

THE ARTS IN SCHOOLS: MAKING THE CASE, HEEDING THE EVIDENCE

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- I -

We know, don't we, that at their best the arts excite, amaze, inspire and move us; that they illuminate and enrich our lives; that they deepen our awareness of who and what we are; that they compel us to step out of the here and now into the realm of the possible and barely apprehended; that they nurture essential and transferable skills; that they confront conventional wisdom and speak truth to power; that they encourage us to think and feel more deeply; that they are unique and powerful ways of making sense of ourselves and our world; that they embody much of what it means to be civilised. In short, we know that the arts are truly and profoundly educative.

Surely, if we know all this I don't need to say any more. High quality creative and cultural education must be every child's absolute right. It's a matter of common sense as well as justice. QED.

Hold on though. *We* may believe this but many people don't. To them, arts education is desirable but not necessarily essential. They may *claim* to support arts education - for nobody wants to be thought a philistine - but their decisions signal otherwise.

Who are these equivocators? Well, they include some of our most prominent political leaders, though fortunately not all of them. These people determine what shall be taught in our schools, so their views have consequences for every child. Thus in 2013 the government produced for England's schools a new national curriculum handbook with a very old message.¹ For primary schools the handbook had 51 pages on mathematics but just two pages on visual arts, two on music and none at all on drama or dance, apart from fleeting mentions under English and PE - a staggeringly cursory treatment that the Henley report on cultural education had sharply criticised the previous year but ministers ignored.² Then, for secondary students, the EBacc excludes creative and artistic subjects altogether and each year since 2015 the effect on student choice, school provision and teacher training of this indefensible decision has become more and more acute.³ Meanwhile, national tests reinforce the stockade between the so-called core subjects and the rest, while school inspections patrol and police it.

¹ Department for Education (2013) *The National Curriculum in England: framework document*. London: DfE.

² DCMS and DfE (2012) *Cultural Education in England: an independent review by Darren Henley for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education*. London: DCMS/DfE, 58.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc>

No amount of DfE or Ofsted rhetoric about a 'broad and balanced curriculum' can reverse the damaging consequences of such policies. That phrase has anyway been totally devalued by mendacious official use. This year's Ofqual figures show EBacc subject entries up, but non-EBacc subject entries down, again.⁴ Only last week a House of Lords debate deplored the fact that for two years in a row there has been an 8 percent drop in creative GCSEs, and Kenneth Baker, ministerial architect of England's first National Curriculum in 1988, called the decline in technical and creative GCSEs 'a disgrace'.⁵

Ministers might assure Lord Baker that the place of creative subjects is for schools to decide and it's for students to choose from what is available, and in a strict sense they would be right. Yet policy *does* matter, for it sets the boundaries of opportunity and accountability within which schools must work. It signals to teachers, parents, employers, the public - and of course children themselves - what kinds of learning matter most and least, what it means to be educated, and by what fundamental values a national culture is shaped and defined. Hence the current paradox: a curriculum that we are told is informed by so-called 'British' cultural values but which pushes to the margins culture as many understand it.

Naturally, I'm aware that this begs the question of whether we define 'culture' in its anthropological or artistic sense, or indeed as both of these and more, though such questions appear not to have troubled those who have decreed that democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and inter-faith tolerance are the only so-called British values that matter.⁶ By way of contrast we might note that the Henley report included in its generous definition of cultural education 'archaeology, architecture and the built environment, archives, craft, dance, design, digital arts, drama and theatre, film and cinemas, galleries, heritage, libraries, literature, live performance, museums, music, poetry and the visual arts.'⁷ These, equally, are the stuff of democracy, liberty and tolerance. Only connect ...

Anyway, the government's recurrent bouts of PISA panic leave little time for culture however it is defined. So here's the question: how can we persuade policymakers and educational leaders that exercises like PISA should *serve* education, not drive it, and that while STEM subjects - science, technology, engineering and mathematics - are indeed vital foundations for learning, employment and economic competitiveness, the arts also have an irrefutable claim?

I want to suggest two responses. First, we should *publicise the evidence* that supports our cause. Second, we should *expose the myths* by which, for some people, even the strongest evidence is outweighed. We may not be wholly successful in our efforts to change deeply entrenched ways of thinking, but we can try.

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⁴ <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/entries-to-ebacc-subjects-peak-as-fewer-pupils-take-creative-subjects/>

⁵ <http://www.baccforthefuture.com>

⁶ Ofsted (2015) *School Inspection Handbook* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

⁷ DCMS and DfE (2012) *Cultural Education in England: an independent review by Darren Henley for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education*. London: DCMS/DfE, 3.

An evidence-based case for arts education was made as long ago as 1982 in the Gulbenkian report *The Arts in Schools*.⁸ Yet while comforting the believers Gulbenkian had limited impact elsewhere. Then in 1999 the government enquiry chaired by Ken Robinson produced a report⁹ that set the arts in the broader context of culture and creativity, thus enabling it to appeal to others than the already convinced. Robinson argued that creative capacities are needed in all walks of life, including business, industry, science and technology - a proposition which, of course, our best scientists and business leaders have always understood.

As well as mainstreaming the idea of creativity, Robinson brought businesses on side and encouraged partnerships between artists, performers and teachers of a kind that across the UK are now commonplace. I expect you'll hear more about these in Paul Collard's keynote this afternoon, and having heard Paul a few months ago I know you'll be inspired by what he says. However, one thing did *not* change as a result of Robinson: the national curriculum. Here the message was clear: by all means do exciting things *outside* the classroom, but *inside* the classroom the old subject hierarchy remains fixed and immutable.

After Robinson came a major report from the United States. In 2011, President Obama's Committee on the Arts and Humanities published *Reinvesting in Arts Education: winning America's future through creative schools*.¹⁰ Like Robinson, the President's Committee argued that economic success requires creative capacities, though it placed greater emphasis on the arts as such than Robinson, whose report tended to lose them in its quest to spread the idea of generic creativity. Like Robinson, the US report saw the future less in traditional teaching than in partnerships between artists and teachers, arts organisations and schools.

Children and the Arts (CATA), of which I'm proud to be a trustee, provides many brilliant and successful examples of such partnerships, as does Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), Paul Collard's organisation; and Curious Minds has entered a partnership investment with Children and the Arts to enable four new projects to take place in the North West as part of CATA's Start programme. Over the next three years these will see 1,400 young people aged 4-16 given access to cultural venues and workshops with professional artists, and the chance to create work of their own. The projects will also provide support and resources for their teachers.

Back to the President's Committee report. Its main value for us is that it pulls together research evidence showing how the arts in schools can have a positive impact on educational outcomes. Of these outcomes it highlights five:

1. *Student motivation and engagement*, including attendance, persistence, attention, aspiration and risk-taking.

⁸ Gulbenkian Foundation (1982) *The Arts in Schools: principles, practice and provision*. London: Gulbenkian Foundation.

⁹ National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) (1999), *All Our Futures: creativity, culture and education*. London: DfEE and DCMS.

¹⁰ *President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (2011), Reinvesting in Arts Education: winning America's future through creative schools*. Washington DC: PCAH.

2. *Student achievement* in tests of reading and mathematics.
3. *Skill transfer* from the arts to other subjects, including, again, reading and mathematics.
4. *Habits of mind* across all areas of learning, including problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, and the capacity to deal with ambiguity and complexity.
5. *Social competencies* including collaboration, teamwork, tolerance and self-confidence.

The US report also cited a study by James Catterall that followed students from school into adulthood. This showed that such outcomes aren't just temporary: they can have a lasting effect on students' lives. And of disadvantaged students Catterall said: 'Arts-engaged low-income students are more likely than their non-arts-engaged peers to have attended and done well in college, obtained employment with a future, volunteered in their communities, and participated in the political process by voting.'¹¹

A further body of evidence comes from neuroscience, which though still in its relative infancy indicates links, for example, between music training, phonological awareness and early reading skills (something the Hungarian composer Kodály spotted back in the 1930s); between the disciplined practice required for learning to play an instrument and improvement in other cognitive domains; between musical training and the ability to manipulate information; between arts training and the development of executive attention, 'especially the abilities to control emotions and to focus thoughts, which are critical aspects of ... general cognition ... and ... social and academic success';¹² though in relation to arts partnership schemes we should also note that what makes the difference is not brief exposure, however stimulating and enjoyable at the time, but sustained engagement.

What was the impact of that illuminating report from the President's Committee? Sadly but symptomatically, my American colleagues shrug and tell me that few American educators have even heard of it. They tell me that no evidence, however conclusive, can resist the pressure of high stakes testing and the Common Core Curriculum Standards.

Then, in 2012, we had the Henley report on cultural education, which was more about mission than evidence but maintained the push towards an outward-looking approach involving not only partnerships and hubs but also national awards and ambassadors to raise the profile of cultural education and cultural achievement.¹³ The government response was ostensibly supportive, though more supportive of Henley's recommendations on partnerships than of what he said about the place of the arts in the national curriculum. There, as I've noted, change was not permitted.¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid*, p 18.

¹² Posner, M.I. (2009) 'How arts training improves training and cognition', http://www.dana.org/Cerebrum/2009/How_Arts_Training_Improves_Attention_and_Cognition/ ; Goswami, U. (2015) *Children's Cognitive Development and Learning*, CPRT Research Survey 3. York: Cambridge Primary Review Trust.

¹³ DCMS and DfE (2012) *Cultural Education in England: an independent review by Darren Henley for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education*. London: DCMS/DfE.
DCMS and DfE (2012) *The Government's Response to Darren Henley's Review of Cultural Education*. London: DCMS/DfE.

By now it's clear that in this area as in so many others, governments are selective in their use of evidence. We must not be. It is therefore right that I should balance the four positive reports I've mentioned with a less positive account published two years ago. The Endowment Foundation (EEF) uses funding from DfE to commission randomised control trials of initiatives that look likely to improve the educational performance of disadvantaged children. Some of you may be aware that my own work on dialogic teaching¹⁵ has recently been trialled in 76 schools in Birmingham, Bradford and Leeds and that last week EEF reported that disadvantaged pupils who had received our dialogic teaching intervention were by the end of the intervention two months ahead of pupils in the control group in tests in English, maths and science, and that they made these gains from a talk-intensive programme of only 20 weeks.¹⁶

[Incidentally, the example of dialogic teaching is not as unrelated to the theme of our conference as it may seem, for dialogic teaching, as I've been working on it during the past two decades, prioritises the development of children's capacities to use talk to reason, argue, explain, explore, justify, challenge, question, negotiate, speculate, imagine, evaluate, and in these and other ways to take ownership of their talking and thinking rather than merely answer someone else's usually closed questions. Such talk, unusual in the teaching of mainstream subjects, is actually not unlike that habitually deployed and encouraged in performance arts, for example in the kind of discussion that might be generated to support and explore improvised drama. This is a line of enquiry I hope to pursue further, though for the moment EEF is more interested in dialogic teaching's impact on test scores in the core subjects].

So I've every reason to be grateful to EEF. However, responding to pressure from those who complained that most EEF trials - like ours - are limited to outcomes in English, maths and science, the Foundation commissioned a review of 200 research studies in arts education.

Although the resulting EEF report¹⁷ confirmed some of the findings reported elsewhere, for example the non-musical benefits of learning to play a musical instrument, it could find no proof of the impact of the visual arts on educational attainment and very little positive evidence relating to drama, dance, poetry or creative writing. Disappointingly, the report concluded: 'Though there are promising leads, at the moment there is not enough robust evidence to be able to demonstrate a causal link between arts education and academic achievement.'¹⁸

But before you become too depressed, I must voice three reservations about the EEF report.

First, it is excessively narrow in its focus. Most of the studies it reviews are of primary school pupils taught by non-specialists, where we know that lack of subject and

¹⁵ E.g. Alexander, R.J. (2017) *Towards Dialogic Teaching: rethinking classroom talk* (5th edition). York: Dialogos. For full list see <http://www.robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Alexander-dialogic-teaching-bibliography.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://cprtrust.org.uk/research/classroom-talk/>

¹⁷ See, B.H. and Kokotsaki, D. (2015) *Impact of Arts Education on the Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Outcomes of School-Aged Children*. London: Education Endowment Foundation.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 3.

pedagogical content knowledge can diminish both teacher expectations and pupil outcomes, and that's hardly a fair basis for assessing what the arts can do for pupil learning; and anyway, most of the studies reviewed in the EEF report track learning not in the arts themselves but in other subjects.

Second, the EEF arts report judged all the studies it reviewed against the so-called 'gold standard' of the randomised control trial (RCT), with its use of matched control and experimental groups. No methodology other than the experimental or quasi-experimental was deemed sufficiently robust. However, not only is considerable insight available from some of those many other research studies that the EEF review chose to ignore, but transferring to the complexities of teaching a model devised for clinical drug trials is highly contested.¹⁹ To accept it without question was unwise.

Third, having concluded that its evidence showed few causal links between arts education and what it chose to define as academic achievement, the EEF report said: 'Almost all of the studies in this review were rated as providing weak evidence because of serious design flaws.'²⁰

This, I'm afraid, is the point when the Education Endowment Foundation report scuppers itself. If the research studies in question are methodologically so weak, then they don't prove anything either way, negative or positive. End of story, end of report.

So where does this leave us? Well, setting the Education Endowment Foundation's somewhat self-defeating report alongside findings from other sources, I submit that we do in fact have a growing body of evidence in addition to the research studies listed in the President's Committee report, some of it very striking. Here are a few examples. You, I'm sure, can provide many more.

In Leeds, Opera North has established the government-supported In Harmony programme. This aims 'to inspire and transform the lives of children in deprived communities, using the power and disciplines of community-based orchestral music-making.' It is one of six such projects in deprived areas in different parts of England. Last year year the programme's evaluation reported dramatically improved test results in language and mathematics, results that can only be explained by reference to In Harmony.²¹

In Germany, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen moved its headquarters and rehearsal space into an inner-city secondary school. This created first unease, then a dawning sense of opportunity and finally an extraordinary fusion of students and musicians, with daily interactions between the two groups, students sitting alongside orchestra members at lunch and during rehearsals, a wealth of structured musical projects and dramatic improvements in student motivation, engagement and behaviour. As a result, the school was transformed from one to be avoided to one to which parents from other parts of Bremen eagerly competed to send their children.²²

¹⁹ For example: Ginsburg, A. and Smith, M.S. (2016) *Do Randomised Control Trials Meet the 'Gold Standard'? A study of the usefulness of RCTs in the What Works Clearinghouse*. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p 4.

²¹ <https://www.operanorth.co.uk/news/dramatic-sats-results-increase-at-schools-working-with-opera-north>

²² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-32381815>

Perhaps the most celebrated example is Venezuela's El Sistema, which since 1975 has promoted 'intensive ensemble participation from the earliest stages, group learning, peer teaching and a commitment to keeping the joy of musical learning and music making ever-present' through participation in orchestral ensembles, choral singing, folk music and jazz.

El Sistema provides the model for In Harmony, the English programme whose work through Opera North led to those improvements in test results in Leeds; also for Sistema Scotland, which has projects involving nearly 2000 children in Stirling, Glasgow and Aberdeen. The official evaluation of In Harmony cites 'positive effects on children's self-esteem, resilience, enjoyment of school, attitudes towards learning, concentration and perseverance' with, as a bonus, 'some perceived impact on parents and families including raised aspirations for their children, increased enjoyment of music and confidence in visiting cultural venues, and increased engagement with school.'²³ Similar findings are reported from Sistema Scotland.²⁴

There are many more examples like these, and I know that many of you are involved in them.

But here I must issue a warning. In the vital matter of seeking evidence to convince sceptics that arts education is not only desirable but also essential, we tend to use only those outcome measures in which the sceptics are likely to be interested. Hence the number of research studies that assess impact not in terms of outcomes specific to the arts but by reference to reading and mathematics.

The danger of presenting the case in this way, necessary in the current policy climate though it may be, is that it reduces the arts to the status of servant to other subjects, a means to someone else's end rather than an end in itself. ('Why study music?' 'To improve performance in maths'). It also blurs the vital differences that exist between the various arts in terms of their form, language, concepts, practice and modes of expression. Literature, creative writing, the visual arts, music, drama and dance may have elements in common - form, for example, is fundamental to all of them - but each is also in obvious ways distinct. Each art has its own language, engages specific senses, requires specific skills and evokes distinct responses.

Until schools have the courage to champion art for art's sake, and to make the case for each art *in its own terms*, then arts education will continue to be relegated to the margins of the curriculum.

- III -

I said earlier that in order to persuade we should not only argue from the evidence but also expose the myths to which people have recourse either because they know no better or because they find the evidence inconvenient. Let's now consider three of these myths.

²³ Lord, P., Sharp, C., Mehta, P., and Featherstone, G. (2015). *Evaluation of In Harmony, Year 2*. Slough: NFER.

²⁴ http://www.makeabignoise.org.uk/files/2914/9748/5984/Big_Noise_Torry_Evaluation_Report_FINAL3.pdf

First and most familiar is the view that the arts are about feeling and doing rather than thinking, and that they are therefore intellectually undemanding. We find this view reflected in the exclusion of the arts from typical lists of ‘academic’ subjects and of course from the EBacc. We find it in the traditional relegation of arts subjects to the late afternoon. We find it in the EEF report that concluded that there was no evidence that the arts impacted positively on academic achievement, defined as achievement not in the arts but in English and maths. We found it in New Labour’s 2003 manifesto on curriculum and educational standards entitled *Excellence and Enjoyment*.²⁵ This rightly argued that teachers should strive for both excellence and enjoyment in learning, but then made it clear that excellence comes from literacy and numeracy, and enjoyment from the other subjects - implying, conversely, that the arts are not about excellence while reading and maths are much too puritanical in their pursuit of excellence to be enjoyed. As, sadly, many SAT-driven Year 6 pupils would agree.

And so, not surprisingly, we continue to hear children themselves saying, ‘It’s only art.’ Only? Talk to any writer, artist, musician, actor, dancer or film-maker and you’ll learn something of the knowledge, skill, intellectual effort and even pain that go into creative activity of any kind. Yet interestingly, Howard Gardner reports that ‘there has been almost a conspiracy of silence among artists concerning the arduous training and the keen mental efforts involved in artistic practice ... artists have hesitated to acknowledge the cognitive dimensions and demands of their chosen field.’²⁶ So artists themselves could to help us bury the myth that the arts are intellectually undemanding.

Then there’s the myth that schools can *either* pursue high standards in so-called core subjects like language, maths and science, *or* they can offer children a broad and rich curriculum, but they can’t do both of these equally well.

This myth, peddled by most recent UK governments, has been debunked not just by research but also by Ofsted. Inspection evidence consistently shows that the primary schools that achieve best results in the national literacy and numeracy tests are those that provide a curriculum that is broad, rich and well-managed, and in which all subjects, not just those that are tested, are treated seriously. The inspectors reckon that the connection between curriculum breadth and standards in literacy and numeracy is causal rather than merely a matter of statistical association, and their findings reinforce research evidence on learning transfer between subjects.²⁷ That apart, children surely have a right to a curriculum that treats every subject with equal seriousness, regardless of how much time it is allocated, and educational standards are about the quality of learning in all subjects, not just those that are tested.²⁸ If a subject is worth teaching at all, it should be taught well.

²⁵ Department for Education and Skills (2003), *Excellence and Enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools*. London: HMSO.

²⁶ Gardner, H. (2006) *The Development and Education of the Mind*. London: Routledge, 97.

²⁷ This evidence is summarised and discussed in Alexander, R.J. (2013) *Curriculum Freedom, Capacity and Leadership in the Primary School*. Nottingham: National College of School Leadership.
<http://www.robinalexander.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Alexander-Nat-Coll-curric-capacity.pdf>

²⁸ Alexander, R.J. (ed) *Children, their World, their Education: final report and recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review*. London: Routledge. For information on the work and publications of the Review, and its successor the Cambridge Primary Review Trust: <http://www.cprtrust.org.uk>.

Linked to the myths that the arts are intellectually undemanding and that they are incompatible with high standards in literacy and numeracy is the myth that the arts are not useful socially or economically. This one has been demolished by government itself. Last year DCMS reported that what are called the ‘creative industries’ contribute £84 billion every year to the UK economy (one estimate is £87 billion but let’s be modest). The then Minister for Culture, Ed Vaizey, said:

The creative industries are one of the UK’s greatest success stories, with British musicians, artists, fashion brands and films immediately recognisable in nations across the globe. *Growing at almost twice the rate of the wider economy* our creative industries are well and truly thriving.²⁹

Yet even as Vaizey was celebrating that £84 billion bonus and its spectacular growth rate, his colleagues at DfE continued to exclude arts subjects from the EBacc in the teeth of objections from the great and good and a 100,000-signature petition organised by Bacc for the Future,³⁰ with the lamentably predictable result that the number of students taking arts subjects at GCSE has fallen and now seems likely to fall even more steeply.³¹ To add insult to injury, the last remaining A level examination in art history was set to be scrapped by AQA in direct response to the government’s education policy³² and saved at the last minute only after a high profile campaign led by the likes of the Tate, the Courtauld Institute and the National Gallery, not to mention celebrity historian Simon Schama, who talked of a ‘big dull axe wielded by cultural pygmies.’ Seeing which way the wind was blowing, ex-Education Secretary Michael Gove, whose curriculum policies had initiated the cultural pygmy crisis, strategically converted to the cause and tweeted that the arts ‘stretch minds and expand sympathies.’³³

What is going on here? Our leaders need to start talking to each other. They also need to be a bit more honest.

Having used evidence from one government department to expose the folly of another - £84 billion from the creative industries on the one hand, the forced decline of the arts in schools on the other - I want to stress that to judge the value of the arts in terms of national economic impact may be persuasive but it is far from sufficient; just as it is not sufficient to judge the impact of the arts on individual children from their test scores in literacy and numeracy. We have seen that when children engage meaningfully in the arts they gain in terms of motivation, attendance, engagement, aspiration, risk-taking, achievement across the curriculum, skill transfer to other subjects, habits of mind such as problem-solving and creative and critical thinking, and social competencies such as collaboration, tolerance and self-confidence. These outcomes are not only invaluable for the individual; they also contribute to the common good. They must be celebrated for what they are.

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²⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/creative-industries-worth-almost-10-million-an-hour-to-economy>

³⁰ <http://www.baccforthefuture.com/sign-the-petition.html>

³¹ <http://www.baccforthefuture.com/>

³² <http://www.artlyst.com/articles/association-of-art-historians-condemns-scrapping-of-a-level-art-history>

³³ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/dec/01/art-history-a-level-saved-from-being-axed-after-high-profile-campaign>

I end by noting three problems whose persistence reinforces myths of the kind I have outlined.

First, there's the problem of the habitually dualist or dichotomous mindset: thinking versus feeling, cognitive versus affective, academic versus practical, theory versus practice, 'hard' sciences versus 'soft' arts, knowledge versus skill, excellence versus enjoyment, depth versus breadth, subjective versus objective, and of course as the ancestor of them all, mind versus body. We don't need a philosopher to remind us that all of these are unnecessary and untenable. But they are also hard to shift, for they are rooted not just in today's educational thinking but also, hence my allusion to Descartes, in the history of western culture.³⁴ So we can counter this tendency by making *inclusivity* our cardinal curriculum principle: 'Not either/or but both/and'.³⁵ We can and must pursue thinking *and* feeling, the academic *and* the practical, sciences *and* arts, depth *and* breadth, knowledge *and* skill, and so on. Far from being mutually exclusive these are both complementary and interlocking. For the arts, as Howard Gardner reminds us, are incontrovertibly a matter of mind as well as hand, eye, ear or body.³⁶

Second, there's the problem of how the arts are perceived when the available paradigm for assessing their impact allows only metrics. Many research studies, as we have seen, use standardised tests in reading or mathematics as proxies for attainment in the arts. But if *outcomes* specific to the arts are marginalised because they don't fit the measurement paradigm, then *aims* specific to the arts will be marginalised too. As the great American arts educator Elliot Eisner warned in the 1960s, there's an inherent problem in the way we define both aims and outcomes in the arts, and a naive dichotomy of 'subjective' and 'objective' is part of the problem.³⁷ Arts outcomes *can* be assessed, but the task requires a more subtle and flexible approach. Eisner tried to capture this in his distinction between instructional and expressive objectives and his efforts to extend the vocabulary of arts assessment beyond the limited array of outcomes that can be quantified into the more elusive realm of educational connoisseurship and criticism.³⁸

Finally, there's the problem of understanding. Myths of the kind I have exposed stem in large part from simple ignorance of what the arts are about and the capacities that creative endeavour requires. And I'm afraid this isn't just a matter of political or public perception: we must also accept that the considerable level of understanding and skill that good arts teaching requires is not as widely available in our schools as it should be, and Ofsted evidence confirms this.³⁹

³⁴ Explored more fully in Alexander, R.J. (2008), *Essays on Pedagogy*, chapter 4 'Beyond dichotomous pedagogies.' London: Routledge.

³⁵ Cazden, C.B. (2001) *Classroom Discourse: the language of teaching and learning*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann, 56.

³⁶ Gardner, H. (2006) *The Development and Education of the Mind*. London: Routledge, 97-101.

³⁷ Eisner, E.W. (1969) 'Instructional and Expressive Objectives: their formulation and use in curriculum, in W.J.Popham, E.W.Eisner, H.J.Sullivan and LL.Tyler, *Instructional Objectives* (AERA Monograph Series on Curriculum Evaluation 3. Chicago: Rand McNally.

³⁸ Eisner, E.W. (2005) *Reinventing Schools: the selected works of Elliot W.Eisner*. London: Routledge, chapters 2-5.

³⁹ For example: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years> (KS3), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-in-schools-what-hubs-must-do> and [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-in-schools\(music\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/music-in-schools(music)), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/art-craft-and-design-education-making-a-mark> (art, craft and design),

For, make no mistake, what we don't fully understand we won't teach well, and probably won't value either, and the resulting combination of inadequate professional knowledge, low esteem, low expectations, uninspiring teaching and limited outcomes will reinforce and perpetuate the myths and misunderstandings about the arts and arts education that I've mentioned. Not least among children, who in their turn become parents, teachers and even national decision makers. Thus does the cycle repeat itself.

But when the arts are taught well, and teachers have the knowledge, skill and imagination to teach them with flair and enthusiasm, their impact can be spectacular. We know it, children know it, their parents know it, even economists know it - and the evidence proves it. We can and must break the cycle. Certainly we should strive, albeit against the odds, to educate our policy-makers. But we may also need to re-educate our educators and educational leaders. That, I fear, is the somewhat controversial observation with which I must end.

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