

COLASITE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHA
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

B.A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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THE CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS ART AS A SUBJECT:
A STUDY OF FIRST AND FIFTH YEAR STUDENTS

This dissertation aims to investigate how and why attitudes towards art as a subject develop, with particular reference to years one to five. A questionnaire was given to each of the students in the two classes, the results were compared on bar charts and then discussed.

The study proposes reasons for earlier negative attitudes which seemed to stem from both parental and primary school attitudes towards the subject. In many cases Art is not viewed as a 'worthwhile' subject, as it does not hold the same value as the more academic subjects.

This led to a review of the relevant literature on attitudes, development and self esteem along with a brief investigation on the Irish Education Systems view of Art in the curriculum.

The conclusion suggests possible remedies for such negative attitudes, how they can be changed to a more positive light throughout the school.

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

Candidacy for the

B.A. DEGREE IN ART AND DESIGN EDUCATION

by

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INTRODUCTION

Attitudes towards art are not always positive. Many people feel that it is not a 'worth while' subject, it does not hold the credibility of the more academic subjects and as a result art teachers have a tough job, not only trying to promote it to every student being taught but also to fellow members of staff.

Negative attitudes are quite dominant in the first years but attitudes tend to become more positive in the older year groups who have generally chosen art as an area of study.

The following investigation aims to develop an understanding of how and why these attitudes have developed and why they may change through the year groups. A study of the literature of the attitudes, development, self esteem and the arts in the curriculum will be required. Accompanying this will be a questionnaire, answered by all first and fifth year art students that I teach, in Mount Temple Comprehensive. The findings will be used in order to develop an understanding of why these attitudes occur and what might alter them.

Chapter I is a review of relevant literature which examines attitudes, development and self esteem in relation to one another.

Chapter II discusses class observations with possible reasons for certain attitudes in the different year groups. It also discusses the school and the classes under

observation.

In chapter III the findings of the questionnaires are discussed ; information is presented in bar charts and results are compared to attitudes in class along with examples of students' work.

Chapter IV briefly discusses the Irish Education System's views of art in the curriculum.

In the concluding chapter possible reasons for negative attitudes are presented with a view to possible remedies.

CHAPTER I

ATTITUDES :

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is Attitude?

Psychologists define attitudes as the relatively enduring orientations that individuals develop towards the various objects and issues they encounter during their lives, and which they express verbally as opinions. (1)

The above is Fontana's definition of 'attitudes' in his book *Psychology For Teachers*. He discussed attitudes in relation to personality, behaviour and development, and feels that they contain elements of 'value' and 'belief' along with a certain degree of knowledge. He also suggests that attitudes can be both 'conscious' and 'unconscious' - sometimes they can create conflict - Freudian theorists believe that the conflict plays an important role in the development of the personality.

Davies says that attitude is difficult to define. He looks at different definitions by Mednick and Bernstein. Mednick's definition in 1975 suggests attitude "as a predisposition to act in a certain way towards some aspect of one's environment, including other people." Bernstein similarly says attitude can be described as "a predisposition towards a particular cognitive, emotion or behavioural reaction to an object, individual, group, situation or action." (2)

Davies looks at the latter of these in his attempt to discuss attitudes. Bernstein emphasises the three components : cognitive, affective and

behavioural. Davies expands on these :

The Cognitive Component refers to thoughts or beliefs expressed by an individual regarding an issue. The Affective Component concerns the 'emotional' feeling people have towards an issue, reflected by their favourable or unfavourable evaluation of it. The Behavioural Component refers to the observational behaviour shown by people as a means of expressing their beliefs and feelings on an issue. (3)

Although Davies believes it is difficult to define "attitude", his response is similar to Fontanas. Both emphasises the importance of values and beliefs.

In general psychology books that discuss attitudes cover the topic in a similar format, and like Fontana they discuss it in relation to behaviour and personality.

Psychologists agree that change can occur in attitude. As a child develops into an adult, physical changes and needs cause a change in attitude. Then as the child matures into young adulthood further changes occur. Once they have acquired self esteem they search for independence and personal freedom. Following this they become :

..... realistic, independent, creative, problem centred rather than self centred, and with a ready appreciation both of other people and of the world about them. (4)

When teaching it should be taken into consideration that changes are continually occurring in the adolescent's life. Their attitudes fluctuate from

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When teaching it should be taken into consideration that changes are continually occurring in the adolescent's life. Their attitudes fluctuate from

positive to negative

The art products of the young adolescent fluctuate along with personal behaviour : one week a student may think and express in a child like way, the next week he may express in a very mature manner. Today he may like art ; tomorrow he may dislike it. One day he is aggressive, and he displays leadership ; another day he is retiring and timid. Such individual, changing moods should be understood and then challenged in constructive directions. (5)

Barbara Calvert agrees in some way to this statement in her book :

“.....Children because of their youth are not allowed but expected to have adjustment problems from time to time.” (6)

Perhaps this should be taken into consideration when looking at individuals attitudes, attitudes may be a result of problems outside of the classroom. In many circumstances, particularly with young teenagers it will most probably be that they are not only having to cope with changing schools, friends and work load but also with physical changes. Some cope better than others - they are all different.

It is probably important in these circumstances to be encouraging and understanding. To ensure that attitudes will not be negative, motivation and enthusiasm may enhance a change in attitude.

.....children, like adults, respond readily to enthusiasm in others they are likely to be fired by it and want to participate in the activities associated with it. (7)

Davies discusses the development of a child in relation to attitude :

Attitudes are gained through experience and contact with the world around us. As individuals develop they acquire a set of beliefs and attitudes which in part influence how they interact with others and may be altered by new experiences and information. (8)

How Does Development Influence Attitude?

When discussing 'development' it is important to discuss Erikson's eight stages of personal maturity. Most psychology books cite his work. Fontana's book is no exception. Although each of the eight stages are not relevant to the age group in this study it is important that they are listed so that it can be seen where each stage evolves and where it leads.

- (1)Early Infancy : Trust vs Mistrust.
- (2)Late Infancy : Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt.
- (3)Early Childhood : Initiative vs Guilt.
- (4)Middle Childhood : Competence vs Inferiority.
- (5)Adolescence : Identity vs Role Confusion.
- (6)Early Adulthood : Intimacy vs Isolation.
- (7)Middle Adulthood : Generativity vs Stagnation.
- (8)Late Adulthood : Self Acceptance vs Despair. (9)

This study will relate only to Stage 4, 5 & 6 (mainly 5 & 6), These stages will be compared to the attitudes of students of a First year class and a Fifth year class at Mount Temple Comprehensive.

The first four stages "are a time for accumulating impressions and absorbing data, while the process of developing value judgements is continuous, it is relatively flexible prior to the start of adolescence." (10)

Erikson suggests the adolescence is identity versus role confusion. This can be a stage of emotional turmoil and mixed feelings, adolescence brings about

behavioural problems and at times attitude is negative.

At this age youngsters begin to realise their unhappy position to take any particular action to change their circumstances. These youngsters are hostile towards their parents, disillusioned with school, and at times discouraged with themselves. It is not surprising therefore, to find that they are critical of their own art products. (11)

This relates directly to the first years who are at this stage. Many lack confidence; their search for self identity plays a large factor on their attitudes in class. It would seem that they require encouragement and motivation at all times to give them stability.

To this age group art is a subject taught under different circumstances than as in their primary school experiences. Art is a subject within its own right, a subject that is given a mark and gets a report. It is taken more seriously and this means that they have to conform.

This stage of development marks the end of art as a spontaneous activity and the beginning of a period of reasoning, when children become increasingly critical of their own products. For some this means a change from unconsciously drawing what is known to consciously relying upon what is seen. These attempts at naturalism indicate the shift to adult modes of expression. (12)

At this stage the development of self identity is expressed through a self-conscious approach to life. "They are concerned about how they look, how they dress, what they say, and particularly about how they appear to others." (13)

This apparent need to impress others can be a main factor in encouraging negative attitudes. Impressing one's peers often involves 'showing off' or boasting. This may involve problems with behaviour in the classroom, causing disruption and further discipline problems. Friction between the student and the teacher caused in this way can result in more negative student behaviour : this does not help remedy their negative attitude problem.

One of the main contributing factors to these problems arises from poor self esteem. A lack of self esteem generally occurs during adolescence.

Self Esteem

One of the most exciting discoveries in educational psychology in recent times has been finding that peoples levels of achievement are influenced by how they feel about themselves. A vast body of research evidence has accumulated showing a positive correlation between self esteem and achievement, and with regard to self esteem and scholastic achievement in particular. (14)

This shows that self esteem corresponds with achievement levels and is therefore a direct link to attitude. Self esteem is basically the degree of confidence the person possesses; if a person has a lot of confidence they have a high self esteem and their achievement levels will be of a high standard, they will excel in a classroom situation, both with their work and fellow students. If they achieve well in class and are praised they will gain self esteem and they will gain a positive attitude towards the subject.

The child with high self-esteem is likely to be confident in social situations and in tackling scholastic work.....The child with low self-esteem in contrast, will lack confidence in his/ her ability to succeed. Consequently she / he might try to avoid situations which he / she sees potentially personally humiliating. (15)

A large part of self esteem can be gained from encouragement and appraisal at home. If this is lacking, it is important that it is present in school. A teacher may play a large role in the self esteem of a student. Constructive criticism is preferred to only negative feedback, as is encouragement and motivation. Motivation can create a healthy atmosphere in the classroom - all students will benefit. It is therefore up to the teacher to provide this motivation - for the benefit of her / himself as well as the students.

Attitudes can change, this is a positive thought, particularly for teachers. This change again can be brought about by motivation. At first their behaviour may change and then their attitude.

Fontana suggests a number of points that the teacher needs to keep in mind when thinking about shaping children's attitudes :

Children's attitudes towards a particular activity benefit from seeing that activity performed. Children's attitudes also benefit from the example set by the teacher, particularly in matters of social conduct. (16)

..... and of course to be enthusiastic and encouraging.

Davies believes that attitudes, once developed can be difficult to change - but not impossible. "For example, we may change a long held unfavourable

attitude towards specific people if we begin to see thm in different
circumstances.” (17)

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 1

1. David Fontana, "Personality : Attitudes", in Psychology For Teachers, ed. The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1993. p.204.
2. Roger Davies et al, "Attitudes" in Mastering Psychology, ed. The Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1991. p.49.
3. Ibid.
4. Fontana, Psychology For Teachers p. 198.
5. Walter Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior School ed. The National Art Education Association, Virginia. p.17.
6. Barbara Calvert, The Role Of The Pupil, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, 1975. p.18.
7. Fontana, Psychology For Teachers p.208.
8. Davies, Mastering Psychology, p.54.
9. Fontana , Psychology For Teachers, p.244.
10. Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior School, p.24.
11. Victor Lawrence & W. Lambert Brittain, Creative And Mental Growth (Eighth Edition), ed. Macmillan Publishing Company, New York. 1987. p.349-350.
12. Ibid. p.392.
13. Ibid.
14. Denis Lawrence, Enhancing Self Esteem In The Classroom, ed. Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., London, 1988. p.xi.
15. Ibid. p.6.
16. Fontana, Psychology For Teachers, p.208.
17. Davies, Mastering Psychology , p.56.

CHAPTER II

Personal Observations Of Changing Attitudes Towards Art Throughout The Year Groups.

From my experience of teaching to date, I have noticed how attitudes towards art as a subject differs between the year groups. In the following brief investigation, I will look at the attitudes of students in different year groups examining how they relate to development and self esteem. I will also explore how the general education system and the school itself may influence certain factors. Factors that may influence student attitude to art include the parental or home attitude towards art. Parents who recognise art as a 'worth while' subject may influence their child's opinion. There is some evidence to suggest that first year pupils who choose (or do not choose) art as a subject have been influenced by parental perception of the 'usefulness' or otherwise of art. At a recent first year parent / teacher meeting it was noted that not all parents met with the art department, although all parents did attend. In relation to the Questionnaire that was completed by the first year students, it would seem that parents of those who have a keen interest in art were the ones that met with the department and were genuinely interested in their child's ability and behaviour.

If a child does have talent but it is not recognised by the parents and therefore not encouraged this may lead to a child having a lack of confidence that may in turn lead to a negative attitude towards art as a subject.

Other factors may have arisen from Primary school experiences. If teachers did not give art as a regular subject, but only as a treat or a way out of teaching on a Friday afternoon, the child might not have a positive concept of art. The attitudes and competence of the primary school teacher (ie if they do not feel that they have the ability to teach it) may mean that children are left to do 'some drawing' on their own : art education is not included in the teacher's planned curriculum ; there is no attempt to teach and develop topic skills of drawing, for example . Children may enjoy the quietness and freedom but may not acquire skills that enable them to build their confidence in artistic endeavor.

Attitudes will also be affected by pupils' experience in secondary school. The school that does not encourage art as a subject, the art teacher who is not motivating, the art department which is not adequately funded and has poor facilities will significantly influence student attitude towards art.

Student attitudes may also be affected by human, physical changes in adolescence. The need to impress peers who may think art is not 'macho' may affect individual students.

This adolescent stage can be quite stressful on first year students. They have come from the cosy environment of their primary schools - where they were the oldest and the seniors ; they knew all of their 'class - mates' and probably had a certain degree of confidence. Now they are in an unfamiliar environment,

everyone is bigger and older, they are the juniors, their friends are new and they may for a short time lack the confidence they previously possessed. This may result in a negative attitude to many subjects (not just art) as the student tries to adjust.

Walter Hathaway says of this stage :

The adolescent's physical abilities have an important bearing upon his self concept, the role he plays in relation to others, and his view to life itself. Due to rapid and uneven growth, many students are temporarily awkward and clumsy, requiring spacious accommodations. Working in crowded classrooms can be very embarrassing for self conscious students; it may hamper their art production and of more consequence, create an emotional instability. (1)

These adolescent attitudes are probably going to change within a year or two as confidence and self esteem are regained. However this does not necessarily mean that they will all suddenly enjoy and excel in art, or that their attitudes to the 'worth' of art be altered. Different attitudes arise during a child's development. Generally social influences play a large part on certain attitudes. Art may be viewed as an easy subject option or may be taken as a subject due to restrictions of timetable banding. The student who is not academically able or may be advised to take it. For these reasons a student's attitude can be quite destructive and result in clashes with teachers and a lack of motivation and commitment.

Teaching a Transition year class can also present the teacher with a variety of attitudes towards art. Art may be timetabled in blocks that are compulsory for

all students - even those who have no experience in art. Transition year students can approach many subjects with a negative attitude for this year only as they know that they will not be examined at the end of the year and may not have to carry these subjects on afterwards. For example one particular transition year group had to take art on for a ten week block. None of them had done any art since primary school and had no desire to take it on now. They entered the art room with very negative attitudes and showed little interest in the project that was introduced. The following weeks were taken up by the teacher trying to persuade them to do the tasks set. Many different approaches were tried in vain, the group were not willing to try, as they found it pointless.

One of the main reasons why their attitudes may not be positive may be because they are not talented in the area and may lack experience. They may feel uneasy and inadequate for such a subject and may also be unsure and out of their depth if asked to participate in something unfamiliar. This can cause embarrassment and frustration and therefore their reaction may be destructive.

In these circumstances negative questions may arise such as : What is the point of doing art? This may be asked by a student who does not see the value of art, craft and design. They have been influenced by society to believe it is purely aesthetic and non-practical. They have only experienced negative views of art - possibly from their upbringing - family and school.

Hathaway attributes much of this negativity to the media :

The entertainment media, the plastic age, and the 'discount store society' in which we live have made teenagers more critical of art. Typical questions from students are : "What good is it?" and "Why do it?". The need for practical purpose and the need to have 'fun', predominate. In essence students do not see the relationship of art to daily living. Many go through good art programs without the lack of understanding ever changing. (2)

The fact that art was compulsory for the first years in this study and optional for fifth years showed that there was an obvious reason for a change in attitudes throughout the yeargroups. Negative attitudes tend to reduce as you move through the year groups this excludes transition year where there is evidence of negative attitudes, as previously discussed. It would appear that those with negative attitudes 'drop out' at an early stage and never get the chance to mature in the subject and develop their talents and craft skills.

The school : Mount Temple Comprehensive

This investigation was carried out in Mount Temple Comprehensive, one of Dublin's few integrated schools.

The school itself has a good reputation of which it is proud. Just over twenty years old, the school evolved as a result of three schools merging, bringing together students of different social and religious backgrounds.

The ethos of the school shows that parent, teacher and student co-operation is

vital in the smooth running of the school. The school has a code of discipline that is followed closely. Its aims are to ensure :

- (i) The efficient operation of a worthwhile, effective and stimulating learning programme for all pupils.
- (ii) The fostering of self discipline and training in good behavioural patterns.
- (iii) The encouragement of personal responsibility.
- (iv) The maintenance of good order throughout the school and respect for the environment.
- (v) The involvement and co-operation of parents/ guardians in supporting the code and the operation it sanctions.
- (vi) The understanding and acceptance of the rules governing behaviour within the school. (3)

The students are clearly proud of their school which encourages extra curricular involvement for both students and teachers, particularly within sports, as they believe team work plays an important role in a child's development.

The school would appear to be quite liberal in that the students do not wear a uniform. The school recognises that uniform is not necessary in a student's education however, there are limitations and a dress code is followed.

School trips and outings are encouraged within the various departments and as discipline does not prove to be a problem all students are persuaded to attend.

The parents are also encouraged to take part in their child's education and are continually updated on their child's ability - through regular assessment cards, examination reports and parent, teacher meetings.

Concerning art within the school, there does not appear to be a problem. The school has two art rooms and two art teachers, Student art teachers are welcomed every year and there was at one time an artist in residence. Both the Principle and the staff show an interest in art. The department is reasonably well funded and offers a selection of crafts. In conjunction with the art department, the library has a separate fund for art books at the beginning of each school year.

Every year a large number of students take art at both Junior Certificate level and Leaving Certificate level, and in general there are few negative attitudes towards art.

The Classes Under Study :
First Year And Fifth Year Groups

There are five first year groups taking art in the school, they are not streamed and each consists of students of mixed ability. The particular group under investigation consists of students of mixed ability and mixed attitudes. At the beginning of the year they entered the art room quite excited and some were quite hyper-active. Some were keen to do art others were more interested in socialising and abusing materials. It took them a considerable length of time to settle down and appreciate art as a subject. The results of the questionnaire prove that there are a variety of attitudes towards art at this age and also show

possible reasons for these attitudes.

In comparison the fifth year class look at it much more positively. The school has two fifth year art classes, the particular class under observation are of mixed ability and many are keen to take art to third level. The results of their questionnaires prove that attitudes do improve towards art as you move up through the year groups. Most view art positively although at this stage modesty of their own ability can be dominant.

FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER II

- (1)Walter Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior School, (The National Art Association, Virginia, no date). p.17.
- (2)Ibid., p.56
- (3)Elspeth Henderson, Mount Temple Comprehensive Teachers Handbook, (Mount Temple Comprehensive, Dublin, 1996). p.15.

CHAPTER III

The Outcome Of This Study: The Questionnaire.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to develop an understanding of how and why certain attitudes may exist. The questionnaire was given to all students in the first year class and all students in the fifth year class. Many of the questions required only yes or no answers and have been compiled in a bar chart format to enable both classes to be compared to each other.

The questionnaire asks a variety of questions on the student's art background. It tries to show which students have had encouragement from their home life and primary school and if in relation to this their attitudes have been affected.

It was important when designing my questionnaire to make it relevant to my research purposes and yet appropriate for the pupils to whom it would be administered. I opted to administer the questionnaire 'in situ' to enable me to interact with the respondents and explain what was expected.

My questionnaire was specifically designed to obtain both quantitative and qualitative information. I needed to be able to analyse some aspects of my research statistically yet I also wanted to collect qualitative information which would allow me to gather opinions of both the students own perceptions of their abilities and also their reaction to art as a subject for study and enjoyment. Hence

questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 8 and 9 tend to be quantitative while the remainder are qualitative by design. Each type of information gave me the information I required and while I have presented all the information in bar charts, the qualitative responses required further consideration. I kept all my questions as simple as possible attempting to keep them clear, concise and unambiguous, however, I found that question 15 needed further explanation especially with the first form to ensure they understood exactly what I meant by “pieces of art”. This was one of the advantages of carrying out the questionnaire ‘in situ’.

I used a combination of open and closed questions and took care not to influence the pupils’ attitudes towards the study by reassuring them that they would not be penalised for honesting.

I reinforced my research by utilising observation and interviews with the parents in addition to my questionnaire.

21
QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME _____ CLASS _____

- (1) Did you do art in primary school? Yes/No
- (2) Did you do it once a week? Yes/No/More/Less
- (3) What type of things do you remember doing?
- (4) Do you think you are good at art? Yes/No
- (5) Why?
- (6) Do you enjoy art? Yes/No
- (7) Why?
- (8) Would you be interested in continuing with art?
(If 1st Year) eg. Would you take it at Junior/Leaving Certificate level?

(If 5th Year) eg. Would you be interested in taking it to Third level/career ?
- (9) Have you ever been to a gallery or an exhibition? Yes/No
- (10) Where did you go?
- (11) Who did you go with?
- (12) Did you enjoy it?
- (13) Do you have a favourite artist?
- (14) Who is it?
- (15) Do you have any pieces of art at home? (sculpture, paintings, prints, embroidery etc.)

Figure 1

Did you do art in primary school?

The bar chart on page 22 shows the fifth years in red and the first years in green. Quite a high percentage of both years seem to have done art during their time at primary school. It was however surprising to see that two fifth years and one first year have no recollection of doing any art during primary school. (When studying the rest of their questionnaires this appears to have no correlation to negative attitudes).

Figure 2

Did you do it once a week?

This response may have more of a bearing on student attitudes, most seemed to have done it once a week, some more and some less. The questionnaires which showed that the pupils did art more than once a week also showed positive attitude towards art throughout the remainder of the questionnaire whereas those who seem not to have done art as often, do not share the same positive attitudes. This tends to suggest that the primary school teacher has influenced in either a positive or negative way, the pupils attitude to art.

Figure 3

What type of things do you remember doing?

Although both years seem to have covered a variety of art related tasks /

experiences in primary school, there is still a large number in both first and fifth year who only did drawing or painting. This would suggest that their primary school teachers did not have the ability or 'know how' to be more creative.

Figure 4

Do you think you are good at art?

A high percentage of fifth years feel that they are good at art in comparison to the percentage of first years. Confidence tends to increase when art has been chosen as a subject rather than being compulsory, however, it must also be acknowledged that at this stage in their life, fifth year have become quite modest and in reality many more of them are good at art than admitted it but do not want 'class mates' to think of them as 'big headed'. This could be the reason for such a high percentage denying their ability or claiming to be unsure.

The first years seem to have a high percentage of students who do not feel they are good at art. The overall impression gained from their questionnaires suggests that they do not receive encouragement at home and in general have quite negative attitudes towards art.

Figure 5

Do you enjoy art?

From looking at the results of this question it would appear that the majority of

students in both years enjoy art and therefore the attitudes are positive, however, a student may enjoy art because of the casual atmosphere which is associated with the subject rather than because of a natural love of it. It is difficult to say why so many first year students claim to enjoy art on the questionnaire, when their classroom behaviour does not reflect this. It may be that they enjoy doing a practical subject and enjoy being able to chat in class. Hathaway suggests that at this stage their behaviour fluctuates : “Today he may like art ; tomorrow he may dislike it. One day he is aggressive, and he displays leadership ; another day he is retiring and timid.” (1)

Figure 6

Would you be interested in continuing with art?

It was pleasing to see that such a high percentage in both years are interested in continuing with art. For first years it is too much to ask, if they are interested in persuing art as a career or developing it to tertiary level, as at this stage, for many of them, it is too soon to know. However the majority of fifth years seem quite set on taking art to a higher level. The school has given them support throughout their years studying art and in general most of these students have been exposed to positive attitudes towards art. To them art appears as a ‘worth while’ subject.

The first years are half way through the school year and have by now recieved a certain amount of art tuition and experience within the school that may have

enhanced their understanding of the subject. Their experiences may have improved from their primary school and from classroom observation many of those who disliked art in the beginning of the school year appear to be more enthusiastic now. Due to the school's art facilities and attitude to art they may by now be viewing art differently. During interviews at a recent parent, teacher meeting it was also clear that many of the parents are keen for their children to follow their talents (although some parents did talk quite negatively about their child's ability to draw and had not considered whether their child should pursue the subject any longer than they had to. I felt that their negative attitudes may have been a result of their ignorance towards art as a subject.) It should be noted that many of the first years' attitudes have become more positive since the beginning of the school year. This may be due to them having settled into their new school and with their new friends.

Figure 7

Have you ever been to a gallery or an exhibition?

&

Figure 8

Did you enjoy it?

All the fifth years have visited a gallery or an exhibition. Everyone had visited a gallery with the school, as this is one of the requirements of the Leaving Certificate. It would then seem unfair to compare them to the first years,

however, one of the following questions asked where they went and who they went with. Most fifth years have visited more than one gallery, not only in Dublin but elsewhere around the world. They went with family, with friends and some went on their own. This latter shows a love of art and a need to be exposed to as much as possible. Family support, in many cases was encouraging and it seems obvious that this accounts for so many positive attitudes at this stage. All fifth years claim to have enjoyed their visits to the galleries.

It was good to see that many of the first years had experienced visits to galleries, particularly as they were accompanied by enthusiastic parents. This shows that encouragement at home is quite strong concerning art. However unlike the fifth years not all of them enjoyed it. At their age they may not yet appreciate such places as galleries and although they may enjoy the art they do themselves, they may feel intimidated by the works of professional artists.

Figure 9

Do you have a favourite artist?

Although more fifth years had a favourite artist than first years, it was surprising to see that such a low percentage of the fifth years had one. During their sixth year in school they may discover an artist that they love as they become more exposed to artists through their History of Art classes. At this stage many have only been introduced to a limited number of artists and

movements and may not have liked anyone in particular. Those who did say yes show an awareness of artists outside of their History of art syllabus, this would suggest that to them art exists outside of the classroom.

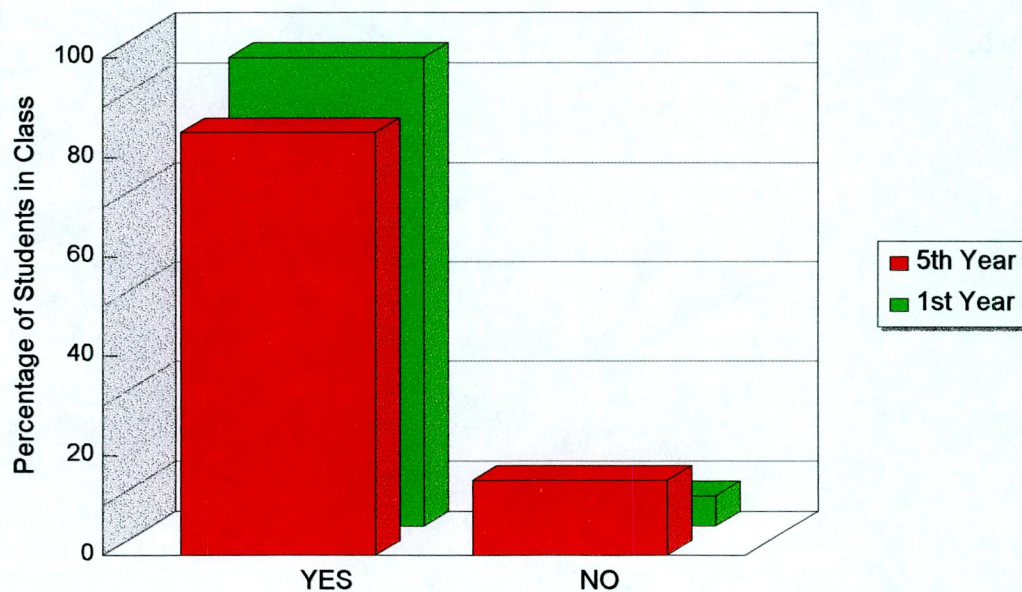
Only a small percentage of first years have a favourite artist and in most cases it was van Gogh. They have not been exposed to the same number of artists as the fifth years and therefore it is understandable why many do not have a favourite artist.

Figure 10

Do you have any pieces of art at home?

The majority of both years seem to have paintings and prints in their homes, some also claim to have sculptures and embroideries. This suggests that most students are exposed to a certain amount of art outside of school. The school in general seems to consist of middle class families, who can afford to have such luxuries in their homes. Families such as these may themselves have had positive experiences towards art and can therefore give encouragement.

Did you do Art in Primary School?

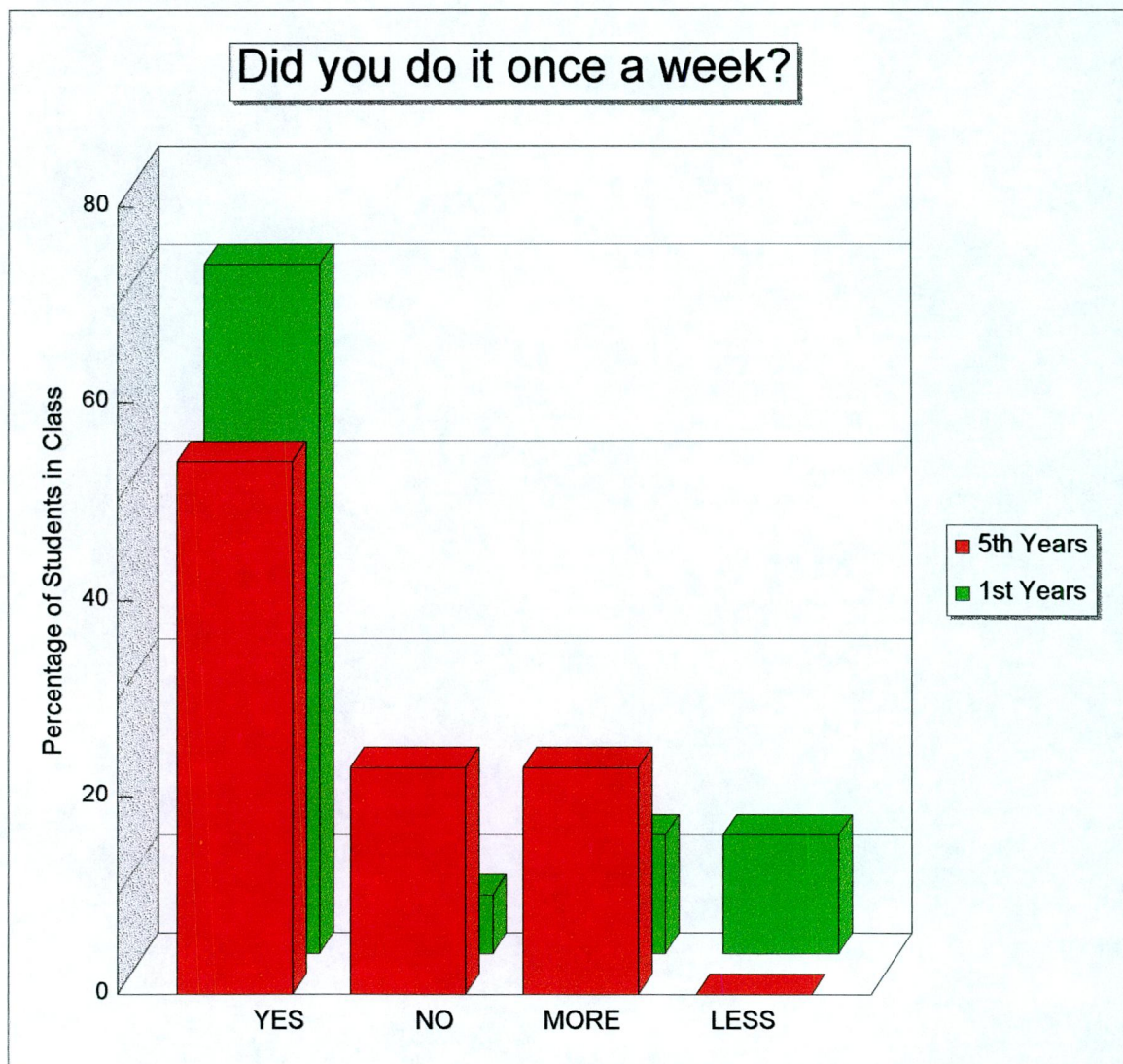


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	11	85%
No	2	15%
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	16	94%
No	1	6%
Total	17	100%



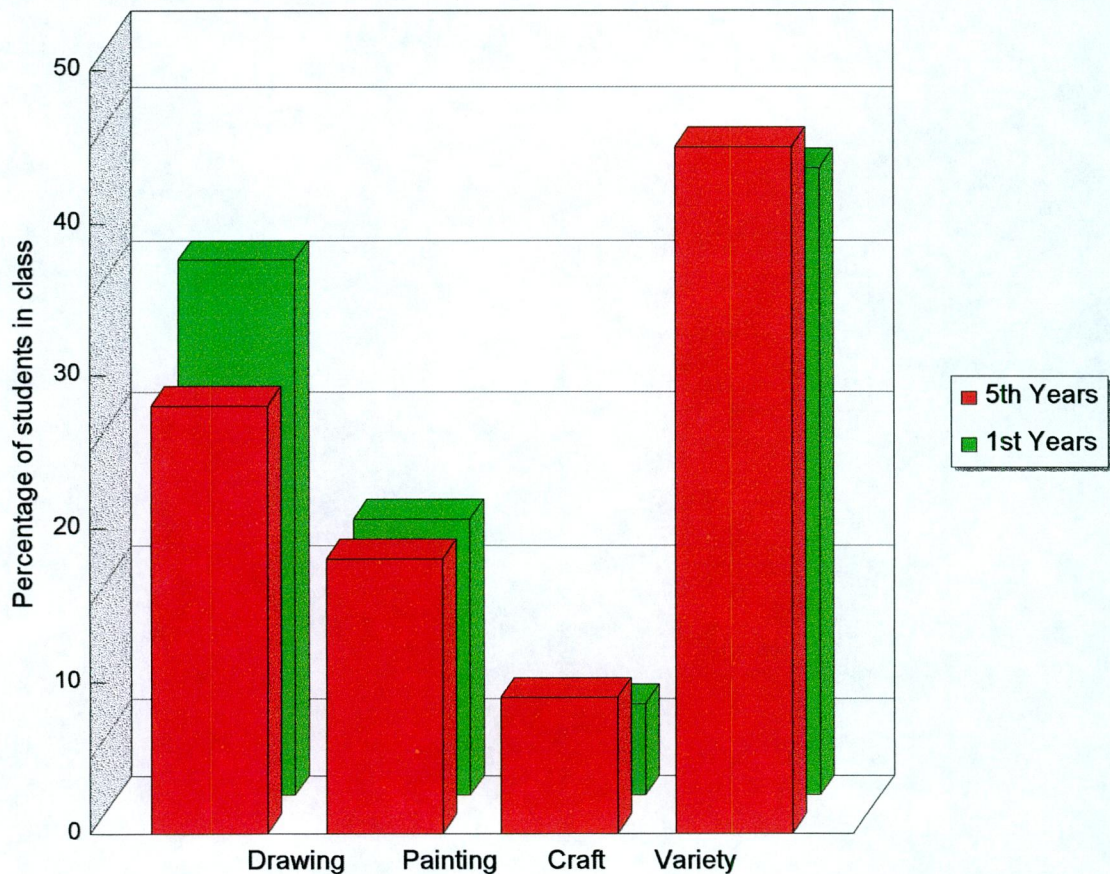
5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	7	54%
No	3	23%
More	3	23%
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	12	70%
No	1	6%
More	2	12%
Less	2	12%
Total	17	100%

What type of things do you remember doing?

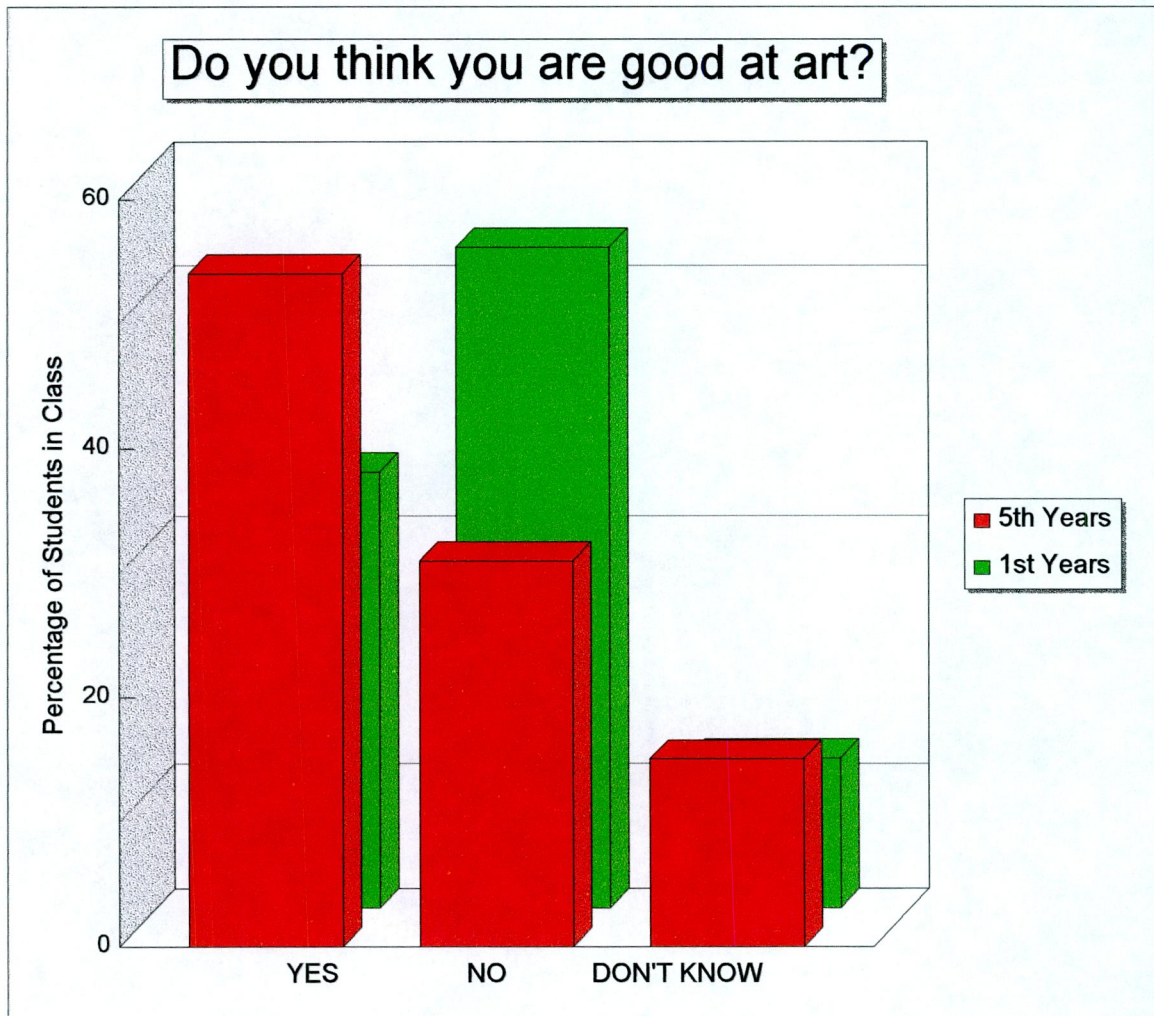


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Drawing	3	28%
Painting	2	18%
Craft	1	9%
Variety	5	45%
Total	11	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Drawing	6	35%
Painting	3	18%
Craft	1	6%
Variety	7	41%
Total	17	100%

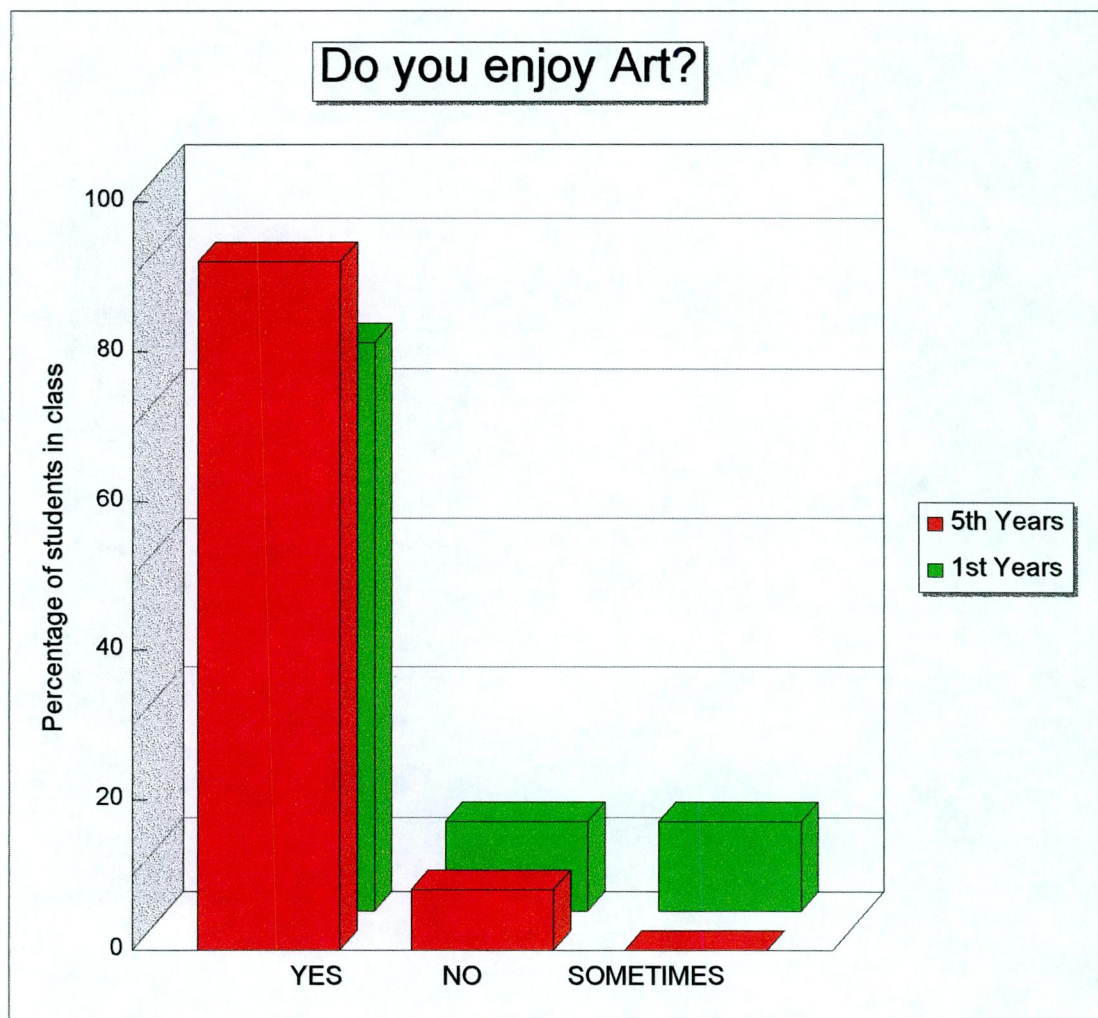


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	7	54%
No	4	31%
Don't Know	2	15%
Total	13	100%

1st Years

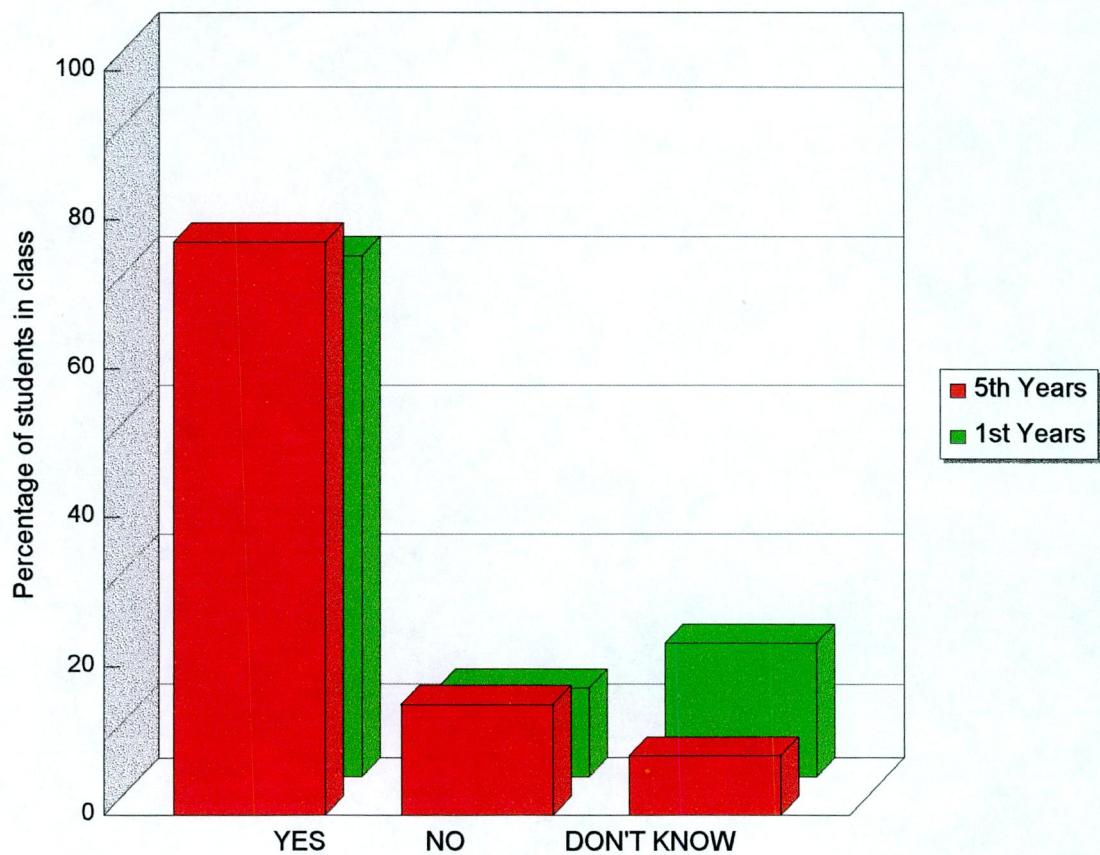
Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	6	35%
No	9	53%
Don't Know	2	12%
Total	17	100%



5th Years	Answer	Total No.	Percentage
	Yes	12	92%
	No	1	8%
	Total	13	100%

1st Years	Answer	Total No.	Percentage
	Yes	13	76%
	No	2	12%
	Sometimes	2	12%
	Total	17	100%

Would you be interested in continuing with Art?



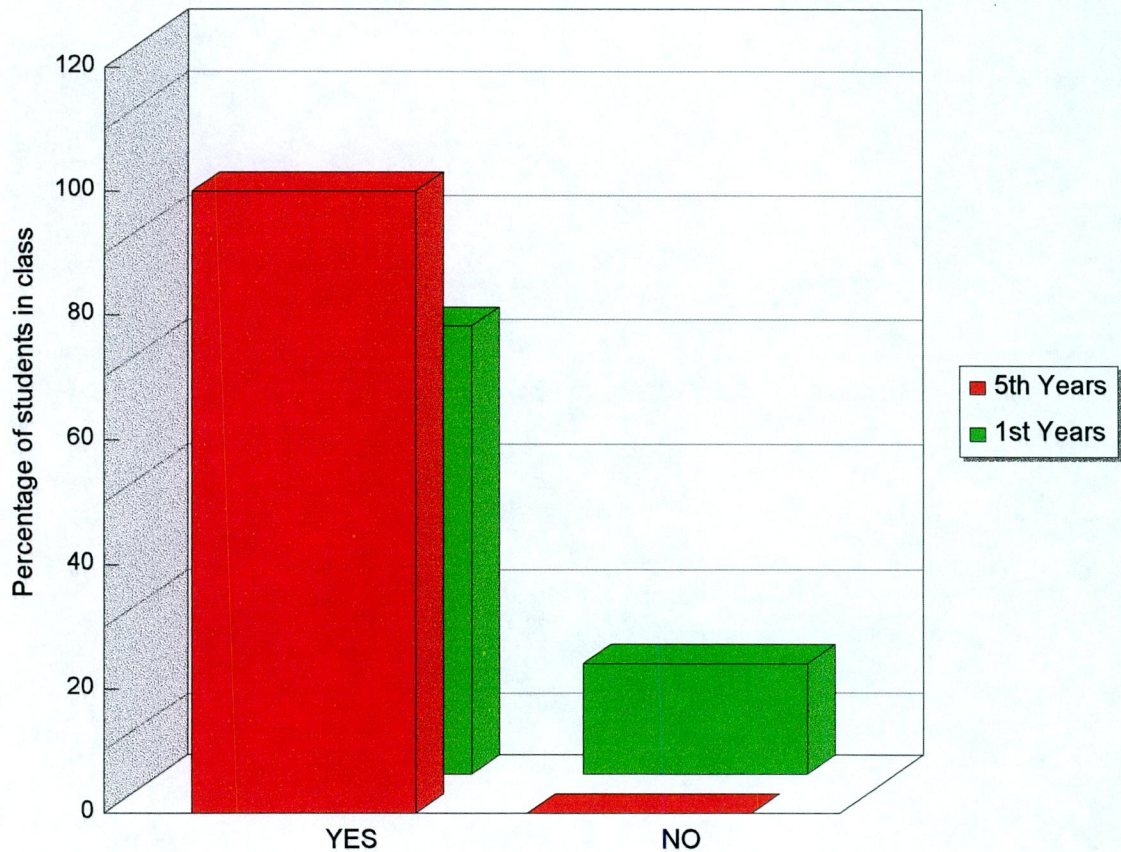
5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	10	77%
No	2	15%
Don't Know	1	8%
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	12	70%
No	2	12%
Don't Know	3	18%
Total	17	100%

Have you ever been to a gallery or an exhibition?

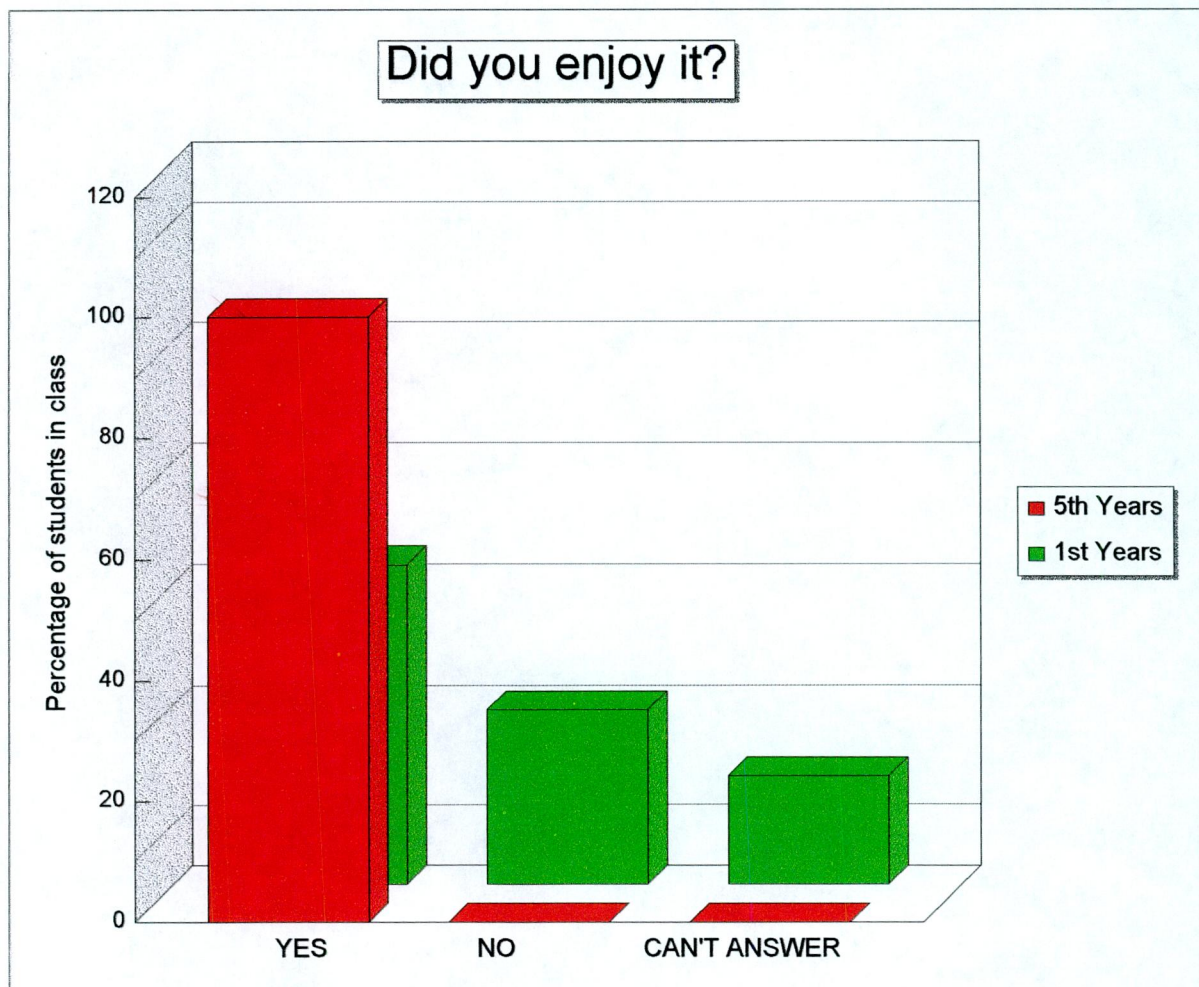


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	13	100%
No	-	-
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	14	72%
No	3	18%
Total	17	100%

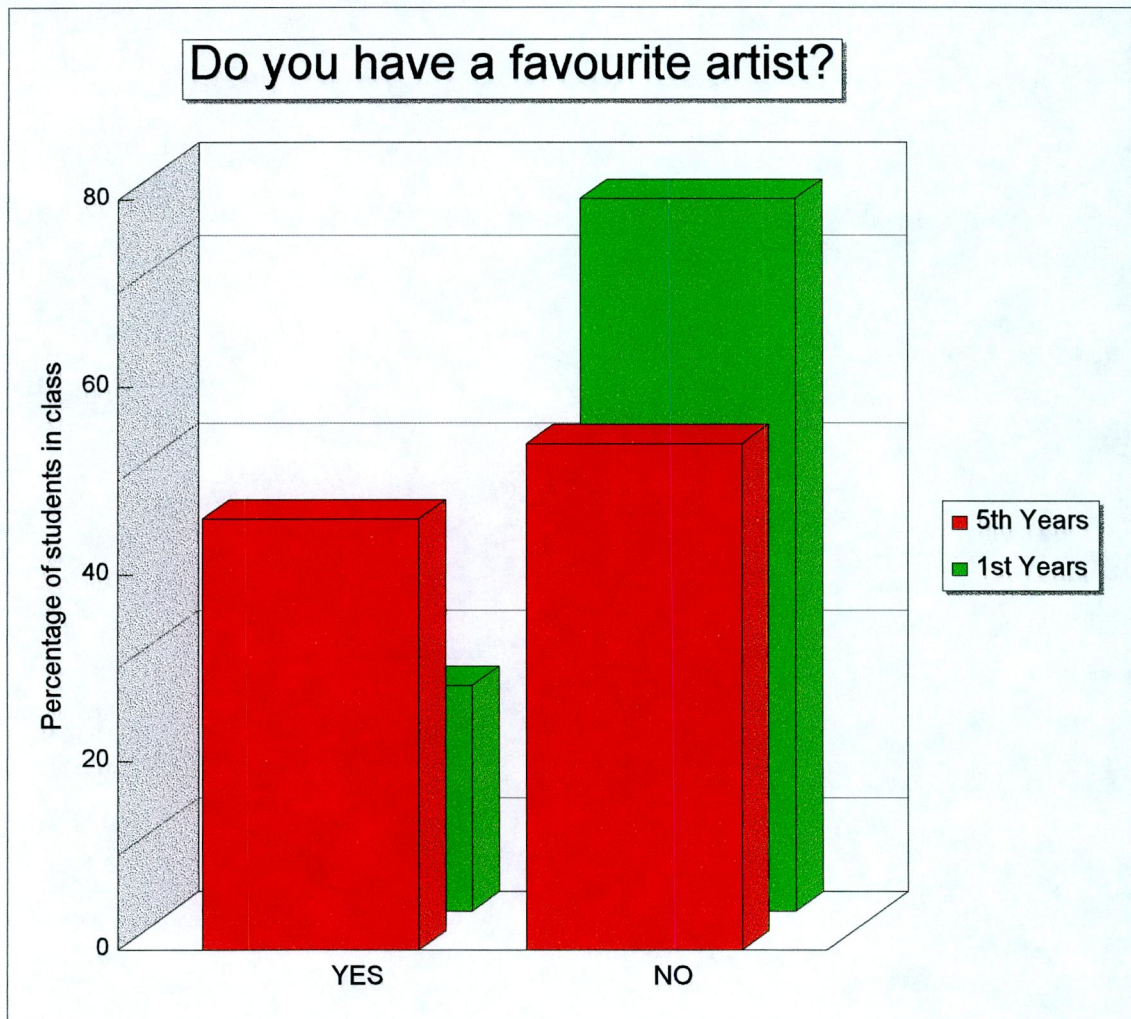


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	13	100%
No	-	-
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	9	53%
No	5	29%
Can't Answer	3	18%
Total	17	100%

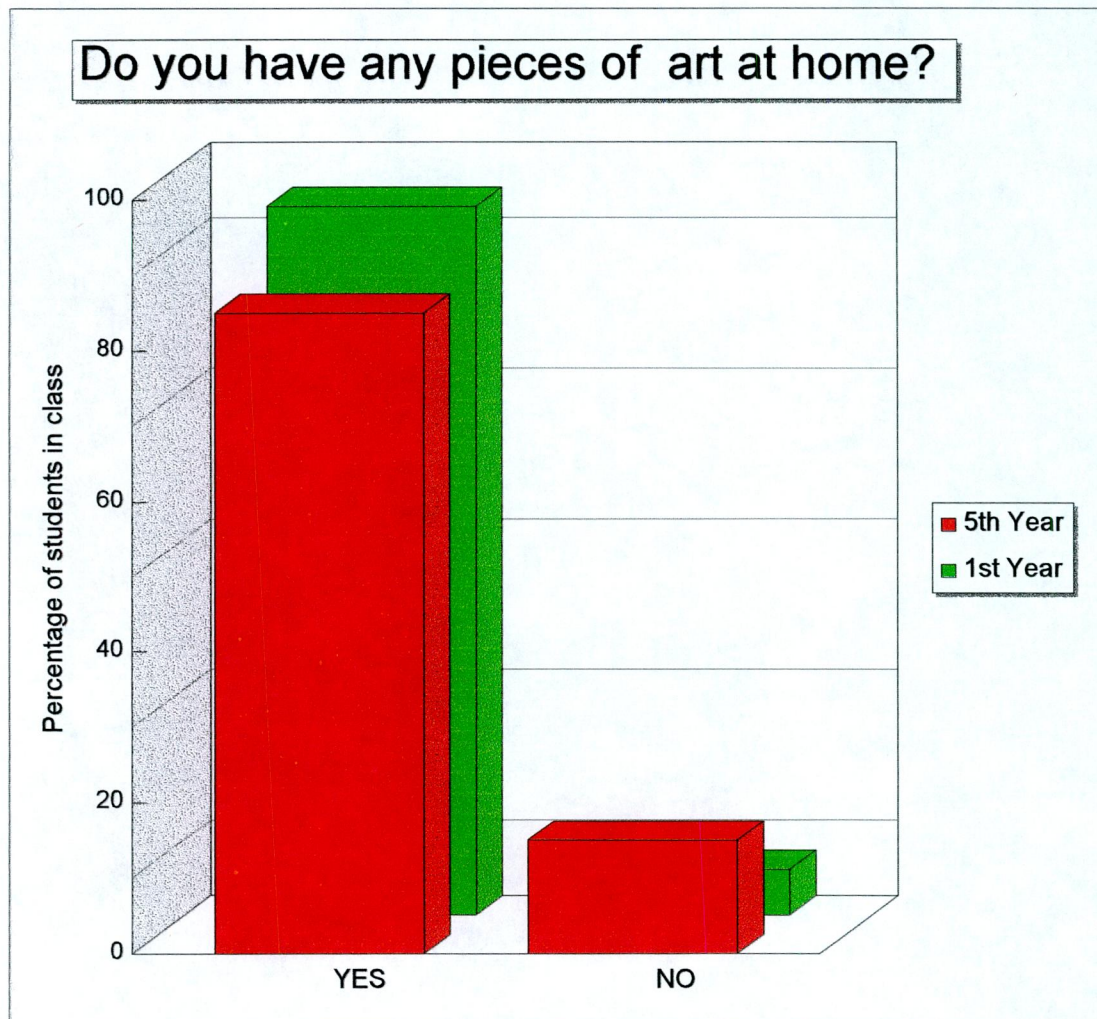


5th Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	6	46%
No	7	54%
Total	13	100%

1st Years

Answer	Total No.	Percentage
Yes	4	24%
No	13	76%
Total	17	100%



5th Years	Answer	Total No.	Percentage
	Yes	11	85%
	No	2	15%
	Total	13	100%

1st Years	Answer	Total No.	Percentage
	Yes	16	94%
	No	1	6%
	Total	17	100%

Assessing Attitudes In Relation To The Results Of The Study

A study of the results of the questionnaires shows that almost all fifth years have a positive attitude towards art. They enjoy art and most want to continue with it to tertiary level.

A few first years have negative attitudes towards art and some appear to have mixed feelings. However in general this first year class do not have a dominant negative attitude. The few that are negative do not wish to continue with art, nor are they interested in what art has to offer, it would seem from both their questionnaires and the absences of their parents at their parent, teacher meeting that they have never been given a positive attitude towards art :

A natural love for art for its own sake on the part of the students of this age bracket seems to have diminished. Students are not only more critical of the process of art work but the product also. They appear to have been programmed by society, family, friends and school, for instant results ; and they know neither the pain nor the joy which results from hard, conscientious effort, struggle and even mistakes. (2)

Many of the first years' attitudes seem already to be changing. This may be the influence of school's attitude. It may also be affected by being exposed to more crafts than in their primary schools. Those whose attitudes have not altered may be explained by the absence of encouragement by their parents.

The fifth years are more positive. However, in general in the school's attitudes to art are positive. A comparison with groups of similar age in different schools

would be interesting.

First Years Work In Comparison To Questionnaire

To assess the attitudes of the first years it would seem appropriate to categorise them into groups of good, medium and poor ability as I percieve them. This can be done under the three components - Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural.

Both their questionnaires and their class work should be taken into consideration, and should show if those with poor ability have negative attitudes in comparison to those with a good ability.

Students will be numbered in alphabetical order rather than named.

STUDENT NUMBER	COGNITIVE	AFFECTIVE	BEHAVIOURAL
1	M	M	M
2	G	G	G
3	M	M	G
4	M	M	M
5	G	G	G
6	G	G	G
7	G	G	G
8	G	G	G
9	M	M	M
10	M	M	M
11	P	P	P
12	M	M	G
13	M	M	G
14	M	M	G
15	P	P	P
16	P	P	P
17	M	M	G

G = Good M = Medium P = Poor

The first year class are of mixed ability, 29% are of good ability, 53% are of medium ability and 18% are of poor ability. Those with good ability work

hard in class and are keen to get their work done. The drawing skills are excellent for their age group as are their craft skills. They have positive attitudes towards art in their questionnaires and all seem to have encouragement at home and have had a positive experience in their primary schools.

Those of medium ability also tend to have quite positive attitudes towards art, except for a few who feel that they cannot draw. This negative attitude towards their own art could be a result of lack of interest in art in their primary school, although their questionnaires do not suggest that parents do not offer encouragement.

Those of poor ability have no interest in their class work and are falling behind the rest of the class, the work they have completed tends to be of a poor standard. Their questionnaires suggest that art was not given much time in primary school and also that parents do not offer a great deal of encouragement.

FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER III

(1) Walter Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior School , The National Art Education Association, Virginia. p.17

(2) Ibid. p.55

CHAPTER IV

The Education Systems Attitude Towards Art

Within the Irish system of Education the arts have traditionally been neglected still on the lines of that adopted in 1924 (1)

The above was a statement by Ciaran Benson in 1979, about the art curriculum in the Irish Education system. At this stage improvement had already been made, as crafts were introduced in 1971. Before this a small amount of drawing was offered to primary school children and unfortunately very little else concerning art. At this time art was not believed to have been of any value and it was more beneficial for children of this age to read, write and learn arithmetic.

Although this small addition of crafts to the art curriculum was introduced in 1971 there did not seem to be much improvement by 1985.

The appreciation, formulation and communication of meaning requires the use of symbols the symbol systems which dominate Irish Education are verbal and numerical. (2)

This description suggests a neglect of the arts. Even when provision was given it was generally only a narrow definition and was not clear on what constituted ability in art, and therefore it was difficult for the art teacher to fully understand what was required.

“The inadequate visual arts education in many primary schools is a matter of concern.” (3) Arts still had a low value within the curriculum and although it has not been recognised, still very little has been done about it.

In many cases art is admired by fellow subject teachers, still being seen as a natural talent but never valued as much as one of the 'academic' subjects.

Schools may use the art department for their own needs :

Art courses have been separated from the general curriculum and labelled "special" courses. Art courses have been required courses for students at various levels, they have been offered as elective courses for those students who had the time and desire to enrol..... Art courses have assumed the role of "serving" the school by the making of posters, floats, scenery and decoration. (4)

Attitudes towards art need to change within the education system and schools in order for student's attitudes to change. In recent years positive alterations have been made within the curriculum, when in 1992 the Junior Certificate was introduced. Art now included a variety of crafts and project based work involving a certain amount of drawing research and support studies, on a chosen theme. Student, teacher participation was emphasised and as a result art was taken more seriously.

In Britain attitudes towards art have already been given a chance to improve :

Art is one of those aspects of the curriculum which over the last 25 years have come nearest and most generally to happy revolution. In art the outcomes of learning are the same or are very similar to those outside education in the adult field of art, the crafts and design. There are known stages of performance there is often competition and often cooperation. Above all, the pupils at work in the art studio are major contributors not passive recipients : they carry responsibility.

Art now plays a serious role in the National Curriculum in Britain and is now

admired and valued as an equal subject. In the Irish Education system this chance has not been given, however, over the past few years more adjustments have been made and discussions of the arts in the curriculum are occurring. Hopefully this will promote art as a subject and attitudes in general will become more positive.

Art lacks full integration in the primary sector, mainly due to a lack of funding and ability among teachers. Not only does art need to be changed in the curriculum, teachers need a basic training and schools need adequate funding.

FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER IV

- (1) Ciaran Benson, The Place Of The Arts In Irish Education, The Arts Council, Dublin, 1979. p.23-24.
- (2) Curriculum and Examination Board, The Arts In Education, Dublin : C.E.B., 1985. p.6.
- (3) Ibid. p.17.
- (4) Walter Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior School , Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., London, 1988. p.53
- (5) Department Of Education And Science, Art In Education 11-16, Her Majesty's Statinary Office, London, 1983. p.iii

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

“The early years are a time for accumulating impressions and absorbing data, and while the process of developing value judgements is continuous, it is relatively flexible prior to the start of adolescence.” (1) These “early years” are the primary school years and are important in the development of a child.

Attitudes can develop at this stage as a response to these years. Visual awareness at the early and crucial stage of the primary school years plays a large part in the learning process. Pictures and objects are related to words and as a child cannot write yet, drawing acts as a form of communication. Art at this stage can also be a way of expressing ones self and the ability to draw should therefore be viewed highly. The teaching of art to a child is important

To teach art is to move the student with one's own moving response to life. It is to lead him, to feel - to care, to experience sensuously and deeply, and to be engaged with the world of art. It is to lead the student to the very heart of aesthetic experience so that he is not removed from it but is immerced in it. It is to inspire him to want to respond, to express, to create something new which in itself is a rich and vibrant thing. (2)

The role of the art teacher is challenging. It is not simply teaching the rules of drawing and painting but also the concerns engendering confidence and the promotion of self esteem. Negative attitudes towards art may cause difficulty when teaching ; the teacher's patience and perseverance are essential qualities. In order to persuade a class with negative attitudes, motivation is needed :

It is essential to expose Junior High students to greater depths in art, to provide depth of content, more media, and more vital motivation and visual stimuli. Offering too little usually results in learning lethargy. (3)

If motivation was not encouraged in the primary school years, negative attitudes may have developed and when they enter secondary school, these negative attitudes may become worse as they are also entering adolescence. This can be tough on the art teacher and will be important for the teacher to find “a rapport with the student, who is already becoming accutely conscious of his own individuality and potential.” (4)

Negative attitudes may be changed by building up self esteem and confidence of the students own ability of the subject.

The art teacher should help develop attitudes that build both esteem for self and esteem for art. The art program should further the ability to feel, to use the emotions ; and it should provide intellectual stimulation. It should help students gain respect for themselves as artists and respect for professional artists and the role they play in society. The art teacher must work with the will, the intellect, and the emotions of students, guiding them to realise that art involves a total person. (5)

Self esteem can be built up in a student who is not necessarily talented in art.

Confidence is greatly enhanced by competence. The rules of drawing and painting can be learned, although they may not be as ‘good’ as a naturally talented student, noticing improvement and recognition from the teacher will help promote self esteem.

In the Early Renaissance period apprenticeships in art were common and respected. Drawing was taught (generally to quite a high standard).

“Apprentices entering the system could be as young as seven or eight.” (6)

Perhaps even this small snippet of information along with examples of frescoes from this time may give encouragement.

Although it may be said that apprentices did not develop their own style and lacked imagination, it is also known that drawing skills can be learned even if creativity cannot. However, imagination may be enhanced when a student is surrounded by imaginative students and in an imaginative, relaxed atmosphere.

It is important for drawing skills to be developed as they can benefit many other subjects. Observational drawing can lead to accuracy, helping with measurement and design. Being visually aware enhances the imagination and may promote creative writing and understanding of literature. Drawing and imaginative skills are essential for most of the things surrounding us that we take for granted, ie furniture design, car design, interior design, wallpaper, cups, plates, magazine layouts, advertising and packaging.

If these things are taken into consideration it may promote art as a subject within the education system. Many view those with talents in the arts as low achievers in more academic subjects. They see it as a choice for those who do not excel in Math and Science. They should take into consideration that many of the

processes and skills used within art are similar to those academic subjects and also that in many cases an individual has talent in many areas.

Leonardo da Vinci was an extraordinary man. He epitomized the Renaissance ideal of the polymath artist, raconteur, musician, scientist, mathematician and engineer - a man of many talents with an insatiable curiosity and thirst for knowledge.” (7)

Although it is generally advised for many students to concentrate on the academic subjects they should be allowed to make their own decisions.

Art plays a vital role in the development of a child, particularly the very young. It is communication and self expression and should be valued as highly as any other subject.

The primary schools curriculum should be adjusted to allow art to play a bigger role. Primary teachers should be given the training and facilities to teach art to their classes. At this very young age children are hungry for education in every area and to be given the choice to practise an assortment of crafts along with observational painting and drawing will enhance positive attitudes, which are more than likely to stick at this early age and be carried on into secondary school.

It would therefore seem appropriate that art should be promoted in the primary school curriculum, even more so than in the secondary school curriculum. It is here that a foundation for attitudes towards art is acquired. If possible trips to

galleries, museums and places of historical interest should be introduced at a young age. The more visually aware a child is of the surrounding world the more they will appreciate art and develop a positive attitude.

FOOTNOTES : CHAPTER V

- (1) Walter Hathaway, Art Education : Middle / Junior High School , The National Art Education Association, Virginia. p.24.
- (2) Ibid. p.14.
- (3) Ibid. p.57.
- (4) Ibid. p.15.
- (5) Ibid. p.57.
- (6) Frederick Hartt, History of Italian Renaissance ,Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 1994. p.8.
- (7) Linda Doeser, The Life and Works Of Leonardo da Vinci , Paragon Book Service Ltd., Great Britain, 1994. p.5.

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