

National College of Art and Design

Department of Design for Body and Environment & School of

Education

: Textile Surface Design

Assessing the Value of Extra Curricula Art Inside and Outside the

Classroom

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I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

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Introduction

This research paper presents the findings of a study carried out to explore and assess the value and benefits of extracurricular creative art inside and outside the classroom. One of the goals of formal secondary and tertiary education is to develop our young people into creative and innovative problem solvers. A cursory review of the second level curriculum shows that there are many relationships between art and other subjects such as Mathematics and even languages such as English and Irish. At college many students can benefit from the skills learned in art at secondary school to visually present their work at college in many programmes such as Business Studies, Product Design and even in Teacher's education itself.

The aim of this research sought to investigate the benefits that using the creative arts inside and outside of the school art curriculum can have on a student and their learning. It examined how art can help young people to develop and discover creativity, allow for new skills development such as communication, social and critical thinking. It also addresses how art is beneficial to the student in encouraging them to express and explore their own thoughts and feelings through a physical form.

This research paper draws on a wide range of sources including form primary and secondary material. Primary research was carried out using a questionnaire prepared and circulated to a secondary school art teacher, a secondary school teacher of other subjects (other than art) and college lecturer from a construction and design background. The completed questionnaires provided answers and feedback from a variety of questions

about the benefits of art inside and outside of the classroom in second and third level education.

This research paper is divided into two chapters. Chapter One - '*Beneficial Creative Arts Inside and Outside of Our Schools Art Curriculum*', contains the findings of the literature review on how art has many wider benefits beyond the art classroom. The review examined how the creative arts can help young people gain and develop new skills such as to create, explore, imagine, develop, etc. The creative arts can also be used with positive effects on a person's mental health. (Beth Unite, 2019) Art integration allows for students to be more engaged and allows for differentiation within a classroom. Finally, using art as a cross curricular subject can be used to help teach students a topic in their core subjects like mathematics, English and Irish and more at secondary level. (Silverstein and Layne, 2010) These skills developed in by students at second level in Art, can then be used at third level in a variety of subjects and programmes beyond the creative arts.

Chapter Two – 'The Evidence of Benefits', presents the findings and analysis of the questionnaire and links this to the literature review presented in Chapter One. The research concluded that using creative art learned inside the classroom has many benefits outside of the school curriculum and is benefit to a student's personal development and their graduate skills and attributes. Finally comparing and contrasting the answers from the secondary teacher and the college lecturer found that there are many similarities on the

benefits of using art outside the classroom, including the benefits of using art to develop skills required for creative and innovative problem solving.

Chapter One

Beneficial Creative Arts Inside and Outside of Our Schools Art Curriculum

Many questions were asked at the starting point of the research such as: What are the benefits of Art ? How does art help with creativity, social skills , wellbeing, critical thinking, exploring, imagining, discovering etc.?

‘Art expression in children can involve and experience the world with vigour: through the senses, in the movement of their bodies, in their thinking, through their emotions and from their memories.’ (Denise Lyons, 2010)

Art is an experience and a number of skills and qualities can be developed by this experience. Art can allow for people to experience the ideas of creativity, research, discovery, exploring and experimenting in a new and personal environment. Creating art positions enables the person creating to develop the skill of being able to concentrate and focus on the task at hand. They become absorbed in the processes of making, a distraction from the everyday life. (Beth Unite, 2019)

‘Art and creative expression is a powerful tool that can be used to benefit both your mental health and your physical health’ (Beth Unite, 2019)

Art has been used with positive effect with regard to a person’s mental health. It encourages the creator to explore new ways of self-expression, reducing stress and is a form of distraction from the everyday busyness of life. Beth Unite (2019) an educational blog author, states that art can be used

as a method of encouraging the functioning of the whole brain and thereby reducing some of the unpleasant symptoms of those suffering from dementia, depression and insomnia. They go further to suggest that in addition to the benefit of looking and viewing art, the physical action of visiting art galleries, museums and private collections where art is displayed has a positive impact on a person's brain and mental health. This also gets people out of their houses and to see and appreciate pieces of art in real life, and also encourages interaction with others with the same objectives. This example of where art helps with improving social behaviour is also used within the classroom where students are set the task of an art project as a group rather than just individually. This gives students the opportunity to work with others and gain teamwork, social and interaction skills that will benefit them in the future for things like within the work environment and jobs.

In 2019, there were 58,787 students that sat the Leaving Certificate and of those 58,787 students only 7,622 completed Honours Level Art. (Careers Portal) On the other hand, studies shows that's studying art can have a number of positive implications. For example, according to the second level Art teacher who participated in this study, studying art enables students to be more creative:

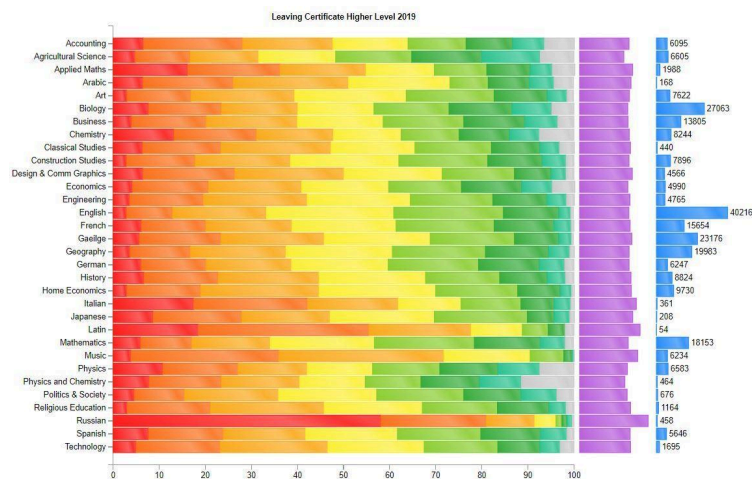


Fig 1. Higher Level Grade Distribution

‘Studying art, as the title suggests, allows students to be creative and explore their desire for self-expression and develop an appreciation for artistic work of others, including the work of famous artists and the history of art’ (Anon, n.d ‘Art’).

Art in schools also helps students who may be weaker in other subjects like mathematics, English, Irish and more. With studying art, students may find it easier to achieve their needed or goal points. In addition, studying art allows for careers in a creative disciplines for example, Architecture, Marketing, Film and Entertainment, Web Design, Fashion, Game Design, or Advertising. (Careers Portal)

Creativity is one of the main skills one discovers and gains while viewing, doing and making art.

'Creativity is all about exploring, imagining and discovering, which makes art a perfect catalyst for increasing creative thinking and expression' (Beth Unite, 2019)

Exploring, imagining, discovering, critical thinking, looking, finding, experimenting and all the key elements to creativity. As Unite (2019) argues, with art all of these elements are very much apparent and the continuous practicing and the learning of art can help develop creativity.

Art Integration is the learning of core skills and goals through art. It is very beneficial for students who may find it difficult to express or to learn from the traditional way of learning, such as reading and writing. Lynne B. Silverstein and Sean Layne (2010) and state that 'Arts-Enhanced Curriculum acts as a "hook" to engage students in learning content. This definition begins with the assertion that art integration is larger than an activity.' Art integration can help with getting students to interact and concentrate on the activity at hand. It keeps the student focused because it is not like a routine that most classes may have, it is something new, different and enjoyable. A new way of learning for many. As Educational Psychologist Dawn Baker explains it:

'Art integration involves learning core content subjects (math, reading, language, science, social studies) through the arts (drama, dance, music, visual arts)' (Baker, 2013, p.g 1)

Silverstein and Layne further acknowledged that art integration is an approach to teaching that is embedded into the teachers day to day practice. Teachers can use the arts to teach many different skills within their class that also can be transferable to other subjects. They can use skills like collage in an English class with the topic of propaganda, a two point perspective within Technical Graphics and Mathematics or studying time periods within art history is also cross curricular with world history. Teachers are encouraged to plan and design activities that will engage students and learners in visual, aural, and kinaesthetic learning modalities so that students can know and actively process the information that they are learning.

In 2007, Winner (cited in James Tyler Rosier, 2010) found that art is a major link within cross curricular subjects. When you think of important educational goals, unfortunately, the arts may not be identified as a priority or as important as the core goals of education such as literature, numeracy and language. Nevertheless, some studies have shown that using art within training and teaching can help to enable the basic skills and perceptions that are shared by other subjects.

Silverstein and Layne (2010) further found that 'by engaging in learning in one subject, learning in the other subject is reinforced and extended, and vice versa.' For example while reading a novel in English, the teacher could set a task in art to remember and revise quotes for a class test or a state examination in English by using the artistic skill of calligraphy to reproduce the important quotes and lines from a novel or play. Students could be further

encouraged to visualise these quotes in images or cartoons culminating in a poster that's represents the learning that is taught in English.

Overall the literature reviewed would support the view that learning through art has many benefits for young people as students, for example, it encourages the development of useful skills that can be used beyond the art classroom, such as, exploring, creating, experimenting and critical thinking. These skills can be used in the further education of the student and also allows the students to have an opportunity to use these skills when they have their own career.

The skills developed in Art class can be used by students in other subjects like Mathematics or English where they can be more creative and innovative in both their problem solving and their presentation of their solutions.

Finally, Art is a very versatile subject and can use elements of art in our everyday lives to communicate or express. The importance of art on the young people of our society is very crucial for allowing them to be the best that they can be. From them expressing themselves, to learning new skills and allowing for new opportunities.

Chapter Two

The Evidence of Benefits

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the questionnaire circulated as part of the research study. The literature review suggested that there were many benefits to using art inside and outside of the classroom and curriculum. The authors presented evidence of benefits in many different areas of young people's lives, including in the teaching and learning of art students learn skills that can be used beyond the classroom e.g., social, creative, critical thinking and experimental skills. The benefits also extend to positive mental health for students who are involved in projects that use skills developed in the creative arts and the art curriculum. Art (and visual presentation) was also found to be used in many different subjects within the second level curriculum that kept students to be more engaged and interested in these subjects.

The secondary school Art teacher's perspective on the topic.

The broad question asked is; How can art based projects be helpful inside and outside of the art classroom? The secondary school art teacher (Questionnaire) states that art based projects can give students new opportunities to work on something different outside of the curriculum. It allows them to discover new topics and techniques to their learning and the presentation of their work. It is generally a positive experience, for the students and their teacher and provides an opportunity for the student to explore and discover different disciplines outside of the art room. These experiences reflect the use and benefits of using art in the real world. They

reflect on art projects that provides evidence of students exploring different areas and topics through the creative arts e.g. mental health, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. Finally the teacher described projects that involved the students working with artists in residence. She testifies to these types of art projects both, broadening the students' knowledge and allowing for new skills to be learned, new people to be discovered and new topics to be explained.

'the proof is in the outcomes of the work that the students completed while doing the workshop or on their return to the classroom' (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

The Art teacher explains that art projects both inside and outside the classroom can give the students more freedom to explore and work through the projects with more independence and control over their time and resources. It is a more low stakes environment where the student does not have to stick to the structure of the exams and assessment. The work and outputs that her students have created at the end of these projects gives a clear picture of and the evidence that these art based projects are very beneficial to the students. *'They engage more when they are creating something that is meaningful to them'* (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

The findings from the secondary school arts teachers questionnaire would also concur with the literature in that using art both inside and outside the classroom can benefit mental health. As, Beth Unite (2019) stated that art

encourages the functioning of the whole brain and allows for one to be calmed by creating and exploring. Similar to Beth Unite, the Art teacher states working in any art form can be a therapeutic experience so therefore it creates a safe space to explore your own thoughts and feelings in a creative manner. They further suggest that implementing art therapy tools into classes have positive mental benefits to the students. It allows them to be more creative without the guidelines and guidance of the curriculum and it allows the class time to become more personal to the students. (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

'Art has the benefit of being able to cross curricular with any other subject'(Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

Silverstein and Layne (2010) further acknowledged that teachers using art integration to teach within their class, allows students to learn new skills that can be transferable to other subjects like Mathematics or English. Art can be used in every school subject. Art has no boundaries. For example, from the art teacher's perspective, in English you could look or study the Book of Kells, a book full of beautiful Calligraphy, Illustration and Graphic Design, can also tie in with the subject of English in terms of its literature and can therefore be considered as a cross curricular tool. (Art Teacher, Questionnaire). They also suggest that Art integration is a very valuable tool that can be used in many other subjects of the curriculum, used to keep students engaged and interested in subjects were students may find difficulties remembering or enjoying, typically academic subjects.

Viewing art can open up new opportunities and a new train of thought to allow for creativity. Displaying students art on the walls of the art room reflects the work of the students from across all the different artistic disciplines. Displaying this art work generates an interest from other students in the art class as well as the wider school community who would not have otherwise seen the work of the student.

The art room walls can display a small amount of the work students produce in art class. Displaying art work in this context is allowing other students see examples of what they can work towards and achieve. This the secondary school art teacher believes give motivation to the other students. (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

Finally the Art teacher expresses that exhibiting students work also has a value to the student themselves who have ownership of this piece of work. The art piece plots the creative journey of the student from inception to completion and allows for the value and appreciation of the work by others. Allowing the students work to be shown to others boosts the students self-confidence and can encourage the student to keep creating in the future.



Fig 2. SuM Screen Print



Fig 3. SuM Screen Print

The teacher testifies to having several opportunities during the year for students to highlight their own personal work and that which is created in the art room. *'We run the Robert Ballagh art competition and winners get their work framed and put on display in the Drogheda arts Centre'* (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

Beyond Second Level - The perspective from a third level College Lecturer.

Students have gained skills and knowledge from their years studying in secondary school but the learning does not stop there. College is the next step to be able to learn about the world in more detail. Art is still used in many ways in college and you do not just need to study art to use it. The questionnaire was distributed to a third level College Lecturer who teaches in the built environment from a construction and design background.

When asked if art based projects are used inside and outside of the classroom at third level they stated that projects such as creating posters, models, photos for events like Engineers Week, College Awareness Week are regular features of their students work. This offers the students informal learning experiences, allowing for learning outside the classroom in a more realistic and authentic way. Collaboration between different disciplines also occurs through these projects e.g., engineering & humanities, engineering & business etc. Students with a background in building and environmental design would work with students in early childhood studies to create spaces and buildings. Students also get the opportunity to engage in real life projects – e.g. Designing spaces or sculptures for display in the institute, town or public buildings. (College Lecturer, Questionnaire)

The College lecturer later stated that the benefits of these art based projects were that students are given the opportunity to identify and work on innovative and creative solutions to real life problems, outside of their own classroom. The project improved the students engagement to their work and allowed the students to experience a real life project that was not simulated for the classroom or confined to the course curriculum assessments.

The experience however, can also be challenging when trying to encourage the students engagement especially when students have to manage their time and workload demands of their programme to working outside of the classroom/curriculum.

'Skills also evident from working with the same students in their studies later on in their programmes' (College Lecturer, Questionnaire)

Skills developed in these project are also evident from working with the same students in their studies later on in their programmes.

The third level lecturer agreed with the second level teacher that Art can allow the students to develop design and creativity skills. They also believe that it develops students into creative problem solvers. (College Lecturer, Questionnaire)

Whilst they did not refer to using art in terms of their students mental health they did suggest that using art outside of the school curriculum can be less stressful for the student. These types of projects take place outside the classroom and are not attached to high stakes assessment.

The college lecturer suggests that the skills that art teaches students gives them openings for potential job opportunities, such as architect, product or website designer. Some students do not get the chance to be able to be creative within their classroom or to be able to work with others, art projects motivates collaboration and teamwork with are skills that are valued in the working force. (College Lecture, Questionnaire)

'Exhibiting the students work in this way gives the student a sense of achievement, builds their self-confidence' (College Lecture, Questionnaire)

Displaying students work can give a sense of achievement for the students and facilitates and provides the opportunity to receive constructive feedback and useful comments on their work. Each year an exhibition of creative work from students in the Dept. of Creative Arts, Media and Music is curated to allow the students to show their work and is an opportunity for external groups or potential employers to view their work. This expands the audience for the student's work which is wider than just their college or institute. (College Lecture, Questionnaire)



Fig 4. DkIT Fís 2021 Graduate Show

Displaying of students work is used in both the secondary school setting and a college setting and both have a positive effect. Boosting the students confidence and giving a sense of achievement. Exhibiting the work opens opportunities to students when viewing work as it can help with exploring and

learning. Exhibiting the students own work cause provide potential job opportunities when external groups are viewing their work.

Conclusion

It is clear from the literature and primary research that there are many benefits of using art inside and outside of the curriculum and these benefits extend beyond the second level stage of a student's education.

The questionnaire participants both testify to the many benefits to the student including the development of skills such as researching, critical thinking, creativity and problem solving. These skills were evident within the classroom and outside the classroom in art based projects. Evidence of the benefits are also visible in the final work from the students. The students also benefit from the display of this work within the classroom and outside in exhibitions and displays. Displaying of students work is used in both the secondary school setting and a college setting has a positive effect on the student's self-confidence and giving them a sense of achievement. Exhibiting the work opens opportunities to students when viewing work as it can help with exploring and learning. Exhibiting the students own work cause provide potential job opportunities when external groups are viewing their work.

The Art teacher has mentioned that art is a form of therapy and can positively help with the students mental health. Focusing on the project and not worrying about exams and assessments, allows the project or task to become more personal for the students and this is giving the opportunity to the young people to be able to express themselves in a safe and healthy way. (Art Teacher, Questionnaire)

The College lecturer argued that projects are not directly designed from a positive mental perspective, but allowing for creative thinking/brainstorming. The projects encourage a comfortable environment for the students to be able to explore their design solutions and choices. Extending the opportunities for the students outside of the classroom on design or art projects is also a less stressful environment, students not being assessed. Team work or group work can lessen the workload on students and help with the anxiety and stress of too much work. (College Lecture, Questionnaire)

The students have used these skills themselves to create and complete the given projects. Showing that skills like exploring, thinking, looking, observation and critical thinking can be used in any situation and gives the students valuable tools for life.

Appendices

Assessing the Value of Extra Curricula Art Inside and Outside the Classroom

Questionnaire – Secondary Teacher and 3rd Level Lecturer

Research Paper – Eimear Rourke 3Yr Joint Hons BA Textile, Surface Design and Education

Question 1 –

Have you previously done art projects with your students outside of the school curriculum ?

Question 2 –

What was the motive or reason for these art projects? Why did you and your class do these projects?

Question 3 –

Do you believe that your students have benefited from these projects? (Was it positive?) If so please explain...

Question 5 –

Could you see measurable proof that these projects were beneficial? If so please explain...

Question 6 –

Do you think that using art outside of the school curriculum is a positive activity for young adults and why?

Question 7 –

Is there anything that you can think of that schools and teachers can do to help while using art to help engage students? Examples?

Question 8 –

If so, what projects do you think other classes i.e. Maths, English, History could do for the benefit of the students while using art outside of the school curriculum? Examples?

Question 9 –

Are there any 'creative / art' routines that you add to your class that could be/is beneficial to students to keep a good and positive mental health or benefit many different factors .i.e. Learning? Examples?

Question 10 –

Do you have students artwork hanging on your classroom walls or is there student artwork hanging on the walls of your school? If so what type of art? Examples ?

Question 11 –

Are students often given the opportunity to put their own work on the walls or have an exhibition to show off their work? Examples?

Question 12 –

Are there benefits of putting the students work on the walls, do you think? Does this benefit them positively? If so, how?

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