

Art, Craft & Design in English Primary Schools: Could Do Better



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I am also a South West Regional Network Coordinator for the Cambridge Primary Review Trust [CPRT] – see: <http://cprtrust.org.uk/>

In this presentation, drawing on recent research evidence, I will shed some light on the current reality of art, craft and design education in many English Primary Schools.

There is, without doubt, room for improvement....

National Society for Education in for Art and Design (NSEAD) Survey 2015-16

- **Research Question:** *In the last five years how has government policy impacted on art, craft and design education?*

1. Curriculum provision
2. Value given to the subject within the school community
3. Professional development opportunities
4. Well-being and workload

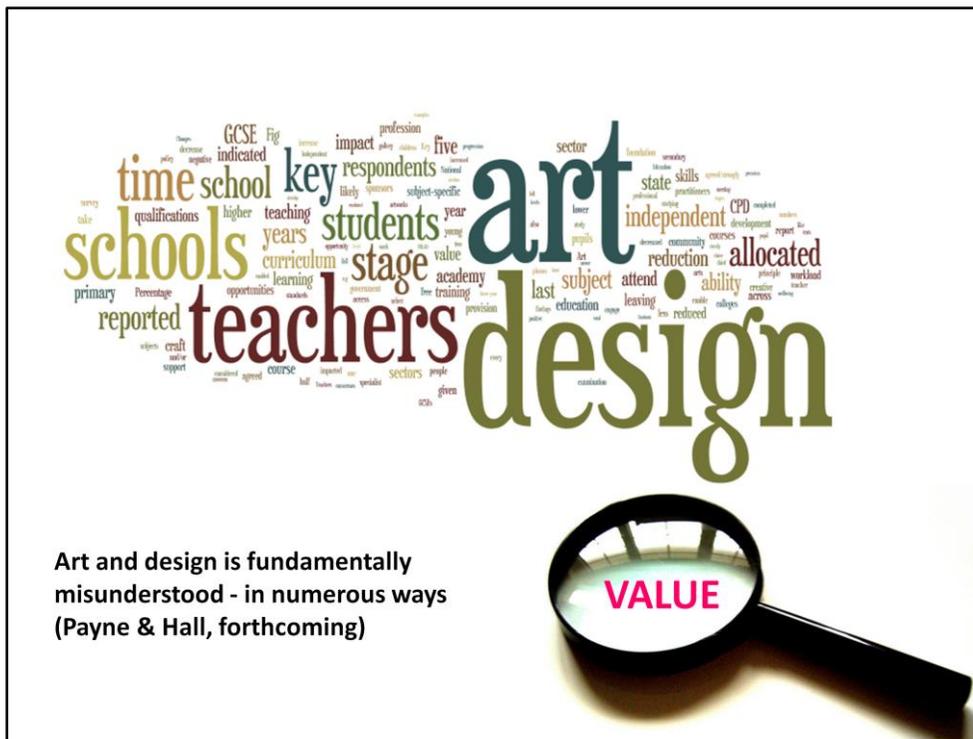
- **Respondents:** 1191 art and design teachers from early years, primary, secondary and further education
(238 primary teachers – approx. 20%)



I am also a Council and Forum Member of the National Society for Education in Art and Design [NSEAD]: ‘the leading national authority concerned with art, craft and design across all phases of education in the United Kingdom’.

See: <http://www.nsead.org/home/index.aspx>

This presentation makes particular reference to the NSEAD’s latest educator survey, the results of which are published in the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)* – available to download from: <http://www.nsead.org/downloads/survey.pdf>



This 'wordle' shows the key words found in the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)*.

Although some words appear larger, the word 'value' can be found at the heart of the cloud.

My colleague Dr Rachel Payne (Senior Lecturer in Art Education at Oxford Brookes University) and I have recently written a policy critique examining the value of art and design in primary and secondary schools, which highlights the negative impact of the government's neoliberal education agendas.

In short, the status of art and design in educational policy (and practice) needs raising.

Curriculum 2: The rest

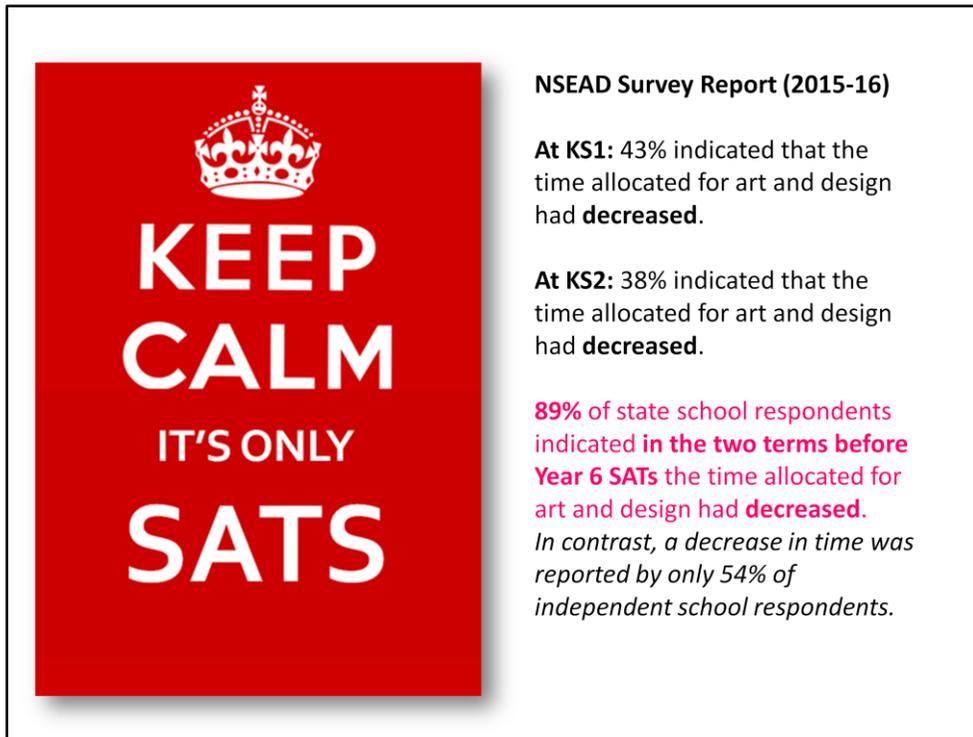
Assumptions...

- Low priority
 - **The notion of standards does not apply**
 - Provides a curriculum for 'enjoyment'
 - **Prepares children for relevant aspects of the secondary curriculum**
 - Likely to be merged within 'themes' or 'areas of learning', or taught through other subjects
 - **Is allocated little time, & this is not protected**
 - Pupil attainment is not tested, and sometimes not even assessed
 - **Low time/priority in initial training, or omitted**
 - Low priority in inspections, or ignored
 - **Minimal CPD provision**
 - **Specialist expertise is not required: anyone can do it**
- (Alexander, 2009, p. 242)

This slide is taken from the Cambridge Primary Review [CPR] Final Report and refers to all non-core subjects in the national curriculum – this is where art and design sits. It is essential that these assumptions are challenged.

It is notable that government policy focuses on preparation for the future (becoming) and is less concerned with children's actual being. This is evidence of the economic influence on education – creating a future workforce. Of course this is important, but education should also be valued for its intrinsic qualities, i.e., art education for art education's sake.

For information on the CPR Final Report see: <http://www.robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CPR-final-report-briefing.pdf>



NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)

At KS1: 43% indicated that the time allocated for art and design had **decreased**.

At KS2: 38% indicated that the time allocated for art and design had **decreased**.

89% of state school respondents indicated **in the two terms before Year 6 SATs** the time allocated for art and design had **decreased**.
In contrast, a decrease in time was reported by only 54% of independent school respondents.

The findings from the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)* indicate a worrying situation about the effect of SATs in primary schools. Respondents indicated that, over the last five years, time for art and design had decreased at both KS1 and KS2.

Moreover, building up to the SATs, it was reported that year 6 children are far less likely to have access to art and design lessons than other KS2 children and a sharp contrast exists between state and independent schools, highlighting equity issues.

The CPRT consistently challenges testing: <http://cprtrust.org.uk/?s=testing>

International Society for Education through Art [InSEA] Survey
(Milbrandt *et al.* 2013)

211 educators from a wide range of countries (2% from Britain)

- In elementary (primary) schools **43% of respondent stated there was at least 60 minutes of art each week.**

NSEAD Survey

- **43% of respondents stated that art lessons at KS2 occupy 60 minutes or less a fortnight.**

*Is art education provision (at KS2) in English primary schools **half** that given to children in other countries??*



Here are some observations about how art education in English primary schools seems to compare to that in other countries.

See: http://insea.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/InSEA_Survey_Report.pdf

Evidence from the research of Milbrandt *et al.* (2013), when compared to findings from the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)*, suggests the possibility that children aged 7-11 in English primary schools may be offered half as much time for art, craft and design in the curriculum as their international counterparts.

Although the data are not fully representative, this does raise concerns that warrant further investigation...



I argue that Nicky Morgan's comment about children's cultural entitlement makes about as much sense as Theresa May's definition of Brexit.

We know that the national curriculum is not a national curriculum at all, as due to the DfE's promotion of academies and free schools, not all schools have to adhere to it.

It is nonsensical to talk of the enriching power of the arts at the same time as advocating for a system in which the curriculum, testing and inspection regime heavily restricts this enriching power – as evident in the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)* findings.



“We are convinced that the artistic capabilities of children are much greater than many primary teachers realise” (Plowden Report, 1967: para 680)

However, despite policy pressures not all schools undervalue art and design education.

This is one example of a piece of high quality artwork made by a year 5 girl from St Leonard’s Primary School in Exeter - an outcome from their CPRT research project into ‘pupil voice and choice’. (For more information on the SW Research Schools Network see: [http://cprtrust.org.uk/networks/regional/south-west/.](http://cprtrust.org.uk/networks/regional/south-west/))

When children are allowed to take ownership of their learning in the arts, one can better see the extent of their knowledge, skills, understanding and interests.



Enriching Britain:
Culture, Creativity and Growth

The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission
on the Future of Cultural Value

Warwick Report (Neelands *et al.*, 2015) recommendation:

Ofsted inspectors need to see evidence of **excellent arts education** before awarding any school 'Outstanding'

My 2 provisos:

X *a sprinkling of excellent art lessons is unacceptable*

X *excellent music education, for example, does not make up for less than good art*

The *Warwick Report*, published in 2015, made the encouraging recommendation that no school should be awarded an 'outstanding' judgement by Ofsted unless its arts education is strong.

See:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture/finalreport/warwick_commission_report_2015.pdf

However, I would like to propose two caveats to this recommendation.

The standard of teaching and learning should be high in all arts subjects and, although we often talk of 'the arts' generically, each art form has its own unique contribution to children's learning.

...an additional argument is that children should have regular access to arts lessons within curriculum time – not as an optional 'add-on'.

NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16) Recommendations

Re. Ofsted:

- **Regular subject reports on art, craft and design education**
- **Specialist art, craft and design subject training for inspectors**
- **Revised inspection framework**



Arising from the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)* findings are three recommendations targeted at Ofsted, which are in harmony with the point made on the previous slide from the *Warwick Report*.

The NSEAD underlines a need for regular subject reports, specialist subject training for inspectors and changes to the current Ofsted inspection framework.

The most recent Ofsted subject report on art, craft and design education was published in 2012 and the one before that in 2009, so it is a great shame a new one was not published in 2015 to follow the 3 year cycle.

For 2012 Ofsted subject report, see:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413330/Making_a_mark_-_art_craft_and_design_education_2008-11.pdf

...and see below for 2009 report:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/10624/1/Drawing%20together.pdf>

What Makes Great Teaching?

(Coe *et al.* 2014)

Strong evidence of impact on student outcomes:

(Pedagogical) content knowledge [PCK]

The most effective teachers have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach...

Quality of instruction

...includes elements such as effective questioning and use of assessment by teachers... giving adequate time for practice to embed skills securely...



NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)

55% of primary subject coordinators rarely or never attend subject-specific CPD

It is useful to acknowledge the research evidence summarized in the Sutton Trust's report, *What Makes Great Teaching?* emphasizing what most enhances children's learning – see: <http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf>

Both class teachers and those with specialist knowledge can benefit from CPD opportunities, yet the *NSEAD Survey Report (2015-16)* found that more than half of primary art and design subject coordinators rarely or never attend art and design-focused training events.

Effective Primary Teaching Practice

5 Recommendations (Keeble, 2016, p.43)

3) More high-quality and rigorous **research** to investigate the areas of pedagogy where there are significant gaps. **The largest areas identified for attention were: effective teaching practices in the arts and music for achieving the best outcomes in those subjects...**

VALUE

It is encouraging that a very recent publication from the Teaching Schools Council, the *Effective Primary Teaching Practice* report (Keeble, 2016), calls for more research into arts education* – this shows the arts being valued for themselves and not just as vehicles for children’s cross-curricular learning.

See: <http://tscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Effective-primary-teaching-practice-2016-report-web.pdf>

It is hoped that this recommendation leads to dedicated funding for new research into high quality art, craft and design education in English primary schools.

(*I have some thoughts as to why music is mentioned separately to ‘the arts’ and will be writing about this elsewhere...)