Yes, craft associated activities are regularly used in the classroom.

3 b) Why?

Apart from the demands of the Junior Certificate syllabus fine art can cause problems for some students. Craft is more encompassing of all students with varying ability, than the elite group who may be excellent at drawing or painting. By developing craft skills, these students will succeed in creating valid art forms.

4) What types of craft do you introduce students to?

Lino printing, block printing, fabric printing, screen printing, batik, silk painting, creative embroidery, puppetry, book binding, card construction, packaging, mixed media, pottery, clay modelling and calligraphy.

5) Would you see craft as having any values above other means of artistic expression?

Yes, there is a tactile satisfaction of having something you have made and that can possibly be used. Craft also increases manual dexterity which along with its tactile nature is particularly useful among slow learners. Craft is more suited to group projects than other art forms, which encourages interaction among students and hence, builds confidence. In a school curriculum that is dominated by verbal/mathematical reasoning, the manipulation of materials in a controlled yet expressive way in the art class, provides an excellent alternative mode of learning, and an opportunity for genuine authentic self-expression.

These responses to craft in the classroom are very positive. They show how valuable craft is in terms of cognitive and motory learning, for example, problem solving, group participation, and manipulation of materials and techniques. The questionnaire defines what craft means to teachers and how it differs from other art forms such as drawing or painting. The results from all questionnaires proved that due to the introduction of the new Junior Certificate Art, Craft and Design syllabus, craft has become an area of the curriculum that cannot and should not be ignored.

Footnotes for Chapter I

1. Longman, Dictionary of the English Language (Great Britain Merriman Webster Inc., 1984) p.2.
2. NCCA, The Junior Certificate, Art, Craft and Design (Dublin An Rionn Oideachas, 1992) p.2.
3. ibid, p.2.
4. Schools Council, Children's Growth through Creative Experience (Britain Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1994) p.19.

Chapter II

Craft: A Review of the Literature

Why is craft valuable?

On a practical and physical level, craft teaches certain skills to students. It teaches the control and manipulation of tools and materials, and on an emotional level, it teaches students about response to their environment in visual, tactile and spatial terms. Craft develops self-identity and esteem through the practical achievement and completion of work, for example, the stages of a project - design process, construction and finish. Cognitive learning takes place through the understanding of art, craft and design in an historical context. The student also learns how to be critical of his/her own work, and work around him. Aesthetically, students not only learn how to appreciate and evaluate their own work, but also their immediate environment; for example architecture and sculpture in their own locality. It can enhance their qualities of imagination, creativity, originality and ingenuity. Seonaid Robertson explains that it is crucial to “preserve and develop the crafts in education because I believe they offer the most fundamental and most universally valid experience of creation which young human beings need”. (1)

Craft like other art forms, reflects feelings, intellectual capacities, physical development, perceptual awareness, creative involvement, aesthetic consciousness and social development. Lowenfeld and Brittain examine the arts under a number of

headings. It is essential to look at the beneficial effects of art under the following headings and how they can be achieved through craft.

1) **Emotional Growth**; this is concerned with the feelings of the students whether they be that of detachment or confidence. Through the improvements of techniques and skills acquired through craft, emotional growth develops.

2) **Intellectual Growth**; this can be seen in the students awareness of their environment and how much this knowledge the activity uses. By relating craft work to functional and familiar objects within their immediate environment, growth of intellect occurs.

3) **Physical Growth**; this is seen in the students visual and motor co-ordination - how they control their bodies and perform skills. Through manipulating tools and materials and developing craft skills, physical growth develops.

4) **Perceptual Growth**; this is the cultivation and growth of the senses through students work. Students instinctively know how to utilise appropriate materials and skills in executing their craftwork.

5) **Social Growth**; this can be seen in how the student expresses and identifies their experiences, and the experiences of others. Craft is activity based. Interaction between students occurs on a high level in regard to self and group evaluation.

6) **Aesthetic Growth**; this is defined as “the means of organising thinking, feeling and perceiving into an expression that communicate these thoughts and feelings to someone else”. (2) Aesthetic growth develops appropriate vocabulary and critical analysis of craftwork, e.g. form, construction.

7) **Creative Growth**; this is evident as soon as the young child begins mark making. Creativity must be stimulated and is often most evident in the process of the students work. It is often that the student does not realise the full creative potential of their designs until making contact with the medium/material.

Elliot Eisner sees artistic learning as having three main stages;

1) The ability to create art forms (Productive).

This stage involves ‘the making’ for example of a tapestry, puppets, masks.

2) The ability to develop aesthetic perception (Critical).

This stage involves analysis and learning to evaluate their own work and that of others, for example, looking to art in the environment and their peers.

3) Understanding art as a cultural experience (Cultural).

This stage refers to the environment and looking to the work of craftsmen through time and recognising the need for them. This awareness and understanding can then be translated into the students own work.

Eisner believes that artistic learning does not just come with natural maturity. He believes that maturation is necessary to learn, but that it can be “facilitated through instruction”.⁽³⁾ Robertson would also take this view as she sees teaching craft as a means of “helping children to learn to generate their own ideas for artistic self expression”.⁽⁴⁾ Eisner maintains that like any other subject, art is a discipline and each discipline must be learned. This is true of craft as students must be disciplined to learn certain skills and techniques. Therefore, it is clear to see from Eisner’s three learning stages that values are to be gained from craft, in both an emotional and practical way.

The way in which students respond to their surroundings can enrich and refine sensitivities and experience thus describing art and craft in a broad sense as “external and internal”.⁽⁵⁾ Internal growth is achieved when the students transfer their feelings and ideas into craftwork. Externally confidence and communication is achieved through discussion and evaluation.

This internal and external growth is also examined in “Children’s Growth through Creative Experience” by the Schools Council. They believe that “through expression of their feelings and ideas, children grow inwardly, in a personal awareness and sensitivity, and outwardly in confidence and in their capacity to communicate with others”.⁽⁶⁾

What craft offers the student, that other subjects cannot

Unlike other subjects, craft offers a means of expression to the student that can be less intimidating than other art forms e.g. drawing or painting. Students associate drawing and painting with the work of great artists in history, and often do not work to their full potential as they feel they are not good enough anyway. Students can often feel more confident working with craft or three-dimensional forms. Craft also requires a greater deal of interaction between students because it is more activity based.

Students' understanding of craft is often less representational than that of drawing. Therefore they can feel more confident in working with clay or tapestry, as the finished work can be as representational as they want it to be, in comparison to creating the perfect drawing. Craft can also be functional which is a very important factor in relation to the student. The amount of times children say "art is useless" can be counteracted with the fact that craft can be functional. Craft involves the creation of products the students are familiar with e.g. weaving bags or printing on fabric. Taking the aspects of structure, material and function into account, a greater success rate of final work can be achieved. Success of students' final work is a definite confidence builder if they feel they have produced something of worth and value.

Art and craft exists in our everyday society. It's influence which transcends cultures and continents can be seen in architecture and museums. However, arts and crafts

can be seen as more than this. The role of arts and crafts is also a “means of formulating feelings and emotions and giving them a tangible expression”⁽⁷⁾ for the student. This can be expressed through craft as it is not as dependant on innate skill as painting and drawing, which are often talent associated.

An important role of crafts is to increase visual and tactile awareness of forms, textures, colours and functional objects in the world around us. A specific role is “to help the student to use this visual and tactile language in unison with what they feel, think and do” ⁽⁸⁾ e.g. using household utensils and implements and developing them into decorative sculptures.

As I have already mentioned, students often find it easier to express themselves through craft work than other modes of art expression. Seonaid Robertson describes it as a means whereby the student can express his/her independence. She believes that due to economic and legal reasons students can achieve very little in the adult world. Since the adolescent seeks responsibility, a craft task can create a sense of satisfying achievement. This satisfaction stems from the fact that he/she has been given a job to tackle and complete, which, not only can look well, but also serves a function. She also maintains that if a craft is taught well enough it can prepare for a socially valuable job, creating real independence. In the classroom situation, success in craftwork builds self-confidence and self-satisfaction. They are not reliant on technical perfection to achieve these results and feelings.

Like other theorists, Robertson believes the power to create exists in everyone, regardless of whether they are a Michelangelo or Picasso. However, creativity can become frustrated and even distorted if not encouraged and instructed correctly. She has three main beliefs in teaching craft in school;

- 1) To realise that everything has its own colour, form and texture.
- 2) To acquire skills in order to translate their own ideas into tangible form.
- 3) To experience and relate to the material enough to relate it to their environment.

Robertson also discusses the advantages of using raw materials for craft work. One can become sensitive to quality, especially sensitivity through physical touch (an important and central part of craftwork). The preparation of the material is also an essential part of the making. Although, providing ready spun wool for example, can save time, a greater appreciation can be gained for the material if prepared by the student. Exposing students to the initial aspect of a craftwork process paves the way for a greater and deeper learning potential. Finally, the students gain full control over the material in how they prepare, manipulate and execute it.

The potential of craft outside the classroom

Craft can be utilised in a number of areas outside the school. As Seonaid Robertson indicated “one of the advantages of teaching crafts in school is that they are skills which the adult will find extremely useful”.⁽⁹⁾ For example, fabric printing can be linked to dressmaking or upholstery. Craft is an underlying activity in every household, e.g. D.I.Y.

Where drawing skills may never be used again, craft skills are utilised and developed continually. Skills and techniques learned through craftwork in the classroom will be referred back to in homemaking, e.g. stitchery learned from crafts such as embroidery, or construction learned from creating three-dimensional work.

By the time students have completed the Leaving Certificate they should have sufficient knowledge and skills in the area of crafts. From this they have the opportunity to move into specialist areas and serve an apprenticeship as a craftsman, for example carpentry, metal work or millinery.

With the growing consciousness of the environment, recycling has become widespread. This has opened a new avenue for the crafts in recycling used materials for example paper, glass, plastics etc. The awareness of such crafts must stem from the knowledge achieved within the confines of the classroom. As the area of craft has been recognised and promoted within the Junior Certificate, this transition must also take place in the Leaving Certificate curriculum, in order to highlight these valuable skills and techniques.

Footnotes for Chapter II

1. Seonaid M. Robertson, Creative Crafts in Education (Britain Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952) p.7.
2. Lowenfeld, V. Brittain, L., Creative and Mental Growth (Britain MacMillan Publishing, 1987) p.67.

3. Elliot Eisner, Educating Artistic Vision (N.Y. MacMillan Publishing, 1972) p.68.
4. Seonaid M. Robertson, Creative Crafts in Education, p.45.
5. Lowenfeld, V. Brittain, L., Creative and Mental Growth, p.346.
6. *ibid*, p.346.
7. Schools Council, Children's Growth through Creative Experience (Britain Van Nostrand Reinhold Co. Ltd., 1974) p.19.
8. *ibid*, p.66.
9. Seonaid M. Robertson, Creative Crafts in Education, p.91.

Chapter III

The Proposed Scheme of Craftwork

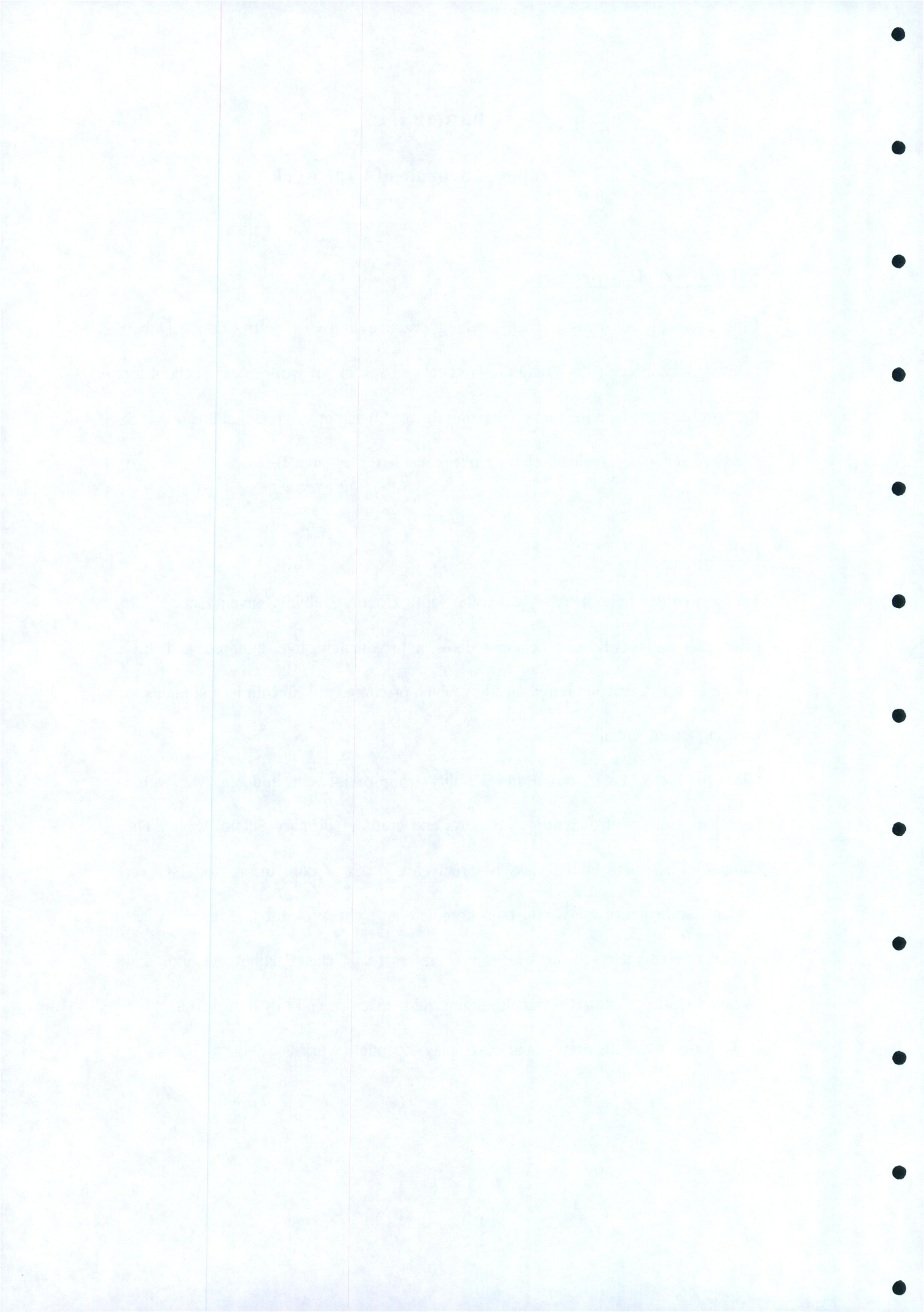
School and class profiles

I have completed my 4th year teaching practice in two South County Dublin Secondary schools. I have taught a craft related scheme of work in each school for the purpose of comparing and contrasting them. So as not to create confusion, each class and school is labelled with the alphabetical letter 'A' and 'B'.

School 'A'

School profile: School 'A' is a private South County Dublin Convent School. It caters for girls only and accommodates approximately five hundred and fifty students. It has a strong religious ethos which promotes the education of students to their highest potential.

Class profile: Class 'A' are a mixed ability group of 1st year students, who would have had a basic introduction to the arts and crafts at Primary School level. The number of students in the class is twenty-five. Art is compulsory for 1st year students and each of the year groups complete an eight week module in art. Class 'A' completed their scheme over seven classes (each class lasting one hour and twenty minutes). The art room although bright, spacious and tidy, lacks stimulation in the form of wall decoration and the display of student work.



School 'B'

School profile: School 'B' is an all girls, private South County Dublin school. Although the school is under Protestant management it accepts students of all faiths and nationalities. It is both a day and boarding school. It accommodates three hundred students of which eighty students are boarders. The school was recently rebuilt and presently provides new classroom facilities.

Class profile: Class 'B' are a good ability group of 1st year students. The majority of students in the class have a good knowledge of art and crafts and are experienced in various techniques. The number of students in the class is twenty-three. The scheme of work was completed over eight eighty minute periods. Art is not compulsory in 1st year, but can be chosen over home-economics. Art, craft and design is important within the school curriculum and the new art room is presently furnished with a kiln, two pottery wheels and various other materials for arts and crafts.

Proposed scheme of work

As stated, I completed my 4th year teaching practice in two South County Dublin schools. In completing a suitable scheme of work relating to the value of craft, I decided to use this to my advantage. Therefore I completed two schemes of work, one scheme in each school. In taking this step it meant I could have a broader knowledge of the students reactions to craftwork, coming from two different backgrounds. I devised two schemes of craftwork directed at 1st year groups. The

final product of each scheme was a mask. The difference in the schemes lay in the source and the practical approach.

Scheme 1 - School 'A'

Aim: To develop an understanding of the mask-making process using the theme of 'Carnival/Festival' as a source.

Scheme 2 - School 'B'

Aim: To develop an understanding of the mask-making process using the National Museum as a source.

Layout of each scheme

Scheme 1:		Scheme 2:	
Source;	Self portraiture and secondary source information from books etc. relating to the theme of Carnival/Festival.	Source;	Portraiture and primary source information gathered from visiting the National Museum.
Design Process;	Thumbnail sketches and final resolutions using imagination and secondary source information.	Design Process;	Thumbnail sketches and final resolutions using imagination and primary information gathered by way of a worksheet from the National Museum.
Construction;	<p>(a) Paper construction based on proportions and dimensions involved in portraiture.</p> <p>(b) Using the paper construction as a base for papier-mâché.</p>	Construction;	<p>(a) Clay Modelling The clay mould was laid over paper in order that it could be biscuit fired on completion of scheme.</p> <p>(b) Using papier-mâché to take a cast from the clay mould.</p>
Decoration;	Decoration of mask relating to design work based on Carnival/Festival.	Decoration;	Decoration of mask relating to design work based on Celtic imagery collected in the National Museum worksheet.

Educational value involved in schemes of work

Scheme 1 - School 'A'

Aim: To develop an understanding of the mask-making process using the theme of Carnival/Festival as a source.

Lesson 1 : Self Portraiture

The learning objective or educational value from this class taught proportion and the dimensions of the face. This was achieved through self portraiture using mirrors.

Lesson 2 : Design Process

The initial stages of the design process were thumbnail sketches. These were developed from a secondary source which stimulated the students imagination.

Lesson 3 : Design Process

The design process was further developed in this lesson. The students had to resolve their ideas and make final decisions about their designs.

Lesson 4 : Construction (Structure of Mask)

The students used a paper construction which reinforced the learning from lesson 1. It developed the students understanding of form and the need for skill and accuracy in craftwork.

Lesson 5 : Papier-Mâché

The technique of papier-mâché also encompassed the element form, and skill in handling materials.

Lesson 6 : Decoration

The initial stages of decoration encouraged the students to choose materials, mediums and techniques for decorating their masks which related to their designs.

Lesson 7 : Decoration

This lesson further developed an understanding of how materials from our everyday environment have their own decorative quality. The lesson forced the students to make final decisions in relating their two-dimensional design work to a three-dimensional mask.

Scheme 2 - School 'B'

Aim: To develop an understanding of the mask-making process using the National Museum as a source.

Lesson 1 : Portraiture

The educational value from this class taught the proportion and dimensions of the face, from both side and frontal view points. This was of great importance as the students needed to realise the three-dimensional form of the face. It also introduced the students to using the Museum as a source for a scheme of work.

Lesson 2 : The Museum Visit

The visit to the National Museum firstly developed an awareness of history. We focused mainly on Celtic ornaments and stone sculpture. Developing an awareness and understanding of the visual, tactile qualities and surface decoration of these artifacts was concentrated on. A worksheet was completed by each student to gather appropriate information.

Lesson 3 : Design Process

This lesson taught how primary source information can be developed or altered and then translated into a design to suit the given brief. In this case the students were asked to design a Celtic mask, taking into consideration its function, e.g. warrior, death mask etc.

Lesson 4 : Clay Modelling (Mould for Mask)

Modelling clay can be very therapeutic. The tactile quality of it appeals very much to students. It develops skills and manipulation of materials. In this lesson the students began to translate their design work into three dimensions, concentrating on form and surface decoration.

Lesson 5 : Papier-Mâché

The initial lesson concentrating on papier-mâché developed an understanding of the technique and how it is worked.

Lesson 6 : Papier-Mâché

Skill and precise manipulation of materials was developed in this lesson. It also taught the potential of papier-mâché in terms of surface decoration.

Lesson 7 : Decoration

For decorating the masks, students had to refer back to their designs and the visit to the National Museum. This encouraged the use of suitable mediums and materials, e.g. wire, gold paint and sand for creating the texture of stone.

Lesson 8 : Decoration

This lesson involved the students in further developing their decorative skills and techniques. It also created a sense of satisfaction in completion of a product.

As mentioned in the review of literature, Lowenfeld and Brittain examine the arts under a number of headings. These headings show how a student grows having had involvement in the arts. The types of growth include; - Emotional, Intellectual, Physical, Perceptual, Social, Aesthetic and Creative. Each of these growth patterns are evident and were developed within each scheme of work. Elliot Eisner's three main learning stages were also an integral part of the craft related schemes;

1) Productive -

Creating art forms was achieved in each scheme. The production of the masks included the process of design, construction and assembly/decoration.

2) Critical -

Analysis and evaluation of the students work was continuous throughout the schemes. Student feedback to and from each other developed their sense of aesthetic perception.

3) Cultural -

Relating their craftwork to culture and their environment also occurred in both schemes. Group 'A' looked to carnivals and festivals of many different cultures throughout the world as a secondary source for their project, e.g. South America, China.

Group 'B' used the National Museum to study the art of the Celts. Apart from the Museum being in their local environment, the art of this period had its own culture. This group also looked to ancient masks of the world which acted as support studies, e.g. Mexico, Egypt and Greece.

Personal evaluation of success of schemes**Scheme 1 - School 'A'**

This scheme was successful. All of the learning objectives were achieved. The students learned to produce their own design which translated into craftwork.

We encountered one problem, this was involved in the construction. The students used papier-mâché on a paper construction. These materials were not fully compatible and the papier-mâché caused the paper construction to shrink and buckle when drying. Both the students and I learned from this and although it somewhat distorted the end product, the scheme continued.

In terms of the students learning through craft, the scheme was very successful. My aims and objectives from each lesson were all carried out. Throughout the scheme, the confidence building of the students was visible. Students who had not been fully confident in their ability to draw and design, realised that the construction and making was an area they could exploit further.

Their self-motivation was evident when the students began collecting images and information relevant to the theme for support studies on their own initiative. They began to suggest alternative materials for decoration and also provided them. My belief in the schemes success is reflected in the students evaluation (in the form of a questionnaire). Each student was fully satisfied with their ability to design and create. The scheme gave confidence where it lacked. As one student responded, "I never thought I could do art".

Scheme 2 - School 'B'

I thoroughly enjoyed completing this scheme of work with the students. This stemmed from the fact that the students were at all times enthusiastic and motivated

by it. Using the primary source of the National Museum acted as a great stimulant as the students were fully involved in obtaining their research information by way of a work-sheet. It also meant the students could see the artifacts first hand and realise the full potential of their decorative and tactile nature.

The students enthusiasm and eagerness resulted in creating a hard working atmosphere, with careful thought and consideration given to each aspect of the project. We encountered no major problems during the scheme of work. Many of the students were not unfamiliar with the mediums of clay and papier-mâché. However, they did need direction in the execution of techniques, e.g. modelling and building up papier-mâché.

The students were exceedingly happy with the final product. Confidence was then boosted by the extension of the scheme to design a poster for an 'Exhibition of Celtic Masks'. The students exhibited their work within the school which also provided historical backup to the Celtic period in Ireland.

Student evaluation of success of schemes

Scheme 1 - School 'A'

Class 'A' were a well disciplined mixed ability group. They thoroughly enjoyed the project, however, they became a little distracted towards the end of the scheme during the lessons on decoration as the continuity of the scheme was interrupted by

the holidays at the end of term one. I chose for the students to evaluate their work in the form of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed on the 9th of January by twenty-three students. Two students were absent. The results of the questionnaire also indicate where some students used more than one word on answering each question.

Question 1

How did you like this project?

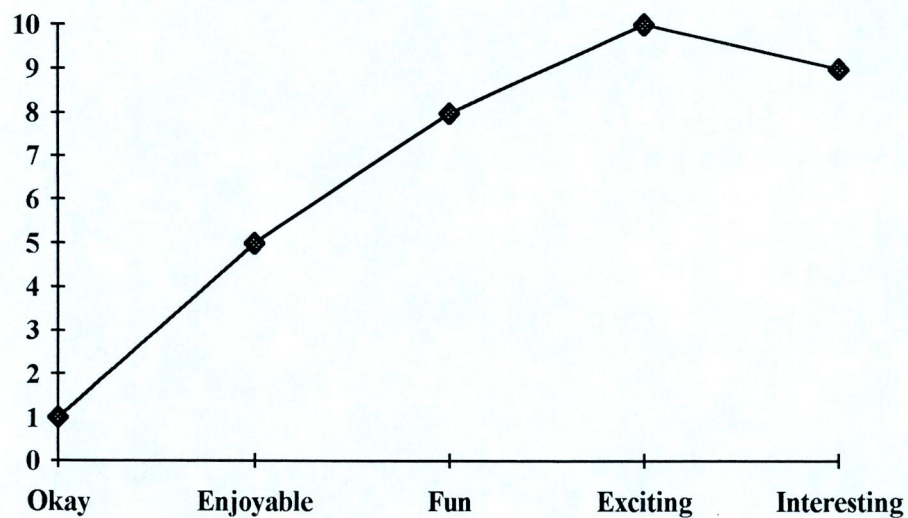


Diagram 2

Question 2

How did you find the work?

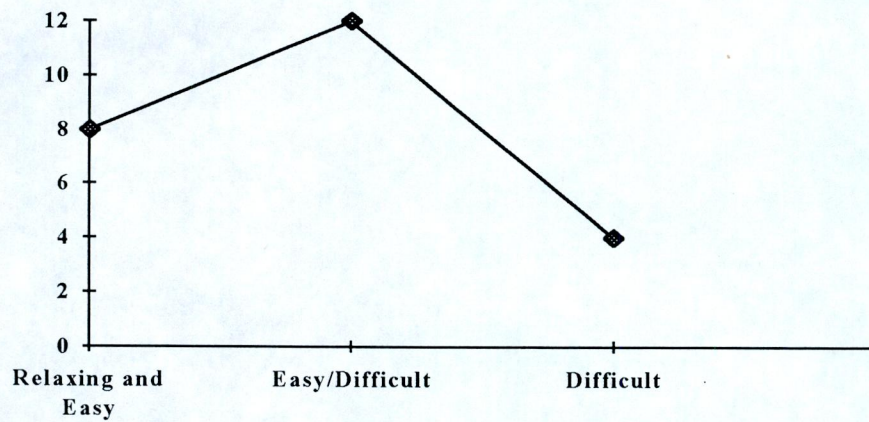


Diagram 3 : The majority of students found some parts of the production easy and other parts more tricky and difficult, e.g.; construction, decoration techniques - namely sewing.

Question 3

How much did the students learn from this project?

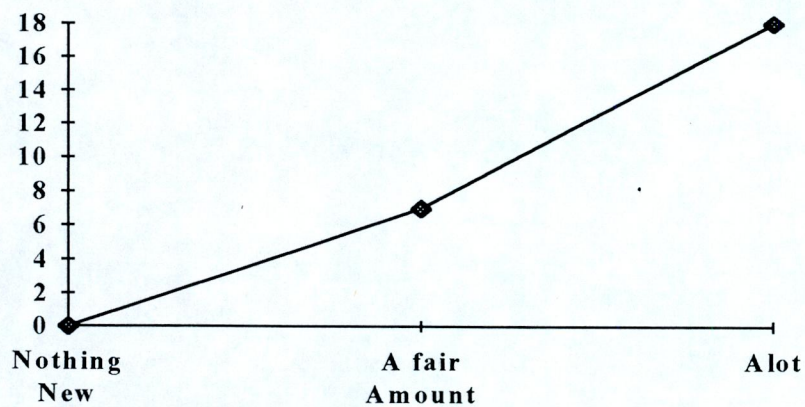


Diagram 4 : The majority of students learned about construction and the technique of papier-mâché.

Question 4

What skills or techniques did you learn?

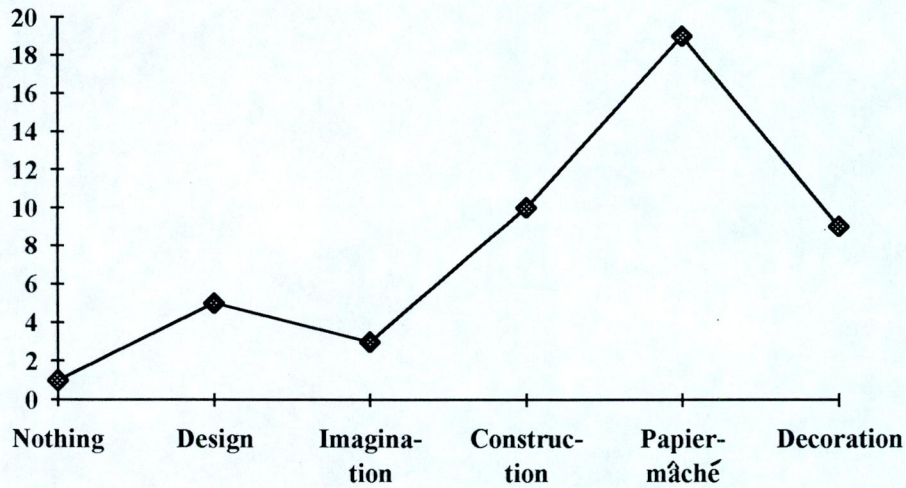


Diagram 5 : The techniques most students learned was papier-mâché. The most popular technique learned during the lessons on decoration was sewing. One student described how she learned to spray paint.

Question 5 (a)

Did you enjoy this project?

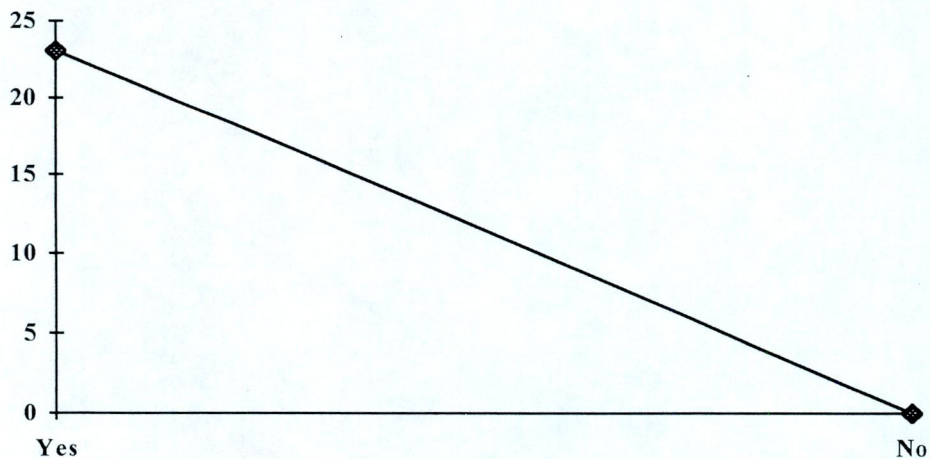
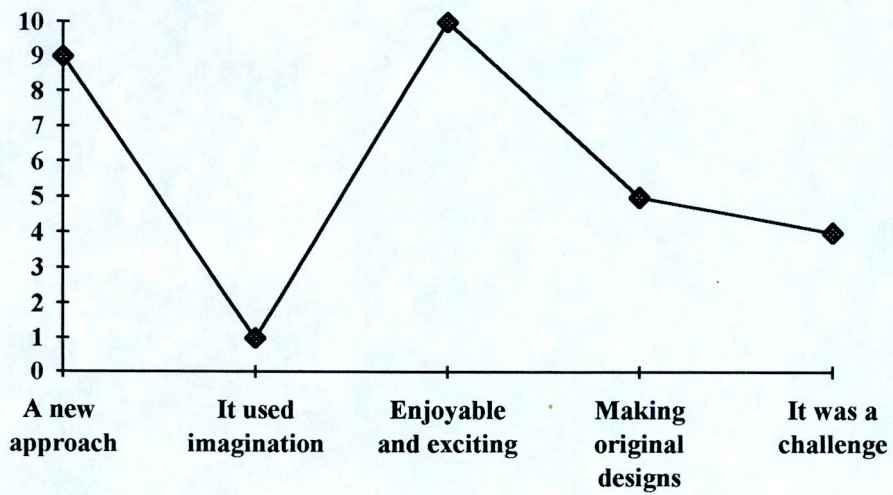
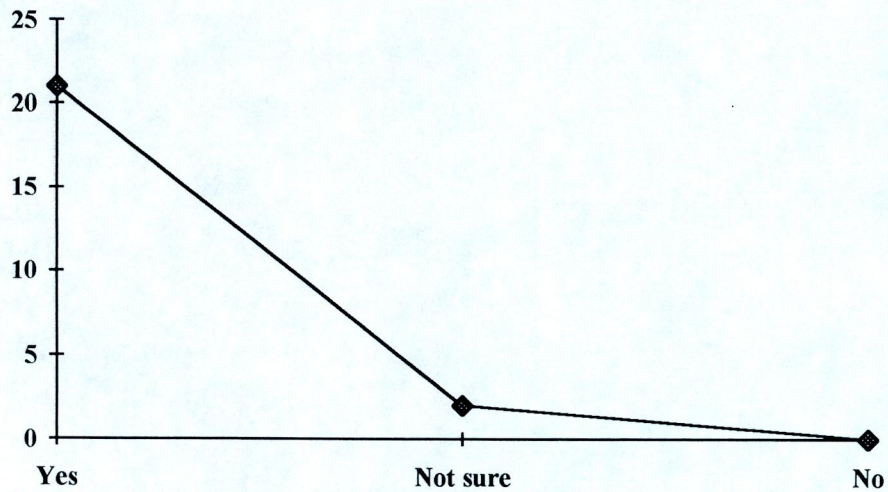


Diagram 6 : All twenty-three students said they enjoyed the project.

Question 5(b)**Why?****Diagram 7****Question 6(a)****Would you use what you learned from this project again?****Diagram 8**

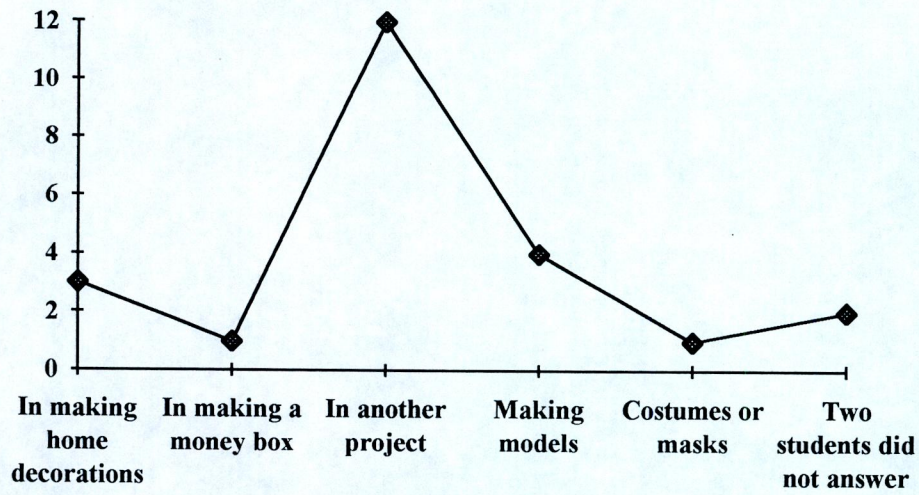
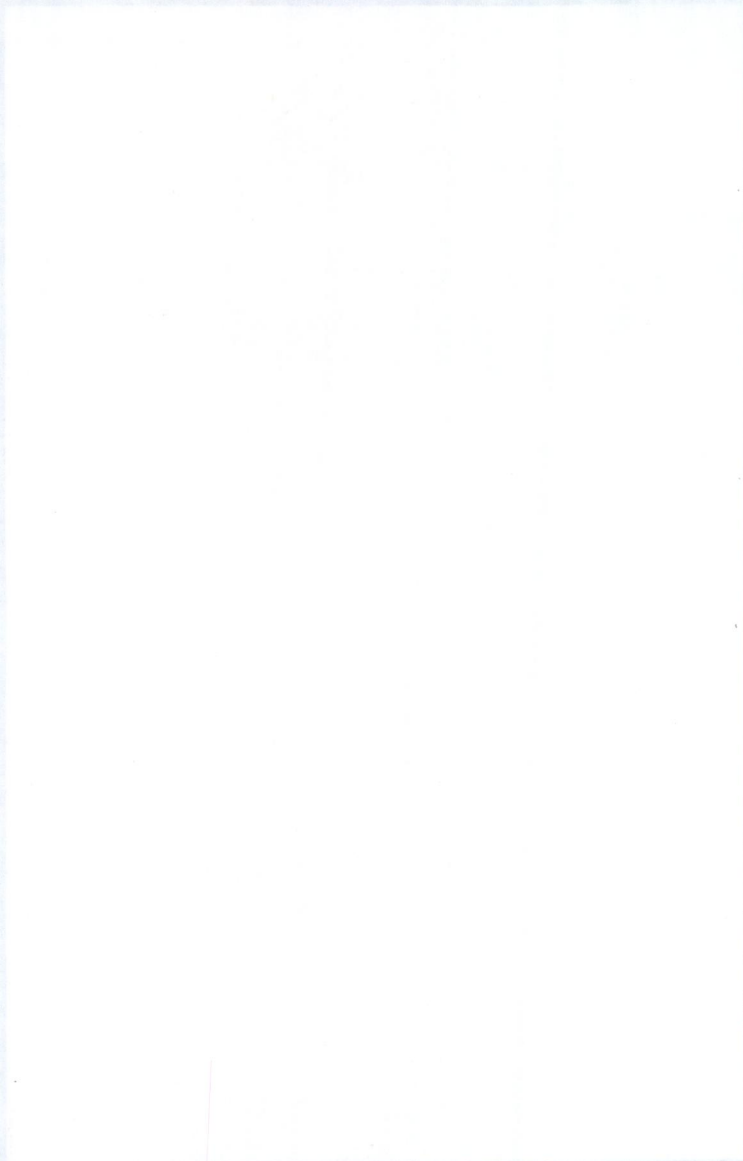
Question 6(b)**How?**

Diagram 9 : The answers from question 6(b) show the students understanding of the versatility of how techniques can be used.



Illustration 1 : Student work from Group 'A'.



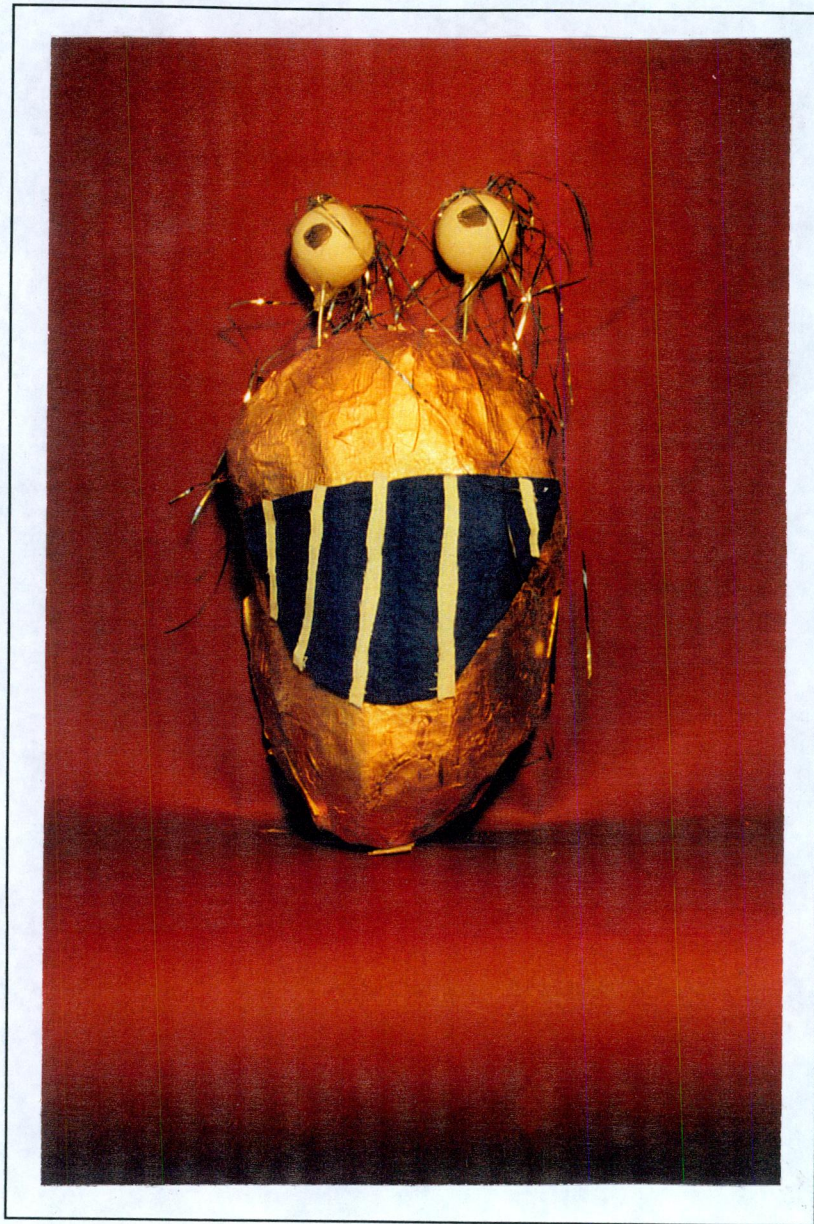


Illustration 2 : Student work from Group 'A'



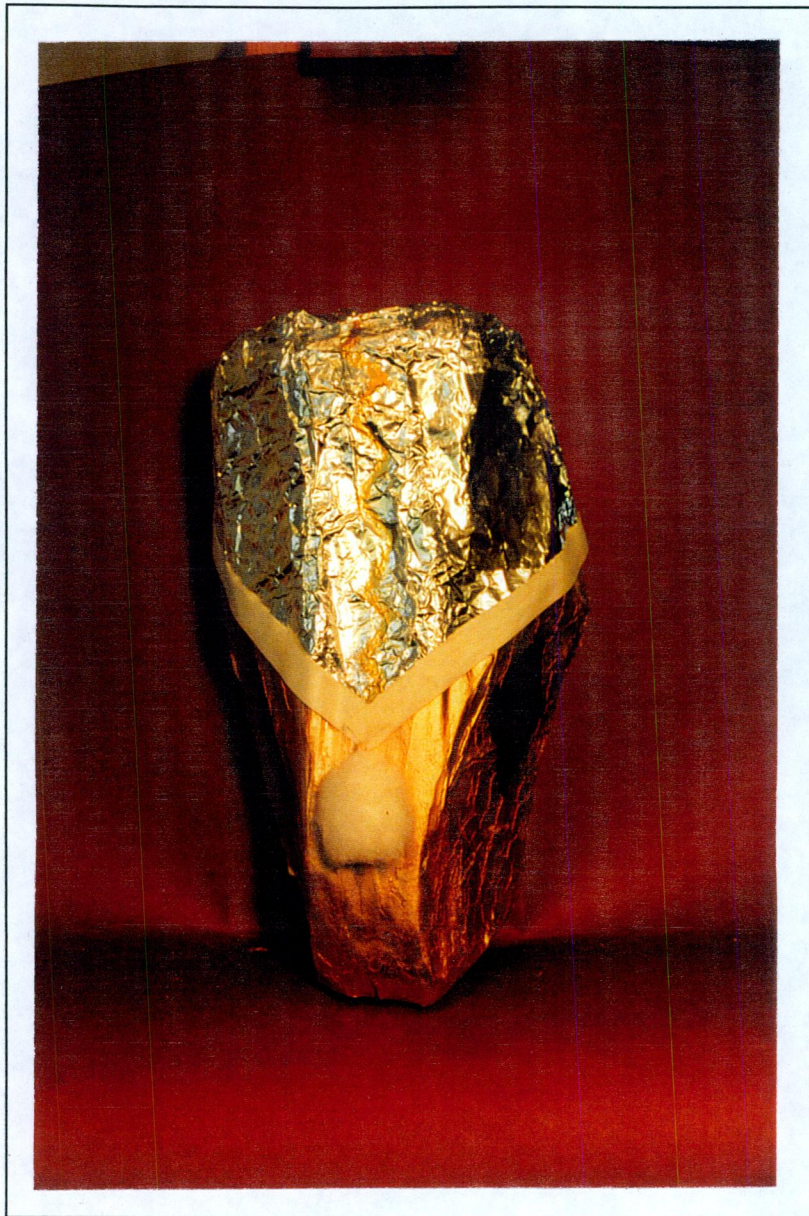
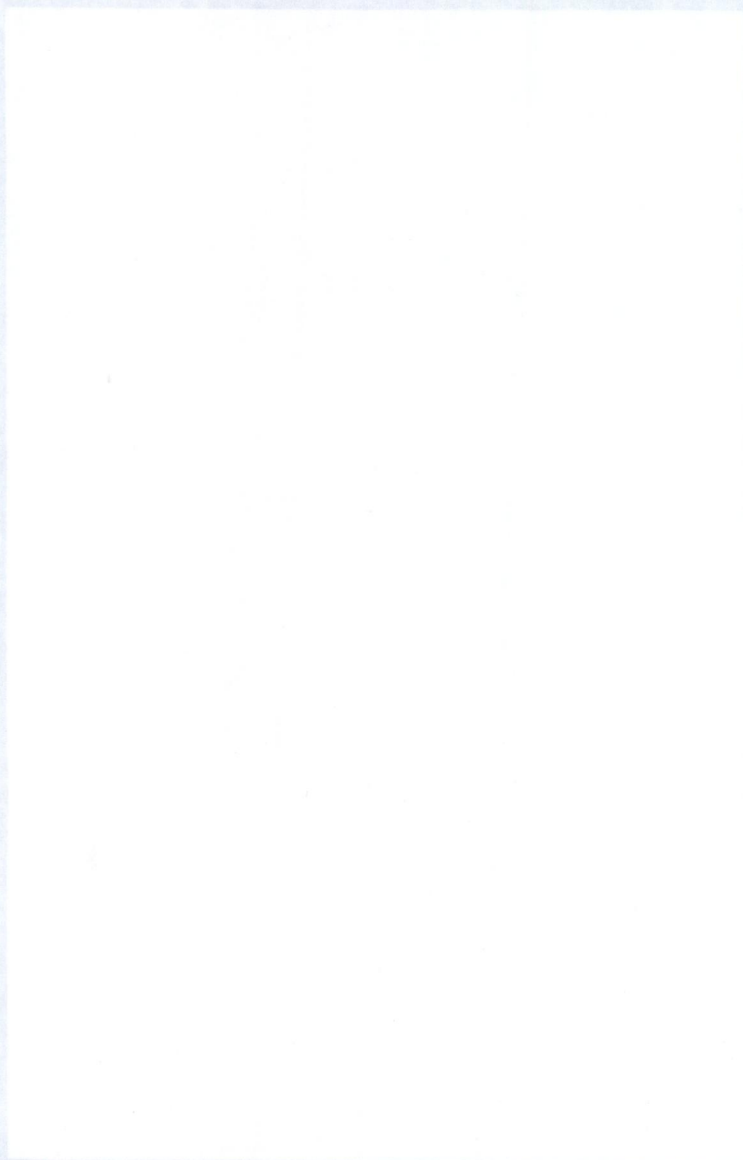


Illustration 3 : Student work from Group 'A'



Scheme 2 - School 'B'

Group 'B' were a good ability group. The class included two slow learners, however, this was counteracted by the overall good ability of the class, and extra attention given by both myself and their classmates. Although discipline was not a major problem, the students were easily over excited. Nevertheless, the students worked hard and stayed motivated throughout the project. Group 'B' completed the same questionnaire as Group 'A' on the 14th of March 1997, by twenty-two students. One student was absent. The results of the questionnaire indicate on the graphs where some students answered the questions with more than one word.

Question 1

How did you like this project?

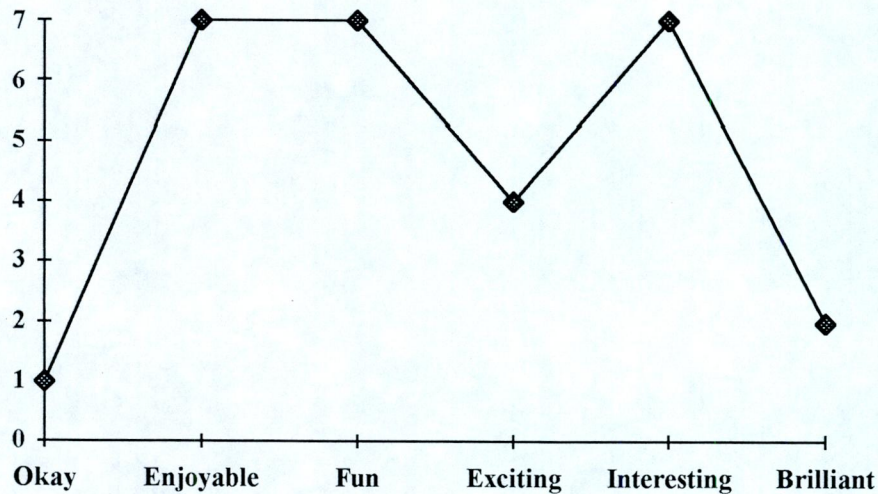


Diagram 10

Question 2

How did you find the work?

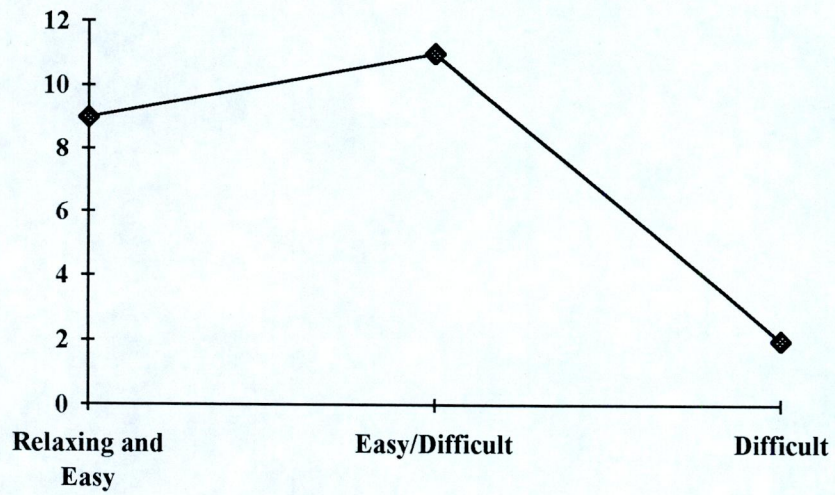


Diagram 11

Question 3

How much did you learn from this project?

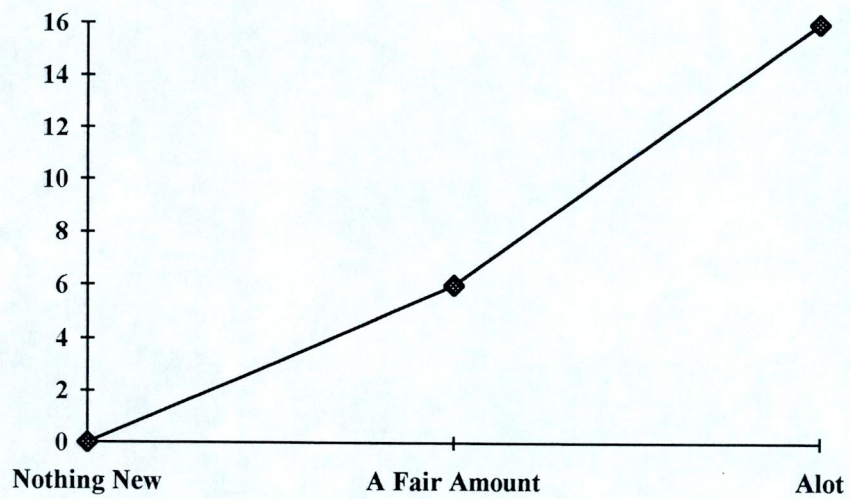


Diagram 12

Question 4

What skills or techniques did you learn?

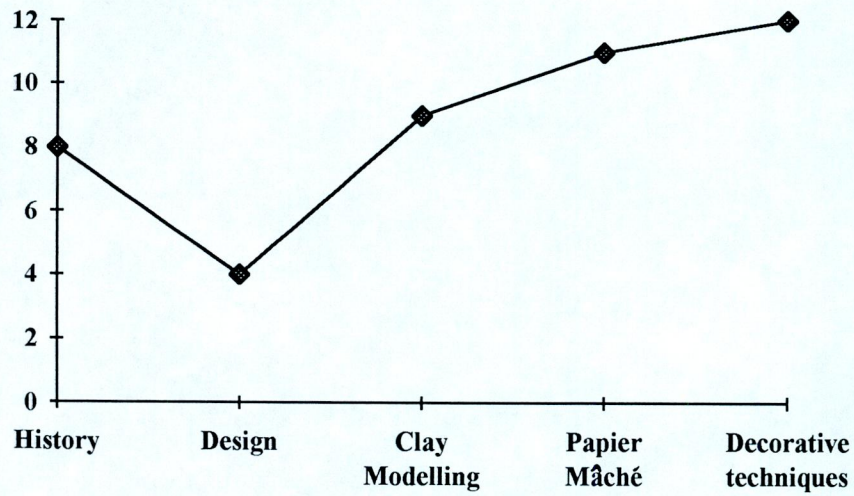


Diagram 13

Question 5 (a)

Did you enjoy this project?

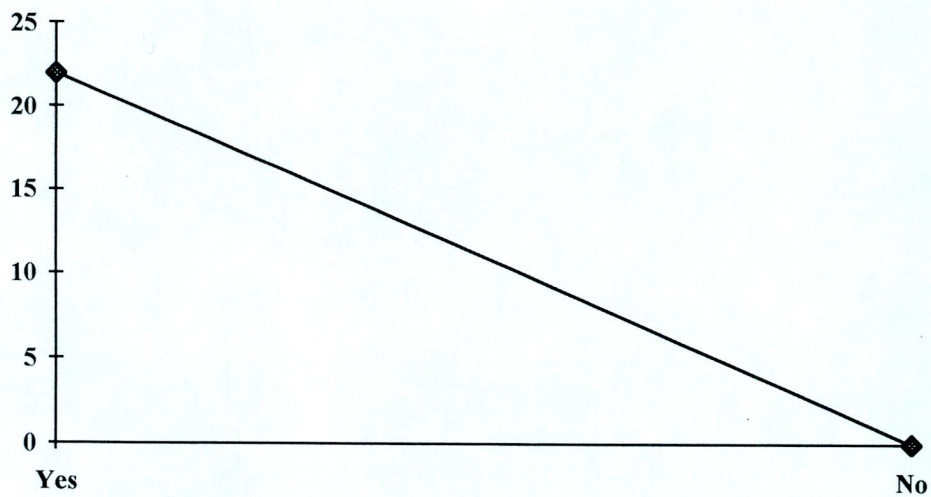
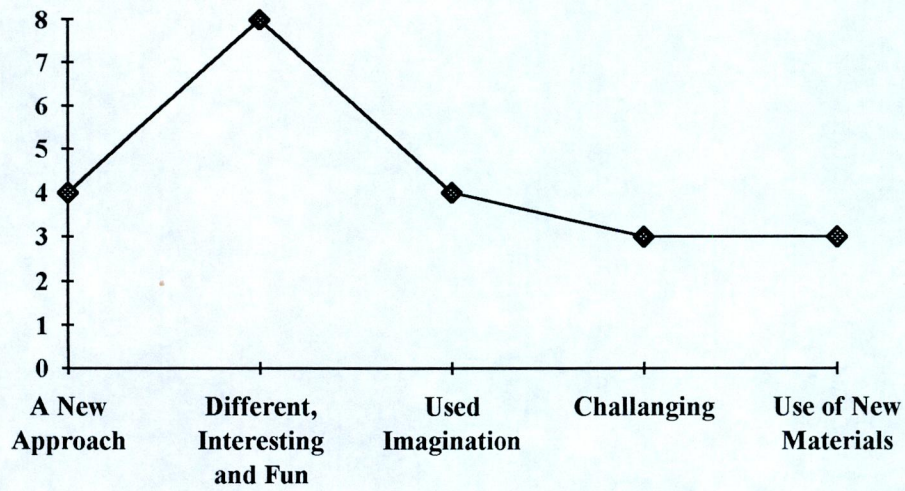
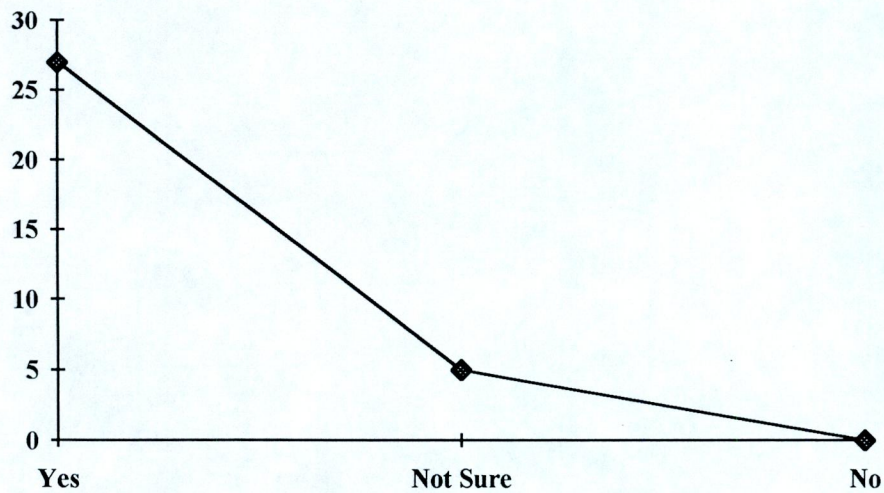


Diagram 14 : All twenty-two students said they enjoyed the project.

Question 5 (b)**Why?****Diagram 15****Question 6 (a)****Would you use what you have learned from this project again?****Diagram 16**

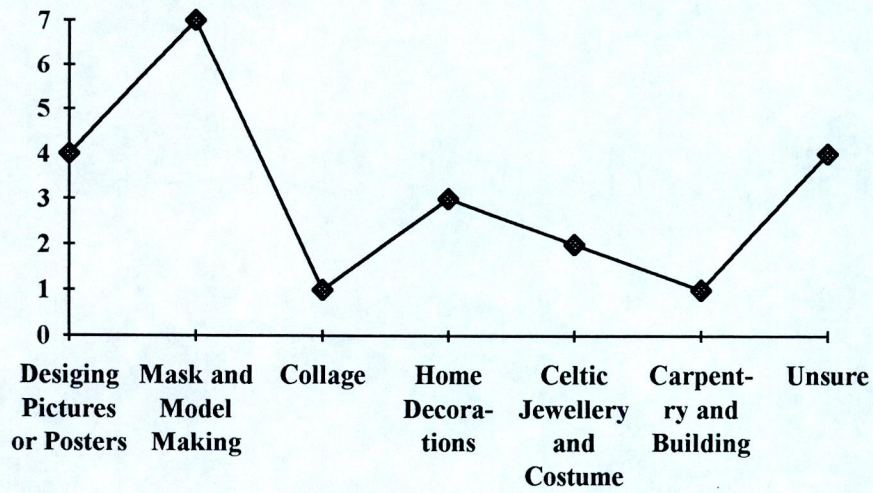
Question 6(b)**How?**

Diagram 17 : The answers indicate that the students' understanding of craft is not just a classroom activity.



Illustration 4 : Student work from Group 'B'

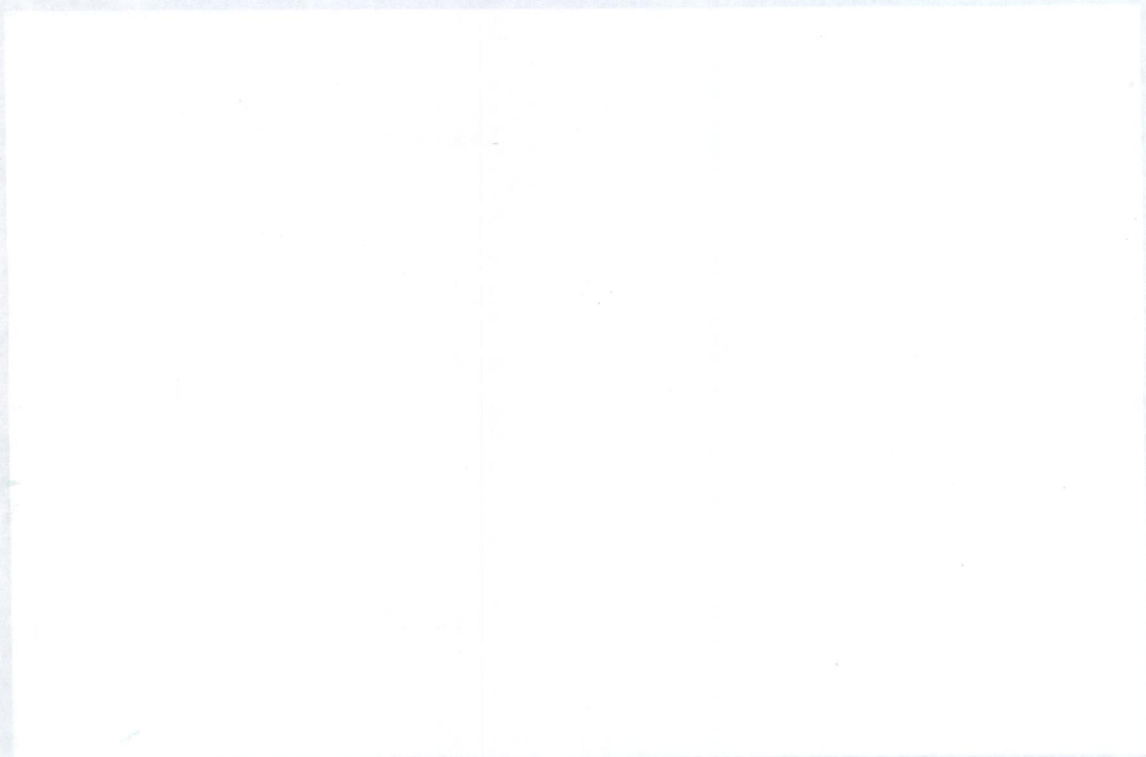




Illustration 5 : Student work from Group 'B'





Illustration 6 : Student work from Group 'B'



Conclusion and Recommendations

Almost every student enjoys the opportunity to partake in creative craft activities. This is reflected in the students evaluation by means of a questionnaire, of the craft related schemes of work.

When each of the projects were first introduced to the classes, the students responded with great enthusiasm at the prospect of making something. Completing the two schemes of work proved how valuable craft is to students. Group 'A' and Group 'B' were classes of different abilities (mixed and good). Group 'B' had also come from a more highly developed artistic background than Group 'A'. Hence, where Group 'A' were learning processes and techniques for the first time, Group 'B' were extending their knowledge and abilities.

Craft related work is always beneficial to the student. In answer to question 6(b) How would you use what you learned from this project again?, students responded in ways of using craft outside the class. Some suggestions included making costumes, decorations for the home and jewellery. One extremely aware student from Group 'B' saw her craftwork as being a direct lead on to building or carpentry. These answers show the students understanding of the full potential of craft.

Learning involved with practical skills, techniques and manual dexterity was completely evident amongst the students. This motory learning was developed at a higher level for the students in Group 'B', in the further development of previously

acquired knowledge, e.g.; furthering their ability to manipulate clay and papier-mâché. Cognitive learning was also apparent in both schemes of work. The secondary and primary sources of Carnival/Festival and the National Museum provided not only a basis for factual learning, but also acted as a constant motivator. Use of imagination, problem solving, decision making and student feedback to each other was also an integral part of their learning. Confidence building and work satisfaction was also achieved by the students. In answer to question 1 - How did you like this project?, one student specified "because you are proud of what you have done".

It was not always necessary for students to execute craftwork at Junior Cycle level. The new Junior Certificate syllabus now makes craft compulsory, I recommend that all projects can and should be developed into craft areas. The source for any project can be developed into an area of craft. For example, the figure can be drawn, painted, worked in collage, developed into abstract compositions suitable to embroidery or fabric printing, moulded in clay or wire etc. Developing all projects to this stage would exercise the aims of the Junior Certificate syllabus which encourages the combination of art, craft and design, to fully develop students' ideas and feelings, and their sense of communication and expression.

In conclusion, it is crucial that children be taught the means and potential of craft at school level. It is beneficial in the development of their physical and emotional growth. It will also prepare them for the world where their learning will be required

to be put into practice. "If the children in our care", says Robertson "grow up with, at every stage, materials which they can mould and arrange, with tools which they can use to construct and if they are encouraged to believe that it is their birthright to be adapting the environment around them for use and for pleasure, they will not be content with the lethal ugliness of so much of our industrial landscape. Having found the joy and satisfaction of creating they will want to create still, and to bring a sensitive imagination to bear not only on their own choice of clothes and furnishings, but on the selection of public monuments, or new plans for new buildings or new towns, they will be concerned with the preservation of the best traditions, and concerned about the destruction of the countryside by industry or suburban selfishness, and so they may make a world more fitting for themselves and their children to enjoy".⁽¹⁾

Footnotes for Summary and Conclusion

1. Seonaid M. Robertson, Creative Crafts in Education (Britain Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952) p.262.

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COLASITE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHA

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

B.A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

Dissertation Abstract

Name : Derarca Cullen.

Title : The Value of Craft in the Classroom.

As a third level student of textiles, I have a great interest in, and derive immense enjoyment from the area of crafts. In knowing and understanding the potential that can be gained from pursuing craftwork, I aim in this dissertation to define the values associated with it.

The research for this dissertation was obtained in a number of ways. Using the Art, Craft and Design Junior Certificate syllabus, the place of craft within the secondary school curriculum is examined. I also looked to active art, craft and design teachers, to achieve their understanding of craft and its values. Relevant literature was also reviewed and finally, two schemes of craftwork were completed to provide primary research work. These two schemes of craftwork were executed with two 1st year groups from two different schools. This study set out to prove the extent of the learning values associated with craft. It also showed that craft can provide learning whether students come from a well disciplined artistic background or not.

