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Visual arts history and visual arts criticism : Applications in middle schooling

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Visual Arts History and Visual Arts Criticism: Applications in Middle Schooling.

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award

of

Master of Education

In the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission: November 1999

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

Visual arts history and criticism occupy central positions in visual arts curriculum statements in Western Australia. This status is sustained by the belief that the study of visual arts history and criticism actively contributes to the education of the student as a "whole person". In reality however, rather than attending to the holistic education of students, the application of visual arts history and criticism in Western Australian schools tends to be pragmatic and instrumental - visual arts teachers often use visual art works as "learning aids" because they don't have time, interest or experience in dealing with visual arts works in any other way.

While visual arts history and criticism offer the student a valuable life-skill worth acquiring for the contribution they could make to the student's autonomy and personal welfare, this understanding often seems a foreign concept for many classroom teachers. The difference between theorists' and teachers' understandings of the place and purpose of visual arts history and criticism provides an important area of inquiry requiring urgent attention. This research makes a foray into this domain with the purpose of shedding light on the content and methods used by middle school visual arts teachers and their students' perceptions of the content and methods.

A qualitative descriptive study was selected for the research taking the form of semi-structured interviews with six teachers. An interview guide was used and transcripts deriving from this methodology were coded by way of reference to the original research questions and classifications which emanated from emergent themes. The teacher interviews were complemented by a questionnaire administered to one class of students from each of the six schools.

Participating teachers were selected through a stratified sampling technique. Analysis of data was undertaken from a qualitative stance in the case of interview participants. Narrative-style reporting of interview content was employed to facilitate accurate representation of the teachers' perceptions of visual arts history and criticism at the middle school level. A quantitative analysis of students' questionnaires provided

triangulation of methodology, ensuring greater levels of validity than would be afforded by qualitative methods alone.

With pressure being applied by the impending implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australian Schools (1998) for the formal inclusion of Arts Responses (aesthetics, art criticism) and Arts in Society (art history), a pressing need exists for clear information about current professional practice.
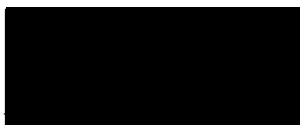
Findings indicated that a misalignment appears to exist between theoretical assumptions embedded in documentation supporting the implementation of the Framework and actual classroom teaching practice. The implications of such misalignment, albeit illustrated on a small scale, are that the initiatives of the Framework may not be sustainable in the longer term, precisely because they are built upon invalid assumptions about what teachers actually do. Whilst the size of the sample and scope of the research limits the generalisability of findings, this first foray may provide impetus for a more comprehensive and evaluative study at a later date.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

1. incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

2. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;

3. contain any defamatory material.

Signature ███████████_____

(LISA FRANCESCA PARIS)

Date *23rd February 2000*

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background to the study

Visual arts teachers are often told that alongside a comprehensive knowledge of studio techniques and classroom management strategies, it is important for them to have a good understanding of visual arts history. Ironically, discussions with teachers who have been practicing their craft for some time reveals that the vision for the future is often not lived out in the reality of the day-to-day routine. In short, it appears that the teaching of visual arts history is problematic within visual arts education.

The present study emanates from a desire to define the place occupied by visual arts history and visual arts criticism in schools prior to the implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia (1998). The Framework legislates for the inclusion of the study of *Arts in Society* and *Arts Responses* as part of a strategy for increasing visual literacy, art appreciation and improving the quality of arts education offered in Western Australian schools. The time line by which all West Australian schools must have implemented the Curriculum Framework and outcomes-based education, presently stands at the year 2004. Armed with indicators about current art educational practice in Western Australian schools, some assessment of the sustainability and likely success of the impending Framework may be possible.

1.2   The significance of the study

The significance of the research is that whilst there are many studies documenting the manner in which visual arts history and visual arts criticism are employed in middle schooling, both internationally and in the Eastern States of Australia, little attention has been given to the enterprise of qualifying/quantifying the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in middle schooling in Western Australia. This investigation opens the door for such disclosure.

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1.3   The purpose of the study

This research serves as a fact-finding investigation of art history/art criticism teaching practice at middle school level in six Western Australian schools. Most importantly visual arts teachers were asked about the kinds of situations in which art history/criticism were manifest in their teaching and further, what conditions and constraints impacted upon the process. Set against a general understanding of most teachers' competency in education, this information could facilitate debate about the development of strategies to compensate for shortfalls in professional practice where they exist and to provide confirmation of the legitimacy or otherwise of the assumptions which underpin current educational trends.

1.4   Research questions

This inquiry is designed to reveal the role that the study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism assumes within middle schooling in Western Australian schools. The research emanated from concerns expressed by a number of visual arts educators at small group moderation meetings and general art education network meetings during 1998 about the difficulties of accommodating the demands of the emerging Curriculum Framework.

Specifically, a number of middle school visual arts teachers had expressed to the researcher feelings of resentment about the need for radical restructuring of their normal teaching patterns and processes. In one instance a senior teacher and subject co-ordinator for visual art in an independent school had declared that she intended to actively resist the process of change that was occurring until "the whole thing proved sustainable". This teacher and several others expressed serious reservations about "change for change's sake" and described the Curriculum Framework as just one more unnecessary interference in the "real business of education". There seemed to be a suggestion that the Curriculum Framework would in time be dismantled because it was fundamentally at odds with what teachers "really do" and what they "really value".

The need for clear information about the actual enterprise of teaching visual arts history/criticism at middle school level has emerged. In response to this need, two related questions were asked:

1.   How do middle school visual arts teachers approach the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism, and what activities and applications are utilized in this process?

2.   What value do middle school students place on visual arts history and visual arts criticism?

It is acknowledged that both questions draw upon the collective understandings and perceptions of visual arts teachers and students (engaged in the visual arts education process) in a small sample. Limitations exist, therefore, in terms of the degree to which findings can be extrapolated to the wider schools community. Nonetheless, however limited, participants' impressions and opinions offer valuable insights into the mechanisms of the teaching and learning of visual arts history/criticism in Western Australian middle school classrooms.

1.5   Operational definitions

- *Visual Arts Appreciation:* The structured study of visual arts works specifically addressing their formal qualities, in the search for artistic meaning.
- *Visual Arts History:* An examination of artists, artworks and their contexts, with the intent of revealing priorities and beliefs.
- *Visual Arts Imagery:*
  Photographic/slide/electronic reproductions of works of art.
- *Visual Arts Criticism:*
  The appraisal, appreciation and critique of visual arts works within phenomenological, psychological, socially and culturally critical contexts for the purpose of deriving meaning. Duncum (1994, pp. 41-45)
- *Visual Arts Works:*
  Artifacts which have entered the public realm so as to embody the culture of a particular society. Brown (1997, p. 7)

- *Middle School Students:*

  Students undertaking formal schooling across Years 7 - 10 in Western Australian schools.

- *Teachers' and Students' Perceptions:*

  Insight and understanding (of teaching and learning visual arts history and visual arts criticism) deriving from observation, intuition and participation.

1.6   Overview of the Study

The circumstances surrounding the undertaking of this research inquiry have been enumerated in the introduction to this study and the resultant research questions have been stated. Contextual considerations including the introduction of the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (1998) have been identified and significant terms and definitions have been provided.

A review of relevant literature which establishes an historical evolution in visual arts educational practice, is provided in Chapter Two as a preamble to a review of contemporary teaching methodologies employed both internationally and in Australia. The review of literature enunciates the theoretical framework for the inquiry which is supported by analytical commentary on the relationship between the literature, theoretical underpinnings of the research and the inquiry itself.

A qualitative descriptive study involving interviews with teacher participants was undertaken and thereafter complemented by a short questionnaire with their students. The rationale supporting this methodology is outlined and elaborated in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four presents the results of the investigation through a process of cross-site analysis of student responses and qualitative analysis of teacher interviews. General themes emerging from the data collection processes have been synthesized into commonly-shared perceptions and experiences of the participants. A number of observations and conclusions about contemporary teaching practice with respect to visual arts history and criticism have been identified.

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the results of the study. Key statements, general conclusions and two recommendations deriving from the study, have been contextualized within the Curriculum Framework implementation process. Chapter Six explores the implications of the recommendations and proposes a reconciliation of these with the demands of the Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia (1998).

The structure of the research process adopted for this study is presented in the following table. The table shows a linear development (stages 1, 2, 3 and 4) in the research process and highlights the inter-relationship and inter-connection which exists between stages 1 and 4 of the undertaking.

1.7 Graphic representation of the structure of the research

Stage One	Review of literature
	- Historical overview
	- Discovery experiences
	- Discovery learning activities
	- Bipolar comparative approaches
	- Learning cycle approaches
	- Investigative craft of seeing
	- Personal and critical response
	- Unit Curriculum
	- Outcomes-based arts education
	- Recent research forays

Stage Two	Teachers' and students' perceptions
	- Qualitative interviews
	- Quantitative questionnaires

Stage Three	Comparative analysis of data
	- Coding of interview materials
	- Coding of questionnaire materials
	- Identification of emergent themes and commonly shared perceptions
	- Synthesis of key statements and conclusions

Stage Four	Recommendations and implications
	- Discussion of recommendations and consideration of associated implications

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CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1   Introduction

Visual arts teachers in classrooms in the late1990s still struggle with the issue of how best to address visual arts images in support of their students' visual arts experiences. Graduate visual arts teachers consistently emerge from tertiary institutions with an expectation that studio work, visual inquiry and design development will automatically take account of the work of both traditional and contemporary artists. A question emerges, however, about what artworks to use and where to find the resources required to enable students to learn about, their visual arts heritage. The difficulty presented in this simple inquiry seems often to be solved by a tendency either to abandon the endeavour altogether and simply not bother with visual arts history; or perhaps, in a falsely acceptable guise, to serve up tired recitations of great Western fine art by male artists, replete with the tried and true script of dates, places and descriptions (Reid, 1995, p.7).

Such a trend has been sufficiently disturbing to elicit a number of professional papers by writers including McKeon (1999), Fielding (1999), Marsh (1994), Sowell (1993) and Szekely (1991) on the importance of appropriate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in both general and visual arts education. Furthermore, the importance of finding alternative and vibrant teaching techniques for the study of visual arts history has resulted in a number of strategies being trialled and promoted. Such strategies include interactive games for art history; discovery experiences; learning cycle approaches; personal and critical response methodologies; and deconstruction techniques designed to reveal latent meanings and agendas. All these strategies espouse a common value regarding the importance of embracing the art of the past and the present. What differentiates these various approaches are the methods employed in the pursuit of the goal of understanding visual arts works.

2.2   Summary of approaches to visual arts history and criticism

Historically, the use of visual arts works in education has been underpinned by four major paradigms or mind sets. These include (a) the mimetic approach, where the copying of great works from European or Western tradition formed the basis of both art and moral education (often termed the picture-making approach); (b) the child-centred approach, where the use of visual arts images (and in fact the influence of adults) was limited or discouraged in a process by which the child embarked on a journey of self-discovery; (c) the discipline-based art education approach, where the roles of adults involved in the arts were studied and emulated in a process designed to inculcate adult vocational attributes in young people; and (d) a variety of contextual frameworks, where meaning and context were given priority over formalist concerns.

2.3   Contemporary methodologies for the study of
visual arts images

Building on the legacy of mimetic, child-centred, modernist/post-modernist, discipline-based, and contextual approaches to art education, a ground swell of contemporary approaches to the study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism has developed during the 1990s. Many of these still have strong links to discipline-based art education in particular which was trialled in Western Australian Schools in the form of the 'Unit Curriculum' initiatives of the 1980's.

Greer (1984) noted that discipline-based art education had a structured format which required students to complete units of study which were organized sequentially according to their degree of difficulty. Student's progressed through the units as they demonstrated competency with specific outcomes and skills:

> Discipline-based art education teaches both the skills of attending to art
> and the skills of expression. It is referenced to a written curriculum,
> evolving from a naive understanding of art to a sophisticated one, with
> tasks appropriate for students' mental and physical maturity that are
> presented in order from simple to complex. Discipline-based instruction
> also reflects balanced attention to all four components of the discipline

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of art, which reinforces one another as they are taught concurrently (Greer, 1984, p. 217).

Greer (1984) maintained that the ideas that guided the study of aesthetics, studio work, visual arts history and visual arts criticism within discipline-based art education came from the structures of the disciplines as they operated outside the school context. According to Greer (1984) the study of aesthetics should result in the acquisition of thought processes and procedures employed by the adult aesthete. This in turn should deliver to the student an aesthetic 'lens' which would result in attitudes that enabled recognition of the expressive character of artworks. Greer (1984) designated this initial stage of the discipline-based art education process as the "establishing of aesthetic perception" (p. 213).

Greer (1984) noted that the artist used media during studio production to make images that were metaphors for something of human 'import'. He believed that students needed to test techniques and ideas in a process designed to lead to adult understandings of art. Greer (1984) held that such a process should deliver a series of sequenced actions that constituted a chronological experience from the naive to the sophisticated, which in turn should allow the student to progress to the adult understanding of artists (p. 213).

The trialling of discipline-based art education both internationally and within Australia achieved mixed levels of success. Greer (1984) noted that teachers involved in the implementation of the model were often poorly equipped to do so. Hierarchical support for on-going professional development of teachers, combined with regular and systematic opportunities for students to experience discipline-based art education were seldom forthcoming, thereby undermining the potential success of the approach (p. 214). The failure of discipline-based art education to meet the expectations of theorists, visual arts educators and educational hierarchies provided impetus for a review of the model, and thereafter gave rise to a number of alternative initiatives in visual arts education practice. A brief survey of some of these follows.

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2.3.1 *Discovery experiences in visual arts history for young children*

Szekely (1991) believed that children have an inherent interest in the art of the past, and that a hands-on approach to accessing this material was warranted:

> Children's love for art history may not come from seeing and listening to slide lectures and recitations of adults' art accomplishments; it often comes from interest in discovering, handling and collecting beautiful old objects. (p.44)

Proceeding from this hands-on premise, Szekely challenged visual arts teachers to "throw away the script", exemplified in the traditional approaches to teaching visual arts history and exhorted teachers to encourage a discovery or hands-on approach to historical objects in the child's own home or school environment. The rarefied atmosphere of the art gallery, or the glossy images in art texts, were seen as remote and limited in value by Szekely, who propounded the view that an object actually held in a child's hand will inspire both a love of historical objects and the development of an awareness and appreciation of the visual arts.

Szekely (1991) held that art objects and the "home as a museum" play a fundamental role in the development of an historical awareness in young artists, noting "Taste and self confidence in art views and choices are formed through such discovery experiences" (p.49). Further, Szekely (1991) argued that the kinds of visual arts history taught in the past were often boring and irrelevant for children, particularly at the primary level, and needed to be substituted with more appropriate forms of inquiry:

> Children's history interests include dinosaurs and fossils as well as interests that surface through family histories preserved in old photo albums and scrapbooks or hidden in valentines in beautifully bound volumes. Kids delight in uncovering art history in attics, covering themselves with the history of grandpa's old hats, ties, or classic Hawaiian shirts. Kids are also interested in collecting old *stuff* such

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as old baseball gloves and flashlights. As collectors and players, they become interested in the history of dolls, teddy bears, marbles or jack in the boxes. (p. 43)

2.3.2 *Discovery-learning activities in visual arts history for secondary students*

In a related approach, Stinespring and Steele (1993) held that the formal study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism through discovery-learning has both merit and importance in the education of young artists. Stinespring and Steele in their review of the merits of contemporary practices in visual arts history and criticism, identified beneficial approaches to learning. Of these approaches discovery activities were deemed to be particularly valuable:

> A visual arts history concept attainment model employing discovery activities, (the process of defining concepts by attending to those attributes that are absolutely essential to the meaning and disregarding those that are not), involves learning to discriminate between what is, and is not, an example of the concept. (1993, p. 13)

Stinespring and Steele (1993) noted that even where the study of art was primarily a studio-based activity, process inquiry methods enabled teachers to inspire students to broaden their repertoire of ideas for projects and to see student art as part of a long tradition of art making. According to Stinespring and Steele (1993) the process of inquiry was seen to be most effective where visual arts history and visual arts criticism learning derived from activities related to the action of art historians and critics:

> In addition to standard historical questions of who, what, where, and when, current art historical practice often examines theoretical assumptions that govern investigation. Some techniques examine how a work of art is put together to create a meaningful structure. Others relate the work to the psychology of the artist. Still others may down play chronology and even the idea of a work of art in favour of placing the work within the social context in which it originated. (1993, p.8)

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Stinespring and Steele (1993, p.8) held the view that as students acquired a better understanding of the factors surrounding the production of works of art, their own ability to intelligently and consciously construct meaningful works of art was amplified. Such a "contextual" approach to the study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism is not universally endorsed and in fact other researchers favour quite different perspectives and methods of inquiry.

2.3.3 *Bipolar or comparative approach to teaching visual arts history*

In a different approach to the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism, Calabrese (1993) advocated a bipolar approach. Within such a framework Calabrese noted that styles and tendencies in the history of art may be viewed as polarities, that is, establishing oppositions between styles, qualities or formats. Calabrese maintained that as disparate works were analysed, point by point, their contrasting qualities became easier to explain and hence easier to grasp.

Calabrese (1993, p.14) commented that the simplicity and elasticity of the bipolar approach to visual arts history were its major assets:

> Clear cut general opposites such as Baroque and Neo-Classicism can readily be utilised as foundations for an interdisciplinary course. However, elasticity permits the course concepts to range from such wide polar generalities as fantastic-realistic to more specific historical frameworks such as Classic-Romantic.

A comparative approach to visual arts history and visual arts criticism necessarily requires that the teacher be well informed and knowledgeable about the periods being examined. Admirable though this approach may be in terms of support the teacher can offer students, the process being applied is somewhat bound up with the teacher's knowledge and may not prove effective in the treatment of works and movements with which the teacher is unfamiliar. As a counter to such criticism, it could be argued that teachers need only to prepare themselves properly before attempting to use a bipolar approach; but immediately issues such as time constraints within an already hectic and full curriculum act as obstacles to the long term

application of such an approach. The responsibility for success or otherwise of this approach sits squarely on the shoulders of the teacher.

2.3.4 *A learning cycle approach to arts history - collaborative small group work*

Where a bipolar approach to visual arts history and visual arts criticism places much of the responsibility for success upon the shoulders of the teacher, a learning cycle approach as recommended by Tudge and Rogoff (1989) shifted the responsibility for success towards the students themselves:

> Based on ideas that learning should be active, that concepts should be developed by students' exploration of concrete objects and that these are best accomplished through social interaction in small groups, the learning cycle makes use of collaborative, or small group work. Recent researchers have emphasised the social factor in learning and have stressed the importance of 'cognitive conflict' for the development of cognitive growth. This is most likely to occur when peers with differing viewpoints engage in cooperative discussion. While adults seem to be better at imparting specific skills and knowledge, free interchange among peers seems more likely to bring about a change in perspective. (Tudge, Rogoff, 1989, cited in Sowell, 1993, p. 20)

Sowell (1993) identified three basic parts to the learning cycle approach. These include (a) exploration, where students work in small groups and discuss objects in a process designed to develop concepts, (b) invention, where concepts being explored are expressed and expanded, and during which a vocabulary is formulated, and (c) application, where the invented concepts are applied to new situations to confirm that they have validity outside the specific situation in which they were identified. Whilst still requiring considerable preparation by the teacher, the learning cycle approach distributes some responsibility for the success of the model among the members of a group. Under the guidance of the teacher the students must explore, invent and apply information and concepts in a small group collaboration. In short, peers and the students themselves become co-teachers and colleagues in the education process.

2.3.5   *The investigative craft of seeing*

Whilst Sowell (1993) and Calabrese (1993) would argue for contextual considerations in the study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism, some educationalists, including Bann (1986), considered visual concerns warranted greater attention. Bann maintained that it is still difficult to determine the form that the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism should assume. Where traditional practice concerned itself with analysis of technique and subject, many newer approaches opt for a contextual stance. Bann, however, considered the visual property of an artwork to be of greater importance than either the analysis of technique, or the contextual approaches.

Bann (1986) provided the example of a 1984 conference on the Little Dutch Masters of the 17th Century, where art historians and critics debated the work of the period. Later commentary on the conference proceedings by American art historian Svetlana Alpers, author of the *Art of describing* and an authority on the topic, appeared as a stark contrast to the bickering which occurred during the event. Bann noted that Alpers' review of the issues and theoretical questions raised during the conference was couched in something approaching a mixture of contextual and formalist terms.

Alpers not only explained the hidden meaning implicit in the structure of the images being examined, but explained the importance of these images by contextualising them in relation to the values and beliefs of the society which had produced them. More importantly, Bann (1986, p. 25) noted that Alpers distilled the essence of the work of the period:

> In her view, the irreducible property of Dutch seventeenth century paintings which exists prior to any interpretation in moralistic and cultural terms is quite simply the visual effect of the paintings. What characterises the visual culture of the seventeenth century is a belief that reality is not given but has to be found out through what was considered to be the investigative craft of seeing - of which painting itself is an exponent.

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Bann considered the potential of the new art history/criticism to be an approach to the study of art, based on the "craft of seeing". Art historians, no less than students, must learn to see an image at its visual or pictorial level; within its cultural context (that is, in understanding the social values which influence the production of the work); and at the level of symbol systems where the viewer must read it until the meaning (iconography) is revealed.

With so many varied and creative approaches to the teaching of visual arts history now being promoted, it is difficult to isolate any one as being the most effective strategy for use in primary and secondary schools. In fact, each approach can be seen to have both positive and negative attributes. It is possible, however, to discern some elements which seem to be regarded as valuable within a number of approaches, and this shared quality can, therefore, be considered meritorious by virtue of widespread endorsement. Approaches evoking students' first impressions (the "personal" response) to art objects; teacher-directed analysis of the appearance of art objects (which could be termed "analytical or critical" response); and exploration of formal qualities of art works and attempts to discern the context of the work through co-operative peer-supported discussion (critical response), are all approaches which share the common feature of group discussion. However, finding a single approach which employs all these and other shared qualities, is as problematic as identifying the elements in the first place. The notion of the student being able to make two kinds of response to art images and objects (personal and critical response) is of course a significant one.

2.3.6 *Personal and critical response methods*

The polarities of personal response and critical response each have merit, but remain incomplete in terms of suitability as tools for the teaching and learning of visual arts history and visual arts criticism. In fact, it could be argued that they each hold half of the necessary material for understanding the value and potential of works of art. The integration of the student's critical and personal responses in a process of reciprocal teaching (small group work by students and the teacher in a collaborative process of investigation of artworks) was investigated by Marsh (1994) with some success. Marsh based her personal response approach on Darby's (1988) student-centred approach,

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which she refined and applied in a research study. In discussing the student centred approach, Darby (1988, p.21) stated:

> Each student brings to the activity of viewing their own unique combination of past experiences which influence how they interpret what they see and what it means to them individually ... (this) reinforces the fact that each student's response to an artwork is critical if the work is to have personal meaning for them and to their own life.

Marsh (1994) described personal response as an inquiry into the artwork with the intention of leading students to the making of informed personal decisions. She noted that Darby's use of description, analysis, interpretation and judgment processes encouraged the student to invest willingly in the time it takes to know an art work:

> Personal response is interpretative. In the proposed programme the deconstruction of the artwork via personal response is not a goal in itself. It provides a framework to interpret the meanings. Students however, may not be able to see beyond their own personal narcissistic view of the world. As part of a reflective reconstruction of meanings the information gathered in personal response needs to be extended to broader cultural contexts. This extension from the linear personal response model into social theory enables the student to understand the function of the artwork. (Marsh, 1994, p. 34)

Personal response methodology does not require that the art teacher possess an extensive knowledge of art images and movements in history. Rather, it draws upon the philosophies espoused by Bann (1986) and Svetlana Alpers (1984), as it invites the student to absorb the visual effect of works being considered before attempting to draw meaning or define context.

Critical response methodology is somewhat more structured, and involves a process of directed inquiry. The teacher initially assumes responsibility for assisting the students to describe, analyse, interpret and judge visual arts works. As students gain

confidence with the model, the teacher relinquishes responsibility for sustaining and directing the course of the discussion about the works or objects being reviewed. Ultimately, students become skilled in formulating opinions about the impact, and success of works of art and they are able to express views and defend judgements. Marsh (1994. p. 35) explained:

> In the visual arts classroom, the personal and critical response model can be used to provide a reciprocal teaching environment where the interaction is between artwork, the teacher and students. Eventually over time and with practice, the students can internalise the processes and respond to any artwork.

Contemporary visual arts education necessarily includes exposure to visual arts history and visual arts criticism as well as imagery (from both the past and the present) in the process of eliciting the students' personal and critical responses. Once activated, each student can apply these skills to the bridging of life-world interests as they exist outside the art classroom where the embedded meanings of advertisements, photographic imagery and television programmes can be discerned. Ultimately, the transmission of such a life skill becomes a major contribution to the development of students as educated consumers who are able to resist the manipulative intent of the mass media.

2.3.7 *Unit Curriculum art and craft education*

The notion that skills/techniques-based art education and aesthetic life-skills art education should be equally manifest in middle school art education programmes underpinned educational trends in Western Australian High Schools during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Deriving much of its form and structure from Discipline-Based Art Education initiatives, the Unit Curriculum model of art education offered students sixteen self-contained modules or units which had specific focus areas or (enquiry) modes. The sixteen units of study were organized into sequential streams, with prerequisite units being completed prior to progressing to more difficult and challenging modules of study. (Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 9)

The units contained five inter-related components which directed and supported each other. Students were required to undertake visual inquiry, visual literacy, studio work, art history and art criticism. The studio component occupied a central position within the unit curriculum framework and the remaining four components existed in an interactive and interdependent form. (Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 5) The super-ordinate status ascribed to the studio component of the unit curriculum approach was further re-inforced by teacher education programmes of the period, which often featured "artists as teachers" within universities and colleges. This studio focus sublimated the related art education areas of visual literacy, visual arts history and visual arts criticism and fostered in visual arts teachers of the period an endorsement of the studio focus as the primary undertaking in visual arts classrooms. (McKeon, 1999, p. 31) With respect to art history and art criticism, teachers and students were encouraged to co-operatively discuss and consider the success or failure of the final studio work by reference to the visual inquiry and art history which had supported and directed the form of the final work. In practice the art criticism component of the unit curriculum model, was most frequently a loosely-structured pseudo-personal/critical response style of evaluating the success of the student's *own* work. The following model illustrates graphically the interconnected and interdependent nature of the five components of the unit curriculum approach.

Figure One: Graphic representation of unit curriculum model (Ministry of Education, 1989, p. 5)

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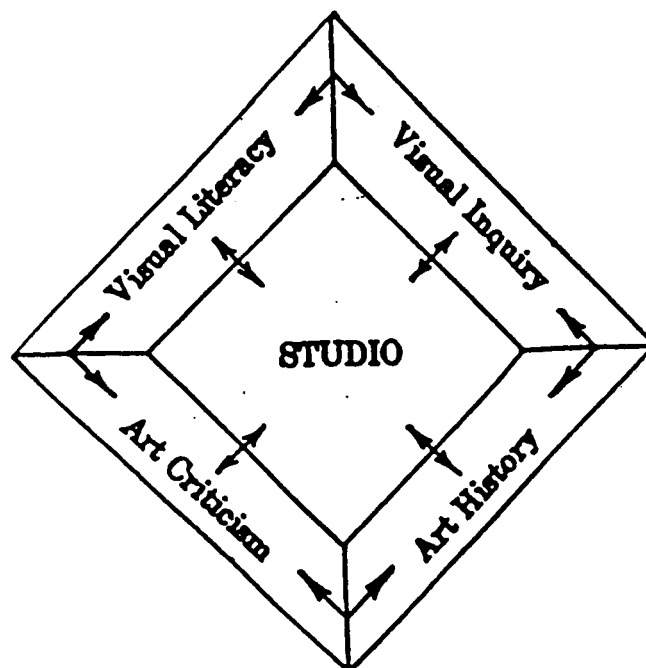
Despite reference to historical and contemporary visual arts works, the development of aesthetic response/critical skills typically remained beyond the scope of the students' "inwardly-focussed" appraisal of studio works. The selection of two-dimensional European fine art (typically by male artists) as exemplars of "styles" or "techniques" which students could consider using as an influence on their own work, established an instrumental application for, and relationship between, visual arts history and the process of middle school art education. This legacy of using visual arts works as *teaching aids* for specific studio techniques is still manifest in middle school art classrooms in the late 1990s. The unit curriculum style of education was promoted as having an "organic" and "circular" structure, in which the five internal components were not sequentially structured. In fact, students could begin a new project from an art historical perspective, or through consideration of an existing studio work they had completed, or by way of reference to a visual inquiry process investigating a specific theme within the parameters of the larger unit of study.

In most Western Australian state high schools, the specific units were offered as optional areas of study within the time-tabling of middle school subjects and the viability of an individual art module depended on acceptable numbers of students enrolling in that specific unit. The viability of a unit was often compromised by alternative art units or cross-curricula units (which students considered more "enjoyable" or "interesting") being offered on the same time-tabling grid-line. Almost imperceptibly, modifications to the initial structure of the units seems to have occurred as teachers sought to entice students into selecting one or more Unit Curriculum art or craft units, thereby ensuring the continuation of the subject on the gridline and ultimately, the employment of teachers to run the unit.

A culture of *bargaining* with students about the content to be covered in individual components, regardless of pre-existing descriptors, became an inherent flaw in the integrity of the units. By the mid 1990s the unit-curriculum style of art education at middle school level had begun to be dismantled; however, the culture of enticing students to take art units (which continue to be voluntary options in most schools) continues to the present day. Additionally, the super-ordinate status ascribed to studio work in the unit curriculum model continues to characterize the structure of middle

school art programmes in many Western Australian schools despite the abandonment of the Unit Curriculum model of art education in most schools.

2.3.8 Teacher education programmes

McKeon (1999) and Fielding (1999) noted that an overt emphasis upon studio work/product (as promoted in the Unit Curriculum model of arts education) was fostered and re-inforced by Australian universities and colleges until the early 1990's, as a direct legacy of the "artist as teacher" teacher education programmes:

> The practice of theory was regarded as an 'add on' by a studio-oriented tertiary sector who comprised 'artists who also teach'. The lack of models of art historical and critical practices in NSW tertiary institutions until the nineties ensured that these would be difficult domains for classroom teachers to implement. The rising visibility of the studio practitioner in preservice experiences from the 1960s onward, by contrast fired a generation of art teachers with enthusiasm for the fragrance of oil paint and the romance of representation.
> [McKeon, 1999, p. 31]

Fielding (1999) confirmed McKeon's (1999) position in relation to pre-service education for teachers noting:

> What seemed to happen was that teacher training institutions failed to convince art teacher graduates of the relative importance of art criticism in the art education program. Consequently, many schools were stocked with art teachers superbly trained in studio skills and with an impressive knowledge of historical developments in art - but with only a luke-warm commitment to teaching art criticism. (Fielding, 1999, p. 1)

McKeon (1999) stated that there had been a re-evaluation of teacher education programmes from 1995 onwards. As a result, there was a shift in focus toward a process-oriented model of teacher education in which students experienced appropriate visual arts history and criticism models:

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One of the assets of the subject today lies in the preservice education of
art teachers who within the university domain experience professional
models of art history, art criticism and art theory enacted by professional
historians and critics who are as passionate, committed and erudite
as the studio practitioners beside whom they work.
(McKeon, 1999, p. 32)

The employment of professional critics, aestheticians and historians in teacher
education programmes during the late 1990s echoes the philosophy of discipline-based
education in its pure form. The failed foray into the discipline-based style of art
education in Western Australian secondary schools during the 1980s seems, in
retrospect, almost unavoidable given the structural flaws of the approach in Western
Australian schools of the period.

McKeon (1994) noted that whilst theoretically promising, the Australian foray
into discipline-based art education was compromised during implementation when
(a) the strict division of time between the four parent domains (aesthetics, art history,
art criticism and art making) became unworkable, (b) teachers' capacities to model the
role of critic, aesthetician, artist and historian were compromised by the limitations of
their own pre-service training, and (c) the Unit Curriculum style of discipline-based art
education failed to mirror the reality of the art world (the intent of DBAE), where the
boundaries between vocational roles were blurred and not tightly enclosed.
Interestingly, in reviewing the Australian foray into discipline-based art education,
McKeon (1994) highlighted the earlier writing of Efland (1990) who had previously
termed discipline-based art education a "curricular fiction" because it was impossible to
reproduce the theoretical divisions and the supposed benefits of such division in a real
life context. (McKeon 1994, p.16)   The "revisiting" of discipline-based education in
contemporary teacher education programmes has translated into improved quality of
classroom practice in many Australian schools according to McKeon (1999). However,
she went on to note that more work needed to be undertaken in this domain. McKeon
(1999) further stated that recent trends in teacher education (and consequently
classroom practice) included the endorsement of "frames" as an aid in the engagement
of visual arts works by students:

The default to chronology and to formalism may not be exorcised from the classroom but they have been diversified and given context and meaning with the initiation of models for interpretation expressed as Frames within present syllabus structures in NSW.

(McKeon, 1999, p. 32)

Israel (1997) similarly noted that frames provided valuable points of reference for classroom teachers seeking to model analysis and interpretation of visual arts works for their students. Israel (1997) identified four frames (subjective, structural, cultural and Postmodern), from which teachers and students could undertake the critical and historical study of visual arts works. Israel's delineation of frames from which the visual arts classroom teacher could approach the study of visual arts history and visual arts criticism, echoes the work of Marsh (1994) in her endorsement of personal and critical frames of reference. Both Israel (1997) and Marsh (1994) maintain that frames of reference constitute a vehicle for engaging both visual arts works and visual culture in a meaningful way.

2.3.9 *Outcomes-based arts education*

The notion that visual arts education should offer students the skills which will allow them to make sense of the visual culture which surrounds them, as well as providing a vehicle for the transmission of visual arts and cultural heritage, is supported by recent developments in the Western Australian educational context. The priorities of outcomes-based education generally (and specifically the teaching of the visual arts) increasingly demand that students demonstrate achievement in specific outcome areas. The approach represents a major shift away from a focus on educational inputs and time allocation towards one which emphasises the desired result of schooling. (Curriculum Framework, 1998, p. 6)

The outcomes *Arts Ideas, Arts Skills/Processes, Arts Responses,* and *Arts in Society* constitute the primary areas of an educational focus set to direct teaching and learning practice into the next century. The major outcomes and associated concepts are interrelated and interconnected. All are equally important and should be developed concurrently. As students progress, they demonstrate the major

outcomes in increasingly complex ways, revising familiar concepts each time.
(Curriculum Framework, 1998, p. 53)

The study of *The Arts in Society* necessarily implies an emphasis on contextual considerations, which visual arts educators have a responsibility to address within the art courses they teach. The Curriculum Framework documentation released in 1997/8 obliged teachers to address all outcomes, beginning in 1999, with all schools fully implementing the Curriculum Framework by 2004. Given the legislative nature of the Curriculum Framework documentation, all visual arts educators will have to confront the issues of the place of visual arts history and visual arts criticism and the appropriate use of art images in classrooms from 1999 onwards. As with many previous policy revisions in educational practice, there will no doubt be resistance to change from some quarters. The immediacy of the implementation time line and the consequences of general non-compliance may have ramifications for funding for schools, thus making resolution of the issue imperative.

2.4 Specific studies similar to the current study

Two primary levels of inquiry were embodied in the present research. First of all, attention was given to the issue of whether middle school art teachers routinely incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in their teaching. Secondly, in the light of the results of the first area of inquiry, a question existed about the value students placed upon the inclusion of such materials in their visual arts education programmes. Only a small number of studies which deal specifically (rather than peripherally) with these issues have been outlined in the review of literature for the present inquiry, suggesting there is an urgent need for further research.

2.4.1   The role of visual art works in Western Australian primary schools

Brown (1997) in considering the role of visual arts works in the theory and practice of education, with reference to the perceptions of Western Australian primary visual arts teachers, undertook research involving three levels of analysis. The stated intent of the research was to consider the disparity between curricular assumptions and practice in primary schools (1997, p. ii). Brown, in reviewing the literature underpinning the research, synthesized a rationale supporting the employment of visual

arts works in the classroom and found that tradition and past practice strongly impacted upon the theoretical debate. Ironically, contemporary professional practice did not mirror the embedded assumptions of curriculum writers:

> Variations in how frequently art works were used, which art works were chosen, and how they were integrated into the lessons, were seen to depend primarily upon the relationship between teachers' philosophies and those embodied in the Western Australian K-7 Syllabus. The tendency to marginalise the use of art works was also found to be related to the ambiguities in the Syllabus, which were seen to derive from its eclectic philosophical heritage. (Brown, 1997, p. iii)

Brown identified the existence of a "gap" between theory and normal teaching practice and questioned the validity of the standards commonly applied to the process of teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism. Brown noted that the whole area was a potential minefield, because of differing perceptions of appropriate practice:

> Great care and thought is generally given in the creating of a curriculum document that is theoretically coherent and educationally sound; but unless teachers implement the ideas it puts forward, the benefits will not accrue to the children for whom the policies were intended. It is perhaps in the area of art criticism and aesthetics that there is the greatest gap between theory and practice in teaching the visual arts at primary level. (1997, p. 5)

Brown (1997) posited that the existence of a gap between the requirements of curriculum documents and actual teaching practice was not of itself a cause for concern. Rather, Brown considered teachers' ignorance (where it existed) of the existence of such a gap was a far more insidious phenomenon, stating "that this tremendous schism between theory and practice is not perceived to be a major crisis in our field ... is our most dangerous threat" (Brown, 1997, p. 5).

Such a gap undoubtedly reflects the priorities of primary specialist art teachers, who are more interested in survival (coping with the demands of the job on a day-to-day basis) rather than in the merits/myths of teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism responding skills. Similarly, Bullock and Galbraith (1992) in their study of the beliefs and practices of two secondary art teachers noted that the gaps that existed between theory and practice led the teachers in their study to compromise or modify their own beliefs in an attempt to artificially fulfill the demands of curriculum theory. (1992, p. 86) The issue of teachers feeling compromised due to the gap between theory and their practice is a pressing one. Altruism is rare in any field and it is likely that a teacher who did not value an externally applied standard (or body of theory) would, in time, ignore or dispense with its recommendations or procedures. Evidence that teachers could be expected to resist embracing educational reforms which they consider to be remote from their normal teaching style is provided in both visual arts education practice and across the curriculum learning areas. Sparkes (1990) noted that such resistance was evident and indeed a legitimate response to the imposition of externally applied standards which often accompanied new initiatives in education:

> To put it bluntly, how would you feel if you were asked to put considerable effort into changing your familiar and preferred ways of teaching in order to achieve something that you did not think was valuable? I would suggest that in such a situation you would do what many teachers do when the costs outweigh the rewards. That is you would sensibly resist change or hedge your bets and make minor investments in the process to allow superficial changes to occur that did not disturb your personal ideologies, beliefs, values and educational practices. (Sparkes, 1990, p. 9)

2.5   The need for further research

The notion of visual arts history being a means by which students can make sense of the world around them (their life-world interest) is expressed and promoted by McKeon (1994), Reid (1995), Addiss and Erickson (1993), and forms the substance of the theoretical framework for this research. Addiss and Erickson (1993) attempted both

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to define visual arts history and criticism and to offer a justification for its inclusion in contemporary visual arts education curricula. Addiss and Erickson (1993) noted that the essence of visual arts history is broader than previously imagined, "the histories of advertising and of design are not peripheral but essential to understanding the history of art" (p. 110).

A further observation by Addiss and Erickson (1993) is that during the last decades of the 20th century, American society (along with most other developed nations) became a "visual society". The implications of such a development are illustrated in the "managed performances" that the American presidential media campaigns assume in that country:

> The image of a presidential candidate is as powerful as the candidate's words. The importance and sophistication of image in politics has increased steadily since 1960, when analysts credited John F. Kennedy's more appealing image for his victory over Richard Nixon in their debate. The same powerful visual tactics are used by Madison Avenue to market everything from children's shoes to automobiles. (Erickson and Addiss, 1993, p. 110)

Ultimately, the issue of the importance of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in a visual society becomes one of *self-determination*. People who do not understand the symbol systems which surround them in everyday life become akin to a deaf person in a society where sound creates nuances of meaning, or to an illiterate person where an inability to read in an information-rich society imprisons them in a social vacuum. The age-old adage that knowledge is power equates with the potential for choice. People who have limited access to information have potential choices reduced by virtue of being unaware of alternatives. Similarly, a limited understanding of the meaning of visual culture makes a person vulnerable to manipulation by those who are visually literate and skilled in the use of the media.

Reid (1995) argued for the inclusion of the study of visual arts images in art education on the basis that imagery assumes a fundamental place in the world around us, and these images are often loaded with meaning and messages which pass almost subliminally into the cultural reservoir which sustains our thinking. Reid maintained that it is essential that students who are exposed to images (popular- common culture or traditional art works) be well versed in the techniques of uncovering the layers of meaning inherent in these images. Reid (1995) argued that "by revealing the power relations expressed in these works students will begin to see the hidden messages and meanings that tend to be overlooked" (p. 12).

Reid is particularly concerned that the study of art images should provide students with an "approach" which will enable them to question both the values which underpin the works being examined and more importantly, to question the place and status of both men and women in modern society. Reid (1995, p.12) further argued that the study of visual arts works has a role to play in the construction of gender identity:

> It is only by exploring how notions of male and female opposition evolved as a social construction rather than inherent characteristics of individuals that students will be empowered to challenge these theories as a means of determining who they are.

The study of art images and their meanings empowers both adults and children by enabling them to peel back the layers of meaning so skillfully developed by the "picture makers", and to critically assess the substance of these images. This is of particular importance when issues raised by contextualists, including feminist and multiculturalist writers, question the stereotypes presented and reinforced through many visual art images, especially those from the European fine art tradition.

Reid (1995) identified three principles of art criticism which are essential to adequately interrogate social relations in figurative visual arts images. First of all, students need to have particular information before they can respond to questions raised about the impact of art images in creating meaning in Western culture (that is, knowledge of the patriarchal structure of society and the place and purpose of art

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works in perpetuating class and sex stereotypes). Secondly, critical questioning or deconstruction is the principle method by which interpretation and evaluation of art works occur. Thirdly, the content of the art curriculum and the formalist methodologies employed to teach it often serve to reinforce gender stereotypes, which are harmful to students developing a sense of self. In developing the third principle, Reid (1995, p. 8) explained:

> The construction that men are the creators of culture is further
> perpetuated by the fact that the artists predominantly studied in schools
> are also male and their lives and works are interpreted through the eyes
> of male historians and critics. As the substance of the art curriculum
> this knowledge reiterated hegemonic masculinity and is oppressive to
> female students who are subjected to it.

Similarly, McKeon (1994) in writing about the purpose of visual arts education in the school years stated that whilst it was difficult to quantify the contribution of visual arts history and criticism, several attributes were undoubtedly inherently valuable. According to McKeon (1994, p.16) these attributes included (a) the opportunity for familiarization with alternate systems for communication and expression, (b) exposure to culturally-shared ideas, skills and values, and (c) the opportunity to "reason with others about social problems in a systematic manner". McKeon (1994, p.16) maintained that a diverse community of educational theorists saw the acquisition of education as marked by the shared disposition to advance and defend claims for rational action; "persuasion by argument rather than coercion by power".

In developing her argument for rational action McKeon (1994) referred to the work of Broudy (1988) in which he identified the process of rational persuasion as the capacity to gain interpretive meanings from one's surroundings and experiences. It is here that the importance of, and the strongest argument for the study of visual arts history and criticism may lie. Whilst studio work makes a valid contribution to development of the student's expressive skills, the inclusion of the formal study of visual arts works provides the student with an understanding of the symbol systems

which pervade visual culture. McKeon (1994, p. 24) gave consideration to the end-in-view of schooling:

> Historical and interpretive knowing becomes the active experience of the arts beyond the school years. In the context of present priorities it is the residual which survives long after completing school which is applied to interpreting the symbolism of the current commercial for Mitsubishi Corporation which alludes to the work of Christo. Knowledge which surfaces when standing before the fountains of the Piazza Navona, surveying the vista of Borobudur, or enjoying cinematic quotations from films such as Beauty and the Beast.

McKeon maintained that "art historical knowing" offers considerable potential for bridging the "life world interests" of the individual student. She maintained that the art world atmosphere of history and theory "reintegrates and invigorates all aspects of artistic endeavour in terms of action, interpretation and finally reflection" (McKeon, 1994, p. 24). More importantly, the study of visual arts history provides an opportunity for students to engage in discussion where they can practise the skills of rational persuasion as opinions about works of art are offered, discussed and modified collaboratively between class members.

Historically, both tradition and reason have motivated the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in general and visual arts education. Students are better served by an education process that delivers literacy, visual or otherwise, than by one that does not. Visual arts history and visual arts criticism are often regarded as essential vehicles for the development of visual or artistic literacy. Additionally, the notion that people can function autonomously, separated from both community and personal culture (as propounded by advocates of child-centred and neo child-centred approaches), seems to have little or no support in the 1990s.

Contemporary visual arts education programmes are normally characterised by a commitment to delivering an education that enables students to express their own creativity within a cultural framework that draws sustenance from their own and others'

traditions, beliefs and values. Such a position in combination with a commitment to the development of visual literacy (which enables students to reveal latent meanings and stereotypes within visual arts works, and to evaluate their worth), provides students with the necessary tools to bridge the disparate sectors of their life-world in a meaningful way. Finally, the notion that the study of the visual arts constitutes a form of cultural capital which should be accessible to all children (regardless of gender, race, socio-economic issues) provides a supporting framework upon which the proposed research was developed:

> Arguments for visual arts history in school have not been to provide
> students with a fuller understanding of the art community, but with a
> form of cultural capital. The idea behind the concept of cultural capital
> is that art can be democratized and social differences reduced by making
> high culture accessible to all children. (Freedman, 1991, p. 40)

The study of visual arts history and criticism in schools is a valuable undertaking, offering students skills which become life-enhancing in a visually-focussed world. Yet in spite of this understanding, which is supported by theorists and educationalists and regardless of the multitude of professional papers urging implementation of improved teaching methodologies, little or no research has been undertaken to evaluate progress in this area.

With increasing pressure being applied by the implementation of the Curriculum Framework for K - 12 Education in Western Australia 1998 which will force teachers to formally include visual arts history and criticism in their art education and assessment programmes (in the form of the Outcomes Arts Responses and Arts in Society), an urgent need now exists for clear information on teaching practice in Western Australian Schools.

The brief foray by Brown (1997) into primary art education exposed a gap between theory and practice in the use of visual arts history. It seems reasonable to assume that similar differences may exist at other levels in Western Australian educational institutions. The visual arts history syllabus for tertiary entrance-focused

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courses (T.E.E. Art - Years 11 and 12) in Western Australian schools have been the subject of several reviews over recent years. Inadequacies in teaching methodologies for this level of education have generally been corrected by way of teacher moderation meetings, periodic reviews by the [1]Art Syllabus Committee and on-going self assessment by teachers responsible for these courses. By contrast, middle school visual arts education programmes have remained an unknown quantity in terms of common practices or accepted standards for the teaching of visual arts history and criticism.

2.6   Conclusion to the Chapter

Visual arts education practice during the last 100 years has generally included formal attention to the teaching of visual arts history and criticism. Yet despite this long standing commitment by educationalists to the inclusion of such content in education programmes, there has been little consensus about the most appropriate methodologies for teaching this material. The journey from the early models of mimetic visual arts teaching to Discipline Based Art Education, and later through contextual stances has been a long one, and in many respects, one which was quite tortuous.

The last ten years of visual arts curriculum writing both within Australia and internationally have evidenced renewed attention to the problems of visual arts history/criticism education. In response to this attention, several models and approaches have been trialled in Australian schools with varying success. Such models included Discovery approaches where a move away from dates/places focus was espoused as valuable, Bipolar/Comparative approaches where disparate styles viewed

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[1] *de Bruin, Bromfield and Monk chaired syllabus committee reviews (dates unavailable) of visual arts history for Year 12 art courses in Western Australian schools and oversaw rationalization of size and content of the course:*
1. *the reduction of the number of images studied under the photorecognition component;*
2. *the inclusion of new areas of study including Impressionism;*
3. *the introduction of a visual arts history of design component;*
4. *the introduction of an image analysis component.*
The on-going review of year 12 courses is now moderated by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia in consultation with teachers in the field.
(Digby de Bruin, Western Australian Curriculum Council, 1998)

comparatively became easier to understand, Unit Curriculum initiatives where visual arts history was sublimated to a super-ordinate studio focus and Personal/Criticial Response methodologies where the students' observations and reactions to a visual arts work were supported through a formal process of teacher-guided analysis. Each of these models offered positive benefits to the students however, each was revealed to have limitations in the context of the Western Australian visual arts classroom.

Despite the best intentions, the work undertaken to the present has failed to reveal an all encompassing approach to visual arts history/criticism education which would bridge the gap between the life-world interests of students and the philosophies and theoretical models of curriculum writers. The classroom practice of teachers in the middle school study reported here echoed the gap noted by Brown (1997) in her inquiry into Visual Arts practice in Western Australian primary schools. Important questions about the Visual Arts component of the Curriculum Framework for K - 12 education in Western Australian schools in this domain clearly need to be addressed urgently, and the implications of such answers for the long term sustainability of the Curriculum Framework need to be considered.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODS OF RESEARCH

3.1   Introduction

This study involved teachers and students from six metropolitan schools in the Perth district of Western Australia. Proceeding from the premise that the study was to be essentially a "perception-based" inquiry (designed to elicit both teachers' and students' impressions of the way art history and art criticism are employed), a qualitative, descriptive structure was selected to collect and present the data collected from the teacher participants. To support and balance this approach, student participant responses were triangulated by way of quantitative analysis of questionnaire data. Although ten schools were invited to participate in the research, only six schools ultimately contributed material to the inquiry. One teacher and an associated middle school class of students from each interview site participated in the study. Although the schools present diverse student populations, teacher profiles and geographical locations within the metropolitan area, strikingly similar results were elicited from both teacher and student participants. All interview dialogue was recorded by way of audiocassette tape, which remains securely preserved for use in future follow-up investigations.

3.2   Research design - qualitative descriptive study

A qualitative descriptive format was chosen for the research on the basis that the study sought to elicit teachers' and students' perceptions about the place visual arts history/criticism occupied within the art curriculum. Qualitative reporting of participants' responses was deemed to be highly appropriate because of the rich nuance of meaning which is able to be communicated through narrative methodology. The conversational style of qualitative investigation allows greater flexibility in the direction the research interview can take whilst in progress. Borg (1987) noted that semi-structured interview techniques were valued in educational research because of their inherent adaptability. The dialogue which takes place between interviewer and interviewee allows much greater depth of insight compared with other methods of collecting research data. Borg (1987, p. 110) observed that:

Most interviews used in educational research are semi-structured. The interviewer follows a guide that lists questions covering all essential information needed by the researcher. He has the option to follow up any answers in an effort to get more information or clarify the respondent's replies.

In the present study, semi-structured interviews enabled teacher participants to "describe" the place visual arts history and visual arts criticism occupied within their teaching repertoires. A narrative style of reporting teacher participants' responses was selected for the reporting of teachers' descriptions and responses in this study. Burns (1990) maintained that narratives within qualitative research constitute a valuable source of insight into the school experience of participants in education research because they allow the researcher to represent a more complete picture of the participants' perceptions:

> Unstructured and semi structured interviews are a major tool in the qualitative researcher's pack. Accounts derived from interviews are studied for themes. This data is reported as narrative containing direct quotations from interview statements, field notes etc. This illustrative data provides a sense of reality, describing exactly what the informant feels, perceives, and how they behave. (p. 277)

In addition to semi-structured interviews with six participating teachers, fully-structured or "closed" questionnaires were administered to a class of students taught and nominated by each teacher. Borg (1987) maintained that:

> A questionnaire usually contained questions aimed at getting specific information. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Questions may be of either the closed form, in which the questions permits only certain responses, or the open form, in which the subject makes any response he wishes in his own words. Generally it is desirable to design questions in closed form so that quantification and analysis of the results may be carried out efficiently. (p.109)

The purpose of employing both semi-structured interviews with teacher participants and structured/closed questionnaires with their students, was to provide triangulation of the research methods through the specified methods of data collection in combination with literature review and analysis:

> Triangular techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and/or using a variety of (two or more) methods. By collecting and analysing different viewpoints, the evaluator ensures that the final evaluation report reflects the multiple realities of specific social relationships. (Burns, 1990, p.273)

3.3   Schools sampling technique

A stratified sampling technique was employed to select schools from Perth's metropolitan area. A stratified sampling methodology was deemed to be appropriate because as Borg (1981, p. 156) stated:

> Stratified sampling is a device to assure that certain population elements are represented. In many educational studies, it is desirable to select a sample in such a way that the research worker is assured that certain subgroups will be represented in the sample in proportion to their numbers in the population itself.

Ideally, stratified sampling allows the researcher to draw conclusions from the schools' sample which could be extrapolated to the larger Western Australian schools community. In this study however, the sample size prohibits generalisation beyond the indicative stage. The schools were identified as possible research sites because of their geographical location:

1   Those from the extreme northern suburbs of Perth.

2   From the hills area to the east of the central business district.

3   Those located south of the Swan River.

4   Those from the coast to the west of the C.B.D.

5   One school within the central business district of Perth
        was also invited to be involved in the process.

In this way all geographical quadrants (north, south, east, west and overlapping city central) were covered. As a lesser focus it was hoped that varying geographical locations might equate with variations in ethnic composition and socio-economic groupings from which student populations derive. Table One illustrates teacher participants' description of the composition of student populations at each of the six schools which participated in the study.

Table One   -   Schools Sample Profile (as described by teacher participants)

Sch	Tcher	Source	School Pop.	Ethnic Comp	Socio-Econ	Loc'n
1	A	State School	Co-Ed	Italian European	High (Wealthy)	Hills-East
2	B	Independent (Catholic)	Single Sex (Male)	Italian Chinese Aboriginal	Middle-class	Hills-East
3	C	Independent (Catholic)	Single Sex (Female)	Unable to Identify	Middle to high	City-Central
4	D	State School	Co-Ed	English Irish/Scottish	Lower-Middle Middle-class	North
5	E	State School	Co-Ed	Australian Asian	High	South
6	F	State School	Co-Ed	English Scottish Aboriginal	Deprived Underprivileged	South

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3.3.1 *Introduction protocol*

Telephone contact between the researcher and a senior administrative officer was established at each of the ten schools which met the schools sampling criteria and selection criteria for teacher participants. Thereafter, where the middle school visual arts teacher indicated a willingness to participate in the study, an introductory letter (Appendix 6) was delivered to the school Principal wherein the structure and intent of the research was elaborated. School Principals were invited to authorize the study and in most cases were extremely supportive of the research. The Principal of School 5 initially expressed reservations about the number of requests he received for the school to participate in post-graduate studies. Having declined the invitation for the school to be involved in the research in the first instance, the Principal subsequently gave permission for the school to participate, after personal representations were made by the researcher.

3.4 Research Participants

The constraints of time and budget prohibited the selection of a larger sample, and six secondary art teachers were therefore taken as representative of the wider teaching community. These teachers were interviewed on site at their school, using a semi-structured interview guide which took approximately 40 minutes to complete. Additionally, one class of middle school students from each school were selected by the participant teacher as being typical of most middle school students at the school. These students completed a questionnaire which explored learners' perceptions of the way art history and art criticism were employed in the art education programme offered at their school.

3.4.1 *Teacher participants - selection criteria*

Initially 10 schools (both State schools and Independent institutions) were canvassed as being suitable sites from which teacher participants might be drawn. Discussions with school deputy principals revealed that only 8 schools employed suitable candidates for the research. The selection criteria were limited to three elements and the two schools which were eliminated from the initial sample were

excluded on the basis that they employed teachers (for middle school visual arts education) who had less than one year's experience, or employed teachers with teaching qualifications which did not meet the minimum or equivalent degree criteria. The selection criteria for identification of these teachers derived from issues relating to:

Gender:	While a gender balance of participants was initially sought, only female teachers were willing to participate in the study.
Educational Qualifications:	A minimum tertiary qualification of Bachelor of Education or equivalent 4-year art specialist degree was prescribed.
Experience:	At least one full-time year of teaching experience was prescribed. In reality all participants possessed more than one year's experience and some teachers were very experienced, with twenty or more years' professional practice. The length of teaching experience in the sample ranged from 4 years to 25 years.

Teachers who met the selection criteria at schools which were deemed to be appropriate interview sites, indicated their willingness to participate in the study by signing a form of disclosure and informed consent (Appendix 5). Anonymity of teacher participants, student participants and schools was assured. Each teacher indicated a willingness to be interviewed on site and further, gave permission for the interview to be tape recorded.

3.4.2 *Student Participants - selection criteria*

A second tier of research participants was comprised of students selected from schools where the teacher participant indicated that she "believed" a structured approach to visual arts history and visual arts criticism was a routine part of the art education offered within their school. A short questionnaire of 12 questions was administered by the teacher participant to the students in the normal class setting at a time after the teacher had been interviewed. Due to the employment constraints of the

researcher, the administration of the questionnaire was not independently supervised by the researcher and this is acknowledged as a limitation of the inquiry.

Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, parental permission was sought by way of an official letter from the school (Appendix 2), advising the scope and intent of the research. Parents who did not want their child to participate in the study were invited to contact the school and thereafter, arrangements would be made for their child to continue with other work whilst the questionnaire was administered. All students who were selected for participation in the study indicated a personal willingness to be involved. Several days before the administration of the questionnaire the teacher interviewee read a standard prepared script (Appendix 3) to the students, which advised them that participation in the study was voluntary, unrelated to their grade for the subject and for use by an independent researcher working on a university degree. Students were asked to consider whether they wished to be involved, and were invited to approach the teacher privately over the next few days if they decided that they did not wish to proceed. No parent or student at any of the six schools indicated that they wished to be removed from the sample. Table Two shows the composition of student participants for the questionnaire at each of the six school sites.

Table Two   -   Student Participants who completed questionnaire

Sch	Teacher	Year	Age Gp	Male	Female	Total
1	A	8	13yrs	8	7	15
2	B	9	14yrs	17	-	17
3	C	10	15yrs	-	25	25
4	D	9	14yrs	6	20	26
5	E	8	13yrs	13	10	23
6	F	9	14yrs	17	15	32

3.5   Research instruments

Data collection involved a semi-structured interview (up to three quarters of an hour in length) with teacher participants and a short questionnaire for students.

3.5.1   *The semi structured interview - teacher participants*

Following consent of teacher participants, an audiocassette tape recorder was used to record the interview responses. Teachers were assured that in the event that they elected to withdraw from the inquiry process, the tape would be returned to them. Giroud (1997) employed two types of open-ended interview questions in a study of secondary arts teachers' perceptions of integrated arts and found "funnel" questions to be very useful tools. Burns (1997) also reinforced the perception of funnel questions as valuable inquiry tools noting that "funnel questions gradually guide the direction of the interview by commencing with broad general questions and focusing progressively onto the topic with more specific questions". (p. 284)

For reasons of comparability (in order that a consistent approach to teacher participants be achieved by the researcher during the interview process) and to enable replication of the proposed study, a written interview schedule comprising funnel questions was prepared to address several key areas. The areas addressed included: (a) descriptive information about the teacher; (b) teachers' perceptions of the importance of visual arts history and visual arts criticism; (c) teachers' perceptions of the success of methods, strategies and techniques they personally employ in the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism; and (d) teachers' perceptions of the degree to which students accept the validity of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in their art programmes.

The final interview schedule (Appendix 4) contained forty eight questions which were formatted under the categories of:

- personal information
- background questions
- ethos of the school
- general philosophical questions
- clarification of terms

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- teaching practice
- questions for teachers who believe
  they do incorporate VAH/C
- final commentary

3.5.2 Structured questionnaire - student participants

The student questionnaire (Appendix 1) was structured in a manner which elicited student perceptions of their teacher's delivery of visual arts history/criticism, through a fixed-closed choice answer scenario. Twelve questions were worded with either four or five response options which generally asked students to rank the occurrence of specific outcomes on the basis of *always, often, sometimes, seldom or never*. The selection of a specific answer option was driven by the student's perception of how often the particular outcome or circumstance occurred. It is acknowledged that a student's perception in this regard may differ from that of other students, the teacher, or the actual rate of occurrence. This perceptual variance represents a limitation of the research, yet ironically is also a strength of the inquiry, allowing student responses to combine into a rich tapestry of insight and understanding of the learning process. It is assumed that where a whole class of students uniformly reported that a teacher employed a particular mode of delivery or application of art historical content, it is likely this collective assessment or perception would have merit as an accurate representation of the teacher's behaviour. Where diverse responses typified the perception of a particular class of students, it is possible that this may well reflect a teacher's "organic" or changeable handling and incorporation of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in that context. In such circumstances, it would be imperative to consider student responses in the light of the teacher's self-assessment of that criterion or outcome. The categories of questions asked, addressed:

- visual arts history and visual arts criticism as a "routine"
  part of art education;
- teacher's delivery (methodology) of visual arts history and
  visual arts criticism;
- perceptions of value of visual arts history and visual arts
  criticism in stimulation of students' visual inquiry or studio work;
- capacity for applying analytical skills acquired in the study

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of visual arts history and criticism to evaluation of the student's own/other's work.

3.5.3 *Trial of the research instruments*

Upon receipt of ethics clearance and approval for the research to commence, a two-part procedural structure consisting of a pilot study and the larger research was undertaken. A visual arts specialist teacher (not from the final teacher participant sample) was selected using the schools' sample criteria and teacher participant selection criteria for the purpose of clarification/testing/refining interview questions. Having administered the interview schedule in a trial interview, the participant was asked for her impressions of appropriateness of the questions. The teacher indicated that the structure of the interview seemed appropriate when judged in the light of the intent of the inquiry (guided by the overarching research questions). Only minor adjustments were made to the final form of the interview schedule. Additionally, a middle school student from a school outside the school sample was asked for impressions of the questionnaire. As a consequence of trialling the student questionnaire, an error was detected in the structure of one of the question's answer options where the choice "strongly agree" appeared twice, rather than as "strongly agree and strongly disagree". This error was corrected before the questionnaire was administered to the wider student sample population. No other adjustments were deemed necessary.

3.6   Ethical considerations

Full disclosure of the intent and structure of the research was made to the participants of this study. Separate letters of introduction and disclosure were provided to:

- school principals,
- visual arts specialists,
- parents whose children comprised the student sample.

School principals and visual arts specialists indicated their willingness to participate in the study by way of a consent form which was signed and returned to the

researcher. Parents were invited to contact the school if they harboured any concern about their child's participation in the study and the option to withdraw their child from the inquiry was made available. No parent or student indicated an intention to withdraw from the process. Student participants were advised prior to the administration of the questionnaire that their involvement was voluntary and unrelated to their assessment in visual arts.

The six visual arts specialist teachers who participated in the study were given verbatim transcripts of their interview tapes for approval, adjustment, and further commentary prior to any analysis of data being undertaken. Teachers who indicated that they would like access to the final results of the study will be provided with a copy of the thesis document following submission. All participants were aware that they retained the right to withdraw from the research process at any time, that their identity would remain anonymous, and that confidentiality of data would be maintained.

3.7 Limitations

The limitations of this research lie in the fact that a relatively small sample has been the source of the data. In short, a potential flaw exists wherever small samples are used as a basis for judgments about a wider community - in this case teachers in Western Australian schools. A further limitation of this inquiry is that the data collection and analysis strategies were perception-based. A question remains about the disparity between perception and action as teachers describe personal experience in their own classrooms. Additionally, although student questionnaires were administered in an attempt to provide corroboration of teachers' perceptions, the students similarly describe their perceptions of classroom practice and this raises a further question about the disparity between practice and perception. Ultimately, the reliability of materials based on perception can only be validated by a triangulation of data collection methods in combination with an assessment of the "fit" between the data and the context from which it is drawn. Measor (1985, p. 74) provided a useful justification for perception-based studies:

> When I was challenged about the validity of data my own reaction was really that I *felt* the data was valid. My intuitive reaction was that the

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responses were real, and that I had not been 'put off'. Such an emotive statement of course has no validity in social science terms, and it has no ornamentation of scientific rigor. Nevertheless, I did have a sense of what was accurate. It may be that we have to come to terms with the intuitive, subjective elements in our work, because the work is with people.

Given the researcher's own background as a visual arts teacher with over fifteen years' teaching experience, the intuitive understanding of the "fit" between the respondents' descriptions with the context (as described by Measor) offers some confidence in the validity of participants' responses. In a larger research project it might be possible for the researcher to attempt some form of ethnographic confirmation of the subjects' understandings of their own and each other's behaviour.

Whilst it would have been preferable to observe teachers at work in their classrooms and to analyse student work which is ostensibly the product of a process involving art history and art criticism, it is unlikely that teachers would have co-operated with the researcher to allow the study to be completed. However, this lack of independent confirmation, whilst a concern, is not a serious impediment to the research.

Confidence in and acceptance of teachers' perceptions of the way they use visual arts history/criticism in their normal teaching, can be gained from the numerous endorsements of teacher "self reporting" as a basis for research into classroom practice. By way of example, Gay (1981) noted that self reporting within school surveys is commonplace and provides valuable and accurate insight into contemporary classroom management. Gay (1981) observed that "self reporting can provide necessary and valuable information to both the schools studied and to other agencies and groups whose operations are school related" (p.156).

Given the limitations of the small sample, questions about perception as a basis for judgement and the inability of the researcher to independently observe classroom practices over an extended period of time, this research may have implications only for

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the six art classes upon which it is based. But research on these six art classes may provide the impetus for a wider inquiry involving a larger sample, over a longer period of time, from which a fuller understanding may be derived. Such understanding may in turn have profound implications for the ongoing review of curricula for the teaching of visual arts history (arts in society) and visual arts criticism (arts responses).

3.8   Data analysis

The analysis of qualitative data, especially in the case of interview materials, lends itself to narrative-style reporting. Burns (1994), recommended that interview transcripts initially be category-coded and filed to provide a framework by which each new interview could be judged. Burns (1994) stated that "the purpose of the coding and filing is to enable the investigator to sort and organise the obtained information into patterns and themes" (p. 285).

Ultimately, deriving meaning from interview materials requires that the primary questions and original propositions be used to evaluate the content of the interview. Burns (1994) suggested that "organization" of interview content is beneficial to the evaluation of such source material:

> Narratives taken verbatim from interviews should be content analysed as soon as possible. One way to analyse the data has been, where possible, to translate it into a form amenable to analysis by coding events and making counts of items allocated in content analysis. Other approaches involve making a matrix of categories and putting evidence within such categories, creating flow charts and diagrams, tabulating frequencies, sorting information into chronological order. But these strategies are only preliminary data manipulations. The ultimate goal is to analyse the evidence in relation to the original propositions and to any feasible alternative interpretations. (p. 322)

Burns (1994) recommended that the researcher keep field notes (quite independently of any cassette recording of interviews) where the impressions and reflections of the researcher can be noted at the time of the interview, thereby fleshing

out the skeletal structure of the interview content and context. These observations and notes allow the researcher to more accurately code, file and interpret the intent and meaning of the participants' responses at the later stage of data analysis.

The strategy of processing respondents' comments through simplifying and coding these into patterns or themes is also supported by Miles and Huberman (1984). A specific process for handling narratives acquired during the qualitative research process involving interviews was outlined and recommended. The richness of "verbal responses" and the "word tapestry" is best preserved and processed, according to Miles and Huberman (1984) through an analytical procedure of simplification and reduction to thematic elements (1984, p. 21). In the model promoted by Miles and Huberman (1984) the process of analysis, simplification and reduction of data is on-going and cyclical throughout the research process. They suggested that the researcher is best served in qualitative research by conducting preliminary analysis during data collection and thereafter modifying data collection methods according to the results of that process. Miles and Huberman (1984, p.49) recommended that:

> Analysis during data collection lets the fieldworker cycle back and forth between thinking about existing data and generating strategies for collecting new - often better quality - data; it can be a healthy corrective for built-in blind spots; and it makes analysis an on-going, lively enterprise that is linked to the energizing effects of fieldwork.

and further:

> The ideal model for data collection and analysis is one that interweaves them from the beginning. Field visits are interspersed with time for data reduction and display, for drawing conclusions ... (creating) the interactive cyclical nature of qualitative data analysis.

Miles and Hubermann (1984) promoted the value of data display through a matrix, which they consider to be a useful tool in the drawing of comparisons and conclusions about the meaning of narrative text and qualitative data. Display of data is central to the model promoted by these researchers and this strategy has been utilized in the present study with some success. The researchers suggest that drawing and verifying

conclusions through a twelve-stage methodology can be a valuable undertaking in the research process. Miles and Hubermann (1984, p. 229) suggested this process could include:

> Counting; noting patterns and themes; seeing plausibility; clustering; making metaphors; splitting variables; subsuming particulars into the general; factoring; noting relations between variables; finding intervening variables; building a logical chain of evidence; and making conceptual/theoretical coherence.

In the present study, aspects of this process (counting, noting patterns and themes, making metaphors, and building a logical chain of evidence) have been utilized and documented.

3.8.1 *Coding interview transcripts*

The interview transcripts in this research were initially coded by way of elimination of information which was not directly relevant to the research topic. For example, some teachers contrasted the demands of their present teaching position through comparisons to past teaching appointments. Whilst interesting, such "stories" did not have a direct bearing on the data being collected. Subsequent coding of interview content was attempted using categories informed by the research questions and modelled on a process developed by Miles and Huberman (1984) in their work on qualitative research evaluation. Deriving from the work of Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 21) an evaluative process has been applied to the study through:

- *Data Collection:* transcribing interview audio-cassette tapes into verbatim scripts.
- *Data Reduction:* classification of narrative responses into key statements, exemplified by text samples.
- *Data Display:* of thematic categories from which matrix can be constructed; overlay of key statements into matrix to reveal patterns and common responses to issues of applications of visual arts history/criticism in middle school between respondents.

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- *Data Synthesis:* identification of emergent patterns and reconciliation with initial research question relating to teacher's use of visual arts history/criticism.

- *Data Validation:* confirmation with source that conclusions were consistent with the interviewee's experience and perception.

3.8.2 *Coding student questionnaires*

Statistical analysis of student questionnaires was undertaken and the results of such analysis were reconciled with the associated teacher's perceptions of the place of visual arts history/criticism and the initial research questions. Preliminary statistical analysis of student questionnaires revealed that most students believed that their teacher introduced visual arts history into their art education programmes at varying times. Having established a general consensus about the inclusion of visual arts history, deeper analysis of student responses was undertaken.

Student responses to the questionnaire were initially coded by the removal of information not directly related to the inquiry. In some instances students had supplemented the selection of a fixed "closed" choice response with additional text and written commentary (either written beneath or along side their answer selection). In some cases such commentary was relevant to the research; in others it was unrelated or outside the parameters of the inquiry. Three primary categories were employed in the process of data encoding student questionnaires:

1   Students who indicated that visual arts history and visual arts criticism was routinely incorporated in their art program were quantified and contrasted with students from the same class group who held contrary views. This analysis facilitated the development of ratios of positive and negative responses in this category of questions, leading to confirmation that most students acknowledged some inclusion of VAH/C at varying times. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire dealt with the student's perceptions of the incidence and rate of occurrence of visual arts history/criticism in the art education process.

2   Students who indicated that visual arts history and visual arts criticism were perceived to occur within the art curriculum, responses were coded according to the value placed upon the inclusion of such materials. Questions 5, 7, 8, 9 and 12 dealt with the issue of the value or relevance the student considered visual arts history/criticism had in the art educational process.

3   Students' perceptions of teacher's competence and depth of knowledge of visual arts history/criticism were evaluated. Question 6 addressed the students' perceptions of the teacher's strengths in this domain.

4   Responses to methodological questions, including the times, techniques and circumstances under which visual arts history and criticism was evident in the art class were used to flesh out the understanding derived from reconciling the questionnaires.

Student questionnaires response totals and key statements deriving from teacher interviews from the same school were displayed concurrently to allow a holistic picture to be developed. Data gathered from the two sources (interview and questionnaire) have been presented in table form to facilitate comparative analysis. Matrix displays of final results deriving from cross-site analysis of teachers' and students' responses (from the six participating schools) have been employed to describe and define the teaching and learning of visual arts history and criticism in the sample. These matrix displays have facilitated the drawing and verification of conclusions from which a number of key recommendations have emerged regarding the sustainability of the new outcomes based education reforms inherent in the 1998 Curriculum Framework, which has to be fully implemented in all Western Australian highschools by the year 2004.

The fate of the competing interests of entrenched and accepted classroom practices and the new outcomes approach imposed by the Western Australian Curriculum Council, will be determined at the "chalk-face" level of the student/teacher relationship. This study has sought to describe some of the entrenched practices which exist in the schools sample of this study. Reconciliation of such practices against the requirements of the new Framework has demonstrated a misalignment of expectations.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1   Introduction

In order to preserve the integrity of perception-based data collected from both teachers and students in this research, participant responses have been presented and analysed concurrently. The rationale behind this dual treatment of responses is the desire to preserve the sense of the teacher's "understanding" of their professional practices and behaviours and the relationship which exists between these actions and the classroom context within which they occur. Separation of *presentation of data* and *analysis of data* creates the potential for distortion of results, when examined independently.

Teacher responses delivered during the interviews were analysed and reduced to provide key statements which allowed common perceptions expressed by teachers to be identified. These key statements cumulatively synthesize the shared perceptions and experiences described by the teacher participants.

The results are detailed in tables (one through twenty-two). Student responses elicited through questionnaires have been similarly reduced and where appropriate reconciled with the teacher's perceptions. In turn, students responses were compared on a school basis. This chapter describes the methods employed in this process and displays the results in table form. Key statements appear periodically throughout the chapter, highlighting significant findings.

4.2   Analysis of teacher's interview response results

Within each category (personal information; background questions; ethos of the school; general philosophical questions; teaching practice; final commentary) each teacher's responses relate to one or more primary questions, (over-arching broad tools of inquiry) and several secondary "funnel" questions which sought clarification or elaboration of the primary question/s. Only responses to the primary questions have been presented as text illustrations in narrative form. Secondary questions have been used to "flesh" out the researcher's understanding of the teacher's responses and these

have been embodied in the key statements and commentary which accompany the analysis and presentation of results.

4.2.1 *Category one: Personal Information - Participant Teacher Profiles*

This category of questions was designed to elicit information from which a teacher profile could be constructed for each interview participant. The questions dealt largely with the interview participants' employment and teaching histories, including information about qualifications and professional experience. All teachers in the sample were female which derived from the willingness of women to participate in the study. The reluctance of male teachers to participate in the study seemed linked to the demands of the teachers' employment responsibilities, lack of available time for participation, and in some instances, a stated reluctance to attribute value to such inquiry.

The researcher acknowledges that this lack of male teacher participants may equate with gender bias within the sample, however, the study seeks merely to *describe* the strategies employed by teachers incorporating visual arts history/criticism in their programmes. The study does not purport to distinguish the strategies of female teachers from those of their male counterparts. Such a gender-specific inquiry may provide a focus for follow-up research. Although the sample was unrepresentative of the population of visual arts teachers, it is unlikely that the views of male teachers would have been markedly different from their female counterparts.

In addition to identifying the gender of participants, teachers were distinguished according to their age range, teaching qualifications and teaching experience. Teachers A, B and C all identified their age range as 31-35. Teachers D, E, and F specified their age range as being 51-55. Teachers in the 31-35 age group all held tertiary qualifications which derived from 4 years of tertiary education. Teachers B and C possessed Bachelor of Education degrees with specialist art focuses. Teacher A had completed a Bachelor of Arts (Craft) degree which resulted in a Jeweller's qualification and then obtained a Diploma of Education which converted the Craft degree into a teaching qualification.

Teachers in the 51-55 age group graduated prior to the introduction of 4-year teaching qualifications, and these teachers possessed three-year Associateships in Art Teaching from the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University of Technology). Teacher E subsequently completed a Bachelor of Education degree with a specialist focus in Careers Education, but remained primarily employed as a visual arts educator. All teachers in the sample had been employed as teachers for four or more years, had worked in subject areas other than art during their teaching careers, and all reported having been employed during their adult working lives in professions other than teaching. Table three presents teacher profiles for the research participants.

Table 3

T	Sex	Age	Teacher Participant Profile Degree/Qualification	Teaching Experience
A	F	31-35	BA (Craft); Grad Dip Ed Curtin University of Technology (now - school No. 1)	4 Years; all in one school. Areas of teaching: art with middle school and Yr 11/12; photography jewellery and computing. Have only worked this school
B	F	31-35	B.Ed (Art) Edith Cowan University (now - school No. 2)	10 Years; visual arts specialist; English and Drama. Worked in girls' school, then it went co-ed. Worked at Catholic co-ed school in Perth for one year, and then worked for two years in a co-ed Uniting Church school - Perth.
C	F	31-35	B.Ed (Art); studying Masters; WAIT - now Curtin University (now - school No. 3)	9 Years; visual arts specialist teaching Italian as well. Worked up North for 3 yrs and in Perth - all private schools.
D	F	51-55	Associateship (Art) Teaching Diploma at Claremont Teachers College (now - school No. 4)	15 Years; visual arts specialist. Taught for 8 years then went on maternity leave Returned to part-time work when second child in lower primary school.
E	F	51-55	Associateship (Art) - WAIT B.Ed (Career Education) (now - school No. five)	17 Years; visual arts specialist; English; Careers Education; Taught in Catholic System for 10 years. After a year off - back to the Catholic system for one year. Took another couple of years off and sold real estate. Then into the State school system.
F	F	51-55	Associateship (Art) - WAIT (now - school No six)	25 Years; visual arts specialist; English. Taught in Perth state highschool as senior mistress for 7 years. Took maternity leave. Transferred to Sydney- did relief teaching. Relocated to Papua New Guinea for 2.5 yrs as university lecturer; then to Darwin. Taught in two State schools. Relocated to a country town and finally moved to Perth 10 yrs ago.

Category One   -   Key statements:

* All teachers in the sample were female.
  The absence of male participants in the study is acknowledged; however, it is not ascribed a particular value in the completion of this study.

* Half the sample of teachers held 3-year Associateship awards from Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University) or Claremont Teachers' College and the other subjects held Bachelor of Education or equivalent 4-year degrees.

* Half the sample of teachers had less than 10 years teaching experience and the remaining participants had more than 15 years teaching experience.

* All teachers had employment experience other than in teaching.

* All teachers had experience teaching in areas other than the visual arts.

4.2.2   *Category two: Background Questions*

Having constructed teacher profiles, information was sought about the context of the teachers' present employment; their schools and details of organizational structures for the classes they taught. These questions relate to the ability of teachers to change existing programmes (if deemed necessary) for the purpose of including visual arts history/criticism. In this instance, Teachers B and F enjoyed the security of tenure afforded by full-time permanent teaching positions which would allow them to institute changes to established programmes and thereafter to structure programmes in forms which they considered to be educationally valid and justifiable. Teacher E was employed on a permanent part-time basis. Teachers E and B reported a high degree of confidence in their autonomy in being able to structure programmes in any form they wished. Teacher F reported similar confidence, but also mentioned limiting constraints or conditions which impinged upon the process. The remaining teachers in the sample held less secure teaching positions, with Teachers A and D being employed on a temporary basis only. These teachers nonetheless reported confidence in their autonomy and freedom to structure their art programmes in forms they considered to be educationally valid. This confidence was qualified with acknowledgement of

peripheral constraints by persons in positions of authority within the school, or by the expectations of the Curriculum Council of Western Australia. The remaining teacher in the sample was Teacher C who was employed on a permanent part-time basis. This teacher reported limited autonomy in structuring art programmes and identified the factors which impinged on the process of developing content and teaching strategies as being the doctrines of the Western Australian Catholic Education Commission and the expectations of the Curriculum Council of Western Australia. In the table which follows (Table 4) teacher perceptions regarding their autonomy in structuring visual arts programmes are presented with illustrative comments.

Table 4   -   Category Three : Ethos of the School

Question: Are you free to structure your art programme in any form you wish?

Response	T	Illustrative Comment
Definite	E	Yes.
Yes	B	Yes.
Conditional	A	As long as it relates to the overall school policy, pretty much so
Yes	D	Yes, within the constraints of the normal curriculum.
	F	Yes I think so. Generally, I mean if we have some ideas it's a matter of just getting them approved.
Unsure	-	-
No	C	I do need to consider the guidelines and the ethos of the school, and the Catholic Education Commission, and basically we are trying to keep in line with the Curriculum Council Guidelines as much as possible.

The participants' perceptions of autonomy (in structuring art programmes in any form they wished) as described by 5 of the 6 teachers in the sample was validated within the context of their seniority within the visual arts department. Teachers B, C, E and F all held positions of seniority within their departments. Teachers E and F were employed as Level 2 senior teachers within their department and school. The criteria for achieving Level 2 senior teacher status generally includes a demonstrated ability to

introduce change to existing curricula for the consolidation and advancement of the integrity of the programme. It would be fair to say, therefore, that Teachers E and F both believed they were in a position to institute change if warranted and further, that they had the expertise required to successfully implement such change. Teachers B and C were employed as subject co-ordinators for visual arts within the school and held responsibility for ensuring that the content and structure of all programmes were educationally valid. This responsibility inherently implied a capacity and willingness to review curriculum content and make changes where needed. Contextual information, including security of tenure, teaching load and seniority within the department has been tabulated and appears in Table 5 which follows.

Table 5 -   Category Two : Background Questions
                  Description of teacher's appointment within the school

T	Full/Part time	Temp/Perm position	Seniority:	Dept: distinct subset	Contact/wk	length period per class/week
A	Full-time	T	Teacher	S	10pds	2 singles (45/70min)
B	Full-time	P	Subject Co-ordinator	S	16pds	2 singles (110min)
C	Part-time	P	Subject Co-ordinator	S	2pds	1 double (100min)
D	Full-time	T	Teacher	D	unsure	1 double (110min)
E	Part-time	P	Senior Teacher	D	unsure	1 double (80min)
F	Full-time	P	Senior Teacher	S	12	60min

Notes: *T = Temporary appointment*   *P = Permanent appointment*
        S = Subset of another department   *D = Distinct Department within the school*
        Pds = Periods per week

* Teachers in the sample were predominantly employed on a full-time basis. Four of the six teachers held permanent positions within their schools.

* Four of the six teachers held positions of seniority either within their school or department, leaving only two employed as classroom teachers.

* Four of the six schools from which teachers were drawn had a separate visual arts department.

* Most of the teachers in the sample felt free to structure their programmes as they saw fit; half the sample, however, stated external constraints could impact upon this process.

4.2.3   *Category Three: Ethos of the School (Planning for Change)*

Having determined teacher profiles and the context of the participants' employment within the school, attention was focused on internal structures within the school which might either enhance or impair each teachers' capacity to include the study of visual arts history/criticism in their middle school art programmes if deemed appropriate. In particular, the availability of and support for, the professional development of classroom teachers was examined in an effort to define how conversant each teacher was with current trends and teaching practices.

Teachers were asked when they had last undertaken professional development and further, whether they had been involved in curriculum development either within their school or with an external agency. These questions sought to define the teachers' participation in the on-going evolution of existing art programmes both within their own school and externally. Teachers A, B, C, E and F had all undertaken professional development within the twelve months preceding the interview and further, they had all participated in school-based reviews of middle school curriculum within their departments. This opportunity for input into the re-shaping and evaluation of existing curriculum formats within the school, combined with security of tenure and seniority within the department (refer to category two questions), placed Teachers B, C, E and F

in the strongest positions to institute change for the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism if deemed appropriate. The remaining participants, although acknowledging the importance of curriculum review processes, considered that they were constrained by the nature of their teaching appointment and/or curriculum development expertise. Table 6 presents teachers' recollections of their participation in school-based and external curriculum development within the twelve months preceding the interview.

Table 6   Category Three - Ethos of the School (Planning for Change)

Teacher description of *recent participation* in school based and external curriculum review and development processes.

Teacher	External Professional Development	School -Based Professional Development	Illustration
A	-	Yes	Yes, reviews of lower school program at school.
B	-	Yes	I have done it in schools before, just with other teachers, looking at our curriculum.
C	-	Yes	Yes, consensus moderation, Year 12 at Catholic Education Office and Western Australian Curriculum Council.
D	-	-	None
E	-	Yes	I've done some work in the Common Assessment Frame-work, but not for middle school. We go to meetings once a term and we are just working together to become more familiar with it. (Yr 11/12)
F	-	Yes	I re-arranged the whole middle school art course about two years ago, within the school. That was for years 8-10

Teachers A, B, C, E and F all reported recent participation in school-based curriculum review processes. Only Teachers A and F reported that such review processes were specifically tailored to the needs of middle school students. The responses demonstrated that curriculum development and review was endorsed by all schools represented in the study; much of the work done, however, within the twelve months preceding the study related to students in Years 11 and 12. Teachers generally reported that they did have access to opportunities to undertake professional development; however half the sample qualified this statement saying that attendance at professional development courses was dependent upon administrative approval and funding. Furthermore, 5 of the 6 teachers interviewed stated that they believed that not only did support exist (within the educational hierarchy at their school) for teachers to undertake professional development, but that such participation was actively encouraged and facilitated.

All teachers in the sample reported that they actively sought to participate in professional development whenever the opportunity arose. All six teachers reported that they had participated recently in professional development courses and all identified professional development as a priority. Teachers A, D, and B noted that whilst participation in professional development was important, the process was often constrained by variables beyond their control. Economic constraints appeared to be the most significant of these variables. The consensus view appeared to be that professional development was considered intrinsically valuable, but it was often undertaken only when surplus funds were available.

In the table that follows (Table 7), teachers describe the degree of support they perceive (from school administration) for teachers to undergo regular professional development.

Table 7		Category Three: Ethos of the School (Planning for Change)
Primary Question:		What degree of support exists from the school administration for teachers to undergo regular professional development?

Response	T	Illustration
Strong Support	C	Yes. Oh they are very good like that, they encourage us.
	F	This year I have found a tremendous amount - the new administration are extremely supportive.
Support with conditions	B	Well as long as it's not too expensive - they don't like sending you to really expensive courses. Basically they don't say no unless its hundreds of dollars or something - then they question it.
	D	I'd say an average amount of support. They don't stop you doing it, but they don't seem to ... Oh I guess if anything comes through them, it gets funnelled down if it's relevant to us here.
	A	It would come down to a matter of economics - if the money was there to pay for relief and for Professional Development there would be full support. But if the money had been spent, the support would probably not be there. They allocate money for each department to have its own Professional Development.
Unsure	E	Well I haven't really asked for any school time to do any. Most of the PD I do is in my own time. I don't know if it would be a favourable response
No Support	-	-

During recent years the Western Australian Government has legislated that all schools (both government and independent) allocate funds for on-going professional development of teaching staff. With the passage of time, this expectation has become institutionalized and it is commonly accepted that staff will participate in such programmes. With competition between subject areas and faculties characterizing the distribution of professional development funding within schools, it is not surprising that the teachers interviewed in this sample observed that professional development was often constrained by competition for funding. Table 8 presents teachers' descriptions of participation in professional development courses for the purpose of improving their art teaching skills.

Table 8 Category Three: Ethos of the School (Planning for Change)

Question: Do you routinely participate in professional development courses to improve your art teaching skills?

Response	T	Illustration
Yes, definitely	F	Most definitely, I do. I'm doing a glass workshop at the moment.
	C	Yes
	E	Yes
Yes, with conditions	A	Yes, but it would only be once or twice a semester at most.
	D	Yes, whenever I can, but because my employment is bitty, I've got to hear about it and be in a school at the time to take advantage of it.
	B	Yes, when there are things on (and I hear about them) I do get to do this.
Not often	-	-
No	-	-

Category Three   -   Key Statements

* There is administrative support for most of the teachers in the sample
  to participate in professional development courses.
  The most significant factor that impinges upon such support is
  economic rationalism, as competition for funding is pronounced
  within most schools.

* All the teachers in the sample participate in professional development
  periodically and half the sample considered that they participated in
  professional development courses on a regular basis.

4.2.4 *Category Four : General Philosophical Orientation*

Having established details of the interview participants' backgrounds, teaching appointments, and opportunities for professional development which impact on programming for middle school, teachers were asked to disclose the priorities they held for content within a middle school visual arts programme. In this area of inquiry teachers collectively identified a number of categories within which middle school art content should be grouped. These content categories (which appeared to be the legacy of previously endorsed unit curriculum structures) were art history/criticism, studio work, and visual inquiry. All teachers in the sample placed studio work and the production of a finished art work in a super-ordinate position. This prioritizing of studio work appeared to emanate from the teachers' perceptions about students' expectations for enjoying the subject area. The notion of making a tangible product (regardless of process considerations) appeared to underpin teachers' understandings of students' motivations in selecting art as a study option.

The consequences arising from addressing middle school students' expectations (when art students voluntarily elect to enrol in the subject on either a semester or yearly basis) are significant. Several teachers suggested that if students did not enjoy art they would not "pick" that option again. In the event that student numbers declined below a viable number for time-tabling and administrative purposes, Teachers B and C suggested that the subject could be under threat and removed from the timetable for a particular semester for given year groups. In the enterprise of defending the "viable" status of the subject, teachers' concerns about the kinds of content students would "tolerate" seemed to have the potential to obstruct the inclusion of material which might be deemed educationally valuable. This concern raises interesting questions about the purpose of visual arts education and the appropriateness of student enjoyment and preferences as a determining force in programme structure.

In an attempt to understand the depth of teachers' concerns about students' preferences in relation to the format and structure of art courses and the associated implications for timetable viability, teachers were asked whether they considered that they changed their style of teaching to accommodate the "likes and dislikes" of specific middle school classes of students. Further, they were asked if they considered their

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approach to teaching normally "child-centred" (and directed by student interests and demands), "discipline-based", "contextual", or "other".

Teachers C, D, and F reported having an organic and changeable approach to teaching middle school students and suggested that they would be likely to alter their approach to teaching students depending upon a class' nature and needs. Variables such as observable ability levels, gender distribution and poor or challenging behaviour were identified as indicators that a change in teaching approach was warranted. Without specifically labeling the causes for altered teaching approaches as being a response to student's stated likes and dislikes, responses by Teachers C, D and F indicated that a "reactionary" (or responsive) style of teaching existed in their classes.

Teachers C, D, and F reported that they would change their preferred method of teaching based on the perceived structure and demands of the group in question and stressed that they considered poor behaviour a significant indicator of the need for such a change. Teachers C, D and F indicated that in addition to modifying their approach to teaching specific groups of students based on student behaviour, it was conceivable that specific content might be modified if students indicated that they were not interested in, or enjoying learning that information.

This stated "reactionary" (in the sense of reacting to students' feedback by making changes) style of teaching, in combination with a declared bias towards studio work (because this is what the teachers in the sample believed students valued most), seemed to place a substantial amount of power for determining content and structure of visual arts courses in the hands of students who seem therefore to have a disproportionate degree of control over the way classes proceeded. The question of whether specific content which is deemed to be educationally valid and valuable should be changed because specific groups of students disliked it, presented as a significant factor because it appeared to split the group of teachers in half.

In the following table (Table 9) teachers' perceptions of the essential components of an adequate middle school art curriculum are described and illustrated.

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Table 9	Category Four : Teachers' General Philosophical Orientations
Question:	Can you describe the essential components you consider comprise an adequate art curriculum for students in middle schooling?
Teacher	Illustration

Teacher	Illustration
A	Okay, one that incorporated opportunities for students to explore ideas, one that included content for that specific subject, (so things like elements and principles), things like skills, techniques, an awareness and a knowledge of historical and modern cultures, and areas of art history, but not too much or they will balk at the whole thing. We need to make sure they come back next semester so we try to keep it interesting and enjoyable. It would be good to have anecdotal and formal assessment by teachers of students, by students of their own work, students of other students' work and some form of reporting to parents and perhaps the wider community.
B	I really want them to enjoy it (art) and I want them to have heaps of things that they can have (to keep and take home) - *really tangible things that they can value* - a lot of studio work. It is more a studio focus for Year 8. For Years 9 and 10, I want to do more art history with them - more inter-relationships, but it just couldn't work this year because of the books - they just didn't have any books. But the subject is optional and so we need to make sure they feel they are getting something out of it. If they feel they're getting nothing out of it they won't pick the subject again and that could be a problem with the time-table.
C	Well at this stage (because of training for upper school art) I would say a visual diary is very important, also art history/criticism content also. And studio work as well. Mostly studio though because that's where they are at - You have to gear the programme to a level they understand and enjoy. Art is optional and you have to make sure they learn something, but you also need to make sure they pick the subject next time. I guess not too much art history.
D	Well I suppose what we offer the kids is the range, like I said, I take these three areas in Year 9, so we offer them a craft experience, the more fine arts experience, and what we call prac arts. I guess within each of those there would be opportunities for them to do a certain amount of research (art history), to do a certain amount of criticism, to do the practical studio side of making or doing whatever, and we expect an evaluation of what they have done.
E	I always structure my course with some visual inquiry, visual literacy, and I pretty much use the framework that's in the Unit Curriculum. We have studio production and always have some art history/criticism and the other thing which I have thrown in which is my own addition is some (art) vocabulary.
F	I usually have visual inquiry, and art history and then studio. Sometimes there's more emphasis on one or another depending on the students and what areas we're actually learning and producing.

Teachers A, B and E reported having a child-centred approach to teaching which necessarily implied a changing and organic style which responded to the perceived needs of the group. Whilst these teachers indicated that they wanted their students to enjoy the subject area, they did not say that they would be prepared to alter/abandon content because students did not like it. Rather they suggested that they would shift the strategies used for imparting this knowledge to one which was commensurate with the students' ability or learning threshold.

In the following table (Table 10) teachers' perceptions about their willingness to alter content in response to students' reactions/behaviours are tabulated. This data is contextualized in Table 11 where teacher's perceptions regarding their preferred approach to teaching is recorded (as student centred, discipline-based, contextual or other) and supported with illustrative text examples.

Table 10   Category Four : Teachers' General Philosophical Orientations

Teachers who indicated they would change specific content in response to students' preferences and levels of enjoyment.

Teacher	Would not alter content to accommodate student preferences and levels of enjoyment	Would alter content to accommodate student preferences and levels of enjoyment
A	X	
B	X	
C		X
D		X
E	X	
F		X

Table 11   Category Four : Teachers' General Philosophical Orientations
Primary Question: Would you describe your personal approach to teaching art as
                child centered, discipline-based, contextual or other?

Teacher	Approach to Teaching	Teaching Style
A	Child-centred	Student-centred.
B	Child-centred	Student-centred. They know that I don't "direct" as such - they come in, and that's their time and they have to use it. They are quite independent generally. They did not do that initially - they would sit around waiting for me to tell them what to do and they had half a pot done from the previous week - they didn't get it. But now they do!
C	I guess at different stages of the teaching it would vary - sometimes child-centred, sometimes discipline-based and also contextual, depending on the kids, the class and the content I'm actually teaching, but more child-centred.	Changes depending on the kids.
D	I suppose I look at the unit I have been given and I look at the kids and their interests, and I try and do something I think they will be interested in - to appeal to them. If it was mainly a boys' class then it would probably run differently to a girls' class. Or if it was a low ability, boisterous type of a mix then you'd be silly not to take that into account. So whether you call that child-centred, I don't know?	I dont think I'm laissez-faire, or overly authoritarian, except I do like to feel in control. Not that the kids can't talk or move around - I like to have a relaxed feeling but I like to be in charge.
E	I guess my approach would be child-centred - I like to run my classes as a sort of studio, so I train the kids, to go in, get their newspaper, tools, work, (and I stand in the middle) and they go straight to work. I get run off my feet - but the kids can work at the level and speed that they are at.	Student-Centred
F	I think it is a mixture of all those really, but probably student-centred.	Developing more towards student-centred than the others I would say.

Note: *Child-Centred approach: A focus for the education process where students determine divergent*

   pathways to the studio product/outcome of teaching.

   Discipline Based Art Education Approach: A focus for the education process where the vocational

   attributes of artists, historians, critics and aestheticians are modelled and imbued in the student.

   Contextual Approaches: A focus for the education process deriving from such issues as feminist

   concerns, multicultural concerns, environmental concerns and other issues of a socio-economic nature.

All teachers in the group considered their teaching style to be more student- centred, than laissez-faire or authoritarian; however Teacher D stated that despite a commitment to responding to the needs of the group being taught, she nonetheless considered it was essential that she retained control of the physical environment. These sentiments seemed to be shared by all participants in the sample and it appeared that some teachers equated control of the physical environment as being indicative of their control over the programme structure *per se*. Whilst most teachers seemed hesitant about admitting that students' likes/dislikes might determine the final form of curriculum content, three participants in the sample stated that they were sensitive and responsive to student feedback about levels of enjoyment. They were concerned about the students' responses and the consequent effect on elective enrolments.

None of the teachers in the sample were either able or prepared to give examples of occasions when they had consciously abandoned content in studio, visual inquiry or art history/criticism areas, as a direct response to exhibited levels of students lack of enjoyment of such content. There was however, a general perception that this did occur from time to time in either their own teaching or in the teaching of other visual arts teachers. Without specific examples of such responses to student demands it is difficult to assess the status of such perceptions.

Having determined that all teachers in the sample considered that there was a strong relationship between course content, student enjoyment, selection of options, and the associated implications for time-tabling and subject viability, teachers were asked whether they considered that their personal expertise in handling specific content might impact on the students' levels of enjoyment. For the purposes of this study, the focus of this series of questions was confined to issues relating to the delivery of art history/criticism content, rather than studio work or visual inquiry. Exploration of teachers' perceptions of the link between teacher expertise and student enjoyment of content with regard to studio work and visual inquiry, might present appropriate areas of inquiry for subsequent studies. These areas have not, however, been pursued in this instance.

Category Four   -   Key Statements

*   All teachers in the sample endorsed the division of content
       into the key areas of visual inquiry, studio work and art history/criticism.

*   Visual Inquiry was considered to be the least important of these
       content areas for middle school students.

*   Half the teachers' sample harboured concerns about student toleration
       of content perceived as uninteresting or "remote". They identified the
       consequences of student dissatisfaction with course content and
       structure as being significant in the continuing viability of the subject.

*   Half the sample stated that they could be persuaded to either alter or
       abandon content which was considered educationally valid and
       valuable as a direct response to perceived levels of students' enjoyment
       of that content.

4.2.5   *Category Five:*   *Professional Teaching Practice*
                              Visual Arts Criticism/Visual Arts History
                              (Arts Responses, Arts in Society)

Cognizant of earlier results which indicated that all teachers in the group
endorsed the inclusion of visual arts history in their courses and mindful of the
perceived relationship between students' enjoyment and course content selection,
teachers were asked to describe their perceptions of their expertise in handling the art
history/criticism component of their courses. Of particular interest was the notion that
teachers might modify/abandon visual arts history, despite nominating it as an
"essential component of an adequate middle school art curriculum". Additionally,
teachers were asked if they considered that their handling of art history materials,
personal expertise and knowledge of the subject might be contributing or determining
factors in levels of students' enjoyment of the material.

All teachers in the sample stated that they believed they did incorporate visual
arts history and criticism content in their art programmes from time to time. Initial
comments demonstrated that most of teachers in the sample preferred to "discuss"

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visual arts history/criticism materials with their students, rather than demand that understanding of the content be demonstrated in written form. Teacher F suggested that it was precisely because she did not require her students to write about visual arts history that she was able to have some success in this domain. Teacher F suggested that the underprivileged nature of the student population in socio-economic terms, translated into substantial problems when students were asked to write about anything. Teacher F stated that visual arts history was only ever dealt with in a verbal form and this discussion-style approach supported by posters, videos and internet access to visual materials, had proven fairly successful in maintaining students' interest in visual arts history/criticism content. Other teacher participants reported that a variety of approaches were employed in the teaching and handling of this component of the course.

Distinguishing between the diverse range of art movements and artists which are accessible for use in the classroom in either an instrumental application (to demonstrate various techniques, e.g. basketry techniques), or as an aesthetic exemplar might have presented as an overwhelming task in terms of the sheer number of choices; so teachers were asked to indicate their degree of confidence in selecting, modifying and presenting visual arts history materials in a form which is appropriate for middle school students. Teachers A, B, C, D and F all considered that they possessed a good knowledge of historical and contemporary artists/art movements. Despite being well read and familiar with the contemporary art scene however, these teachers stressed that they considered on-going professional development in this area to be a priority. Such professional development was reported to include attendance at local art exhibitions and general reading of art history texts. In the following table (Table 12) teachers described their impressions of the breadth/extent of their knowledge of historical/contemporary artists and movements in art and their proficiency in handling such content in their art classes.

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Table 12   -   Category Five : Professional Teaching Practice

Question: How would you describe the breadth/extent of your personal knowledge of historical and contemporary artists and movements in art?
How would you rate your ability to teach/employ visual arts history and visual arts criticism in an art lesson?

Teacher Response		Ability to teach this in art classes
A	I would have to say that it is fairly general, with a few areas that I know really well, simply because I have taught them in a TEE (Tertiary Entrance Examination) context. So it's a general knowledge predominantly.	Fairly high.
B	For lower school I would say I could just pinpoint briefly a whole lot of time periods from like Renaissance to modern or whatever. I would say I have got a wide range that I could draw from.	I could get them interested - good.
C	I feel I have quite a good grounding. In terms of modern contemporary artists I think that I could still be a little bit more knowledgeable because there are always new things happening. Basic concepts of movements and things like that - I'm well read.	Satisfactory
D	I would think it's fairly good - I constantly try to keep up to date with the current contemporary art scene.	Quite adequate.
E	Not very good these days. I did three years of art history at university, but I don't really feel as if I kept hold of a lot of all that.	Just okay.
F	Well I studied for four years, and I taught TEE art for many years, so I guess in some areas it's very strong and in others I need to do some more research. In a general sense I think it's average/good.	Competent

In addition to determining teachers' perceptions about their knowledge of art history content, teachers were asked to rate their ability to teach/employ visual arts history and criticism in an art lesson with middle school students. All teacher participants in the sample considered that they could adequately handle the delivery of visual arts history and criticism content with students at middle school level. It remains unclear whether teachers considered that their students enjoyed this component of the art programme; all teachers however, reported a confident approach to handling such materials and it seems likely therefore, that students would accept this as a necessary

component of their art programme. To test the validity of this assumption, student questionnaires from all six schools were analysed for students' perceptions about the frequency with which visual arts history and criticism materials were incorporated in their art lessons. Additionally, students were asked to rate their teacher's apparent level of knowledge and expertise in delivering visual arts history materials in their art courses.

Students from all six schools reported that they believed that visual arts history was in fact incorporated into their art programme; all students however, except those from school 5 (where teacher E practiced), reported that the inclusion of visual arts history occurred infrequently.

Most students seemed unsure whether their teacher was particularly knowledgeable about visual arts history. Notable exceptions to this were students at schools 1 and 5. In School 1, 93% of students stated that they considered that their teacher (A) knew a lot about art history. In School 5, 79% of students believed that their teacher (E) knew a lot about art history. When reconciled against the respective teacher's self-assessment in this area, Teacher A considered that she had a "fairly general" command of the subject but considered that her ability to teach this content rated "fairly high". Teacher E expressed concern about her knowledge of art history content, describing it as "not very good these days" and rating her ability to teach it as "just okay".

The responses of all students surveyed (regarding the inclusion of visual arts in their art classes) appears in Table 13. Table 14 in turn tabulates students' perceptions about the *frequency* with which such content was employed. Table 15 thereafter tabulates students' perceptions about their teachers' competency/knowledge of visual arts history. Collectively these tables illustrate the students' perceptions about the handling of visual arts history materials within their visual arts programmes.

Table 13   Category Five   -   Professional Teaching Practice
               Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from All Six Schools

Question: Do you ever talk about art history in your art classes?

School	gender distribution Male	Female (number of students)	Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	never	-
				seldom	40
				sometimes	60
				often	-
2	17	-	B	never	29
				seldom	53
				sometimes	18
				often	-
3	-	25	C	never	20
				seldom	16
				sometimes	64
				often	-
4	6	20	D	never	19
				seldom	23
				sometimes	54
				often	4
5	13	10	E	never	-
				seldom	26
				sometimes	52
				often	22
6	17	15	F	never	19
				seldom	22
				sometimes	47
				often	12

Table 14   Category Five   -   Professional Teaching Practice
                  Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from All Six Schools

Question: If you do talk about art history how often would this happen

School	gender distribution Male Female (number of students)		Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	never	-
				seldom	67
				sometimes	27
				often	6
2	17	-	B	never	35
				seldom	35
				sometimes	24
				often	6
3	-	25	C	never	24
				seldom	40
				sometimes	32
				often	4
4	6	20	D	never	12
				seldom	42
				sometimes	38
				often	8
5	13	10	E	never	-
				seldom	26
				sometimes	52
				often	22
6	17	15	F	never	17
				seldom	38
				sometimes	42
				often	3

Table 15   Category Five   -   Professional Teaching Practice
                  Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from All Six Schools

Question: Do you think your art teacher knows a lot about visual arts history

School	gender distribution Male Female (number of students)		Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	strongly disagree	-
				disagree	-
				unsure	7
				agree	80
				strongly agree	13
2	17	-	B	strongly disagree	6
				disagree	12
				unsure	65
				agree	17
				strongly agree	-
3	-	25	C	strongly disagree	5
				disagree	8
				unsure	41
				agree	25
				strongly agree	21
4	6	20	D	strongly disagree	-
				disagree	8
				unsure	42
				agree	42
				strongly agree	8
5	13	10	E	strongly disagree	-
				disagree	5
				unsure	17
				agree	43
				strongly agree	35
6	17	15	F	strongly disagree	9
				disagree	19
				unsure	44
				agree	22
				strongly agree	6

The remaining students' questionnaires when reconciled against teachers' self-assessments indicated that despite fairly confident self-assessments from teachers regarding knowledge of visual arts history content and ability to teach the material, students held different perceptions. In School 6 not only were 44% of students unsure about their teacher's expertise in this area, a further 28% disagreed outright with the notion that their teacher was skilled in this area. Interestingly, School 6 is probably the most disadvantaged of all the schools in the group, and possible links between reduced or limited student expectations for their own future quality of life and employment opportunities may be reflected in a negative response to their teacher. Both Schools 1 and 5, where high endorsement of teachers' expertise was recorded, were described by their teachers as having an affluent student population whose expectation for their future was extremely positive. These results suggest that students' perceptions about teachers' expertise may in fact be linked to the students' sense of personal success and opportunity for the future, rather than to an accurate assessment of the teacher's performance. The remaining schools in the sample had student populations which were described by their teachers as either "middle class or lower middle class". School 4 had 50% of students expressing confidence that their teacher was knowledgeable about visual arts history. The remaining 50% disagreed or were unsure.

Students' perceptions about their teacher's command of content and delivery of visual arts history materials remained unclear, with students largely electing to nominate that they were "unsure" about their teacher's expertise with visual arts history and criticism content. This strengthens the possibility that in this sample, students' perceptions of teachers' performance may well be more closely aligned to the students' own performance rather than to that of their teacher.

When asked how valuable teachers had found their pre-service training in the preparation for teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism, none of the participants considered that visual arts criticism had been adequately handled whilst they were at university. All the participants stated that they had needed to develop their own understanding and methodology to support the inclusion of this skill area in their art courses. By contrast, three of the six participants (Teachers B, D, and E) considered that they had received a good grounding in visual arts history movements and artists

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whilst they completed their undergraduate degree courses. The remaining three Teachers (A, C and F) considered that this area of their pre-service training had been poor or inadequate.

The teachers' assessment of this training does not appear related to either the ages, places of study or years of experience of the participants, as B, D and E straddle the two age categories for teacher participants, and completion of their degrees occurred at different universities. Teacher B taught for 10 years, and the other two teachers had experience of teaching in excess of 15 years. Similarly, those teachers who stated that their visual arts history grounding was poor or of questionable value were of differing ages and had taught for varying lengths of time. These teachers had, all completed their pre-service training at the same University. To balance the suggestion that perhaps the university in question for these teachers was offering a poor grounding in visual arts history, it is significant that Teacher E who did consider her pre-service training in visual arts history adequate, also completed her Bachelor of Education degree at the same university. It is possible that the kinds of grounding offered by teacher training institutions and universities for teachers of the visual arts, where an historical component exists in the courses they offer students, may be somewhat remote from the needs of the Western Australian visual arts classroom. Such a premise is supported by the review of literature which underpinned this study. As already evidenced in the writings of Szekely (1991), Stinespring and Steele (1993) and Calabrese (1993), contemporary experience in the international art education forum echoes the notion that traditional approaches to teaching visual arts history in the classroom have largely proven inadequate. The experience of the teachers in this sample affirms the validity of this wider contextual assumption. The writings of Hickey (1984), McKeon (1999) and Marsh (1994) in relation to visual arts history and visual arts criticism further endorses the view that the training offered to teachers during the undergraduate phases of their careers generally does not translate to effective methodologies for the contemporary Australian art classroom and much work still remains to be done in the necessary improving the quality of education in this domain.

Category Five -   Key Statements

* All teachers in the sample include the study of visual arts history/criticism in their teaching programmes.

* Visual arts history/criticism is included in teaching programmes because all participants in the study considered that this material was educationally valuable.

* All except one of the Teachers (E) in the sample considered their knowledge of historical and contemporary artists adequate to meet the needs of their general art teaching.

* All teachers in the sample considered that there was a pressing need for them to participate in professional development to enhance their teaching of visual arts history/criticism and art generally.

* Student questionnaires indicated that the majority of pupils were unsure about their teacher's level of expertise and knowledge of art history.

* There is some evidence which suggests a correlation between students' academic success at school and their perception of the teacher's expertise with visual arts history and criticism.

* A "mirroring" phenomenon seemed to occur with, for example, students who attended schools in low socio-economic areas (where academic success was difficult to achieve) describing highly qualified and experienced teachers as having a limited knowledge of visual arts history. It appeared that the students' assessment of their teacher mirrored their assessment of their own chances for success. A similar mirroring occurred at the more privileged schools in a reversal of the rating of teacher expertise.

4.2.6 Category Six : Specific Methodologies for teaching Visual Arts History/Visual Arts Criticism

Having established that all participants in the sample endorsed the inclusion of visual arts history and criticism as a valuable component of the art education they offered to middle school students, teachers were asked about the kinds of strategies they employed. The reporting of successful strategies for teaching visual arts history/criticism seemed inherently bound up with the notion that the teachers were working within the parameters of what the students would accept or tolerate. This notion of toleration was evidenced in the kinds of choices made in terms of time allocated to visual arts history in the art class. Such choices related to the selection of written tasks as opposed to verbal exchanges or vice versa and the placement of such content at specific points in relation to studio work. Despite the varying contexts within which the participants were teaching, the underlying theme of negotiating or "buying" student acceptance of visual arts history and criticism through a super-ordinate emphasis on studio work seemed evident. Additionally, rather than teaching visual arts history and criticism for the inherent or essential benefit that the student might acquire through such study, teachers in the sample appeared to utilize the content associated with this undertaking to illustrate an instrumental relationship between visual arts history and studio work. Put simply, the teachers in this sample largely introduced visual arts history/criticism to demonstrate techniques associated with the studio area. Specific examples of this kind of application were cited by all teachers in the sample. Teacher E reported some success in addressing the study of visual arts history for the contribution it could make to her students' critical/aesthetic analysis skills. Nonetheless the primary application of this component of her course was still couched in terms of its relationship to the students' on-going studio work. Teacher E's success did not appear to be replicated in the experience or priority of the other teachers in the sample who reported placing emphasis on contextualizing the study of visual arts history within the studio medium, technique, tools, subject matter or theme. Table 16 (which follows) records the teacher participants' descriptions of their students' responses to the inclusion of visual arts history/criticism in art lessons.

Table 16   Category Six : Specific Methodologies

Question: How do your students respond to the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in art lessons?

Teacher	School	Response - Illustrative text
A	(1)	It would depend on the approach - if it was a formal research written assignment, they have a very negative response, but if it is a visual or a video included to support the work they were doing and if it was a fairly brief thing then it would be quite positive.
B	(2)	Well because it is not really being that time consuming they don't really mind, they sort of liked it because it is something different. They are accepting it. I don't get any negative comments about it like if I say we are going to watch a video before we start our next unit, and I want to show you something about what we are going to be doing, and I want you to think about this artist and what they do, they (the students) never sort of react badly.
C	(3)	Comment related to upper school students in year 12 and not middle school students.
D	(4)	Well like I said, sometimes they'll groan, they don't like doing written work. The guy I am replacing puts more emphasis on art history and less on the actual studio work, whereas I tend to do it the other way around. But I try and keep it to a minimum. I think if you hammer it too hard they'll just really resist. So I try and make it incidental and I try and make it relevant to what they are doing (studio work).
E	(5)	Some kids get a shock, because they think art is just about doing things and making - so a studio focus - and when they discover that there are other things involved and they have to actually do some writing, some thinking and so on about art, they are not quite so sure how to deal with that.
F	(6)	Sometimes they are happy about it and other times they just want to get down to the practical work. They let you know if they are not happy about it - they get restless, and you can just see that you don't get an answer, and they are looking out the window, or a conversation might start here or there, so they usually do it fairly politely but its pretty obvious that they have had enough.

Five of the six teachers in the sample stated that they included the study of historical and contemporary artists/art movements at least once during the course of every project within their semester programmes for middle school students. Teachers reported that they were generally able to complete two projects per semester, with each project being comprised of visual inquiry, art history and studio work. When asked where the inclusion of visual arts history might occur within the project structure, most teachers reported that visual arts history was primarily dealt with at the commencement

of each new project. Teaching approaches included the use of teaching aids such as video tapes on the life and works of great artists, prints and posters of great works, art history texts containing prints with descriptions of formal elements of the works and slides of significant 2D and 3D works. Teachers reported that they typically led analyses of visual art history works and encouraged students to offer opinions about how the form of the work could be incorporated into the pupil's own studio product. Aesthetic judgements about the meaning or success of the works was attempted infrequently in five of the six schools. Teacher E (School 6) did not attempt interpretation or judgement of visual arts works, preferring merely to consider the physical appearance/form of the work.

Guided analysis of visual arts works is promoted by Marsh (1994) in her Personal and Critical Response methodology. Marsh noted the value of visual arts teachers initially assuming responsibility for providing a scaffold and leading students through analysis, interpretation and judgement of significant works. Marsh (1994) encouraged teachers to model the technique for students, however none of the teachers in the sample stated that they were aware of the work of Marsh (1994), or Darby (1988) before her and their description of visual arts criticism only loosely resembled in style the work of these researchers. One of the reasons for this may be that Feldman's methodology (upon which Darby's approach is based), has been the most widely adopted approach.

Where Marsh promoted the study of visual arts works for their intrinsic value, the research participants advocated the study of visual arts works for the technical information which students could then translate into studio works. In Table 17 which follows, teacher participants described the places visual arts history/criticism might (most commonly) be evidenced in their teaching programmes/art projects/lessons.

Table 17	Category Six : Specific Methodologies
Question:	At what part of the programme/art project/lesson would you include visual arts history/criticism?

Teacher	Response - Illustrative text
A	That would be difficult to say. It could occur at the start, it could occur for the entire lesson, it may not occur at all in a particular lesson if it wasn't appropriate. It's a really hard thing to put down and give a specific answer to a question like that. I guess it would be definitely there at the start of a new project, but maybe not in the very first lesson.
B	Mainly at the beginning of the lesson, before they start their studio, especially like at an introduction to the unit. I would talk about it at the beginning of the first lesson.
C	I'd say that it would occur further down the line. I prefer students to start from the drawing - drawing based.
D	That would tend to be at the beginning. Usually I try and get the direct teaching over first, and then because we have the double period, that would then involve them going off and doing some visual inquiry or carrying on with some studio work or what have you, so I tend to make that in the beginning.
E kids	Depends, sometimes I do that in a single period, concurrently with the practical work in the double period, simply because it is too hard to do the practical work in the single period. Sometimes I will actually start it when they have finished their practical project, but it's not the best timing, but it gives me something for them to do whilst the other are catching up. So really they should do it at the beginning, but I don't always get it done then. So it is complementary to the studio experience but the studio work is not actually coming out of that experience. The studio work comes out of the design development and visual inquiry.
F	At the beginning of the lesson while they are still fresh, sometimes it can be done at the end of the lesson when we are evaluating their own work - it's quite relevant then.

The responses recorded in Table 17 suggest that visual arts history/criticism skills were largely subordinated to the studio focus and were used to reinforce the techniques and theme areas being undertaken in support of the end product/studio. According to Marsh (1994) and Reid (1995) such an absence of a visual arts history skills base could markedly interfere in the student's ability to read and interpret the visual culture around them, with potentially damaging consequences to the development of the student as a whole person. When asked specifically what value

visual arts history/criticism held for students, none of the teachers appeared to endorse the notion that the skills acquired during critical analysis made a significant contribution to the education of the whole person.

Teacher F responded that in her view "criticism has to relate to the studio" and she continued "If you take it in isolation, just for its own sake, I think at this particular school it would die". Similarly, Teacher E (at a school which could be described as having an affluent student population) noted with regard to criticism "Well I explain it to the kids, as you can't do things in a vacuum, that by looking at what other artists and craftspeople have done, in the particular area that we are doing in class, they get ideas for their own work - they get more appreciation of the degrees of difficulty and the technical skill involved. I also think it adds to their own work".

Teacher E did not promote the study of visual arts history or criticism for the contribution it could make to the development of the whole person, but focused students' attention on the contribution which could be made to their studio project.

Five of the six teachers in the sample (excluding Teacher F) stated that in addition to discussing visual arts works as a prelude to commencing studio work, students were generally asked to write something to support the study of visual arts history. In most cases teachers kept this aspect of study to a minimum, preferring to utilize worksheets rather than essays. Once again the notion of accommodating student acceptance seemed evident. In the following table (Table 18) teachers' methodologies for teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism are identified and described.

Table 18	Category Six : Specific Methodologies
Question:	What methodology do you employ in this process (teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism)?

Teacher	Response
A	It would involve formal written assignments that the students would do on their own for homework, also it would include showing visuals and then discussing the different art styles and artforms. Whole class discussion. It might also include one-on-one discussion (about a student's studio work) and from that discussion ideas would spring to mind, and then that would lead us to go and look at a particular style of art for that particular student. Sometimes it might include slide shows, it might include a lesson in the library looking at art books and talking about (and writing about) different styles of art.
B	Well for the Year 10s for instance I showed them a video and they really liked it - it really showed the artist painting. For the Year 9s I just had to show them pictures out of a book and basically try to get them to do some patterns of their own (we were doing Aboriginal Art) - I just had to copy a whole lot of patterns, symbols and things they could use to put in their things that they could use to put in their designs. I tend to talking them through images or narrating them.
C	I generally tend to rely on videos, a lot of books, I get the students to flick through books so that they at least gain a visual awareness of time (chronological position of art movements/artists). And also through worksheets.
D	Well we've got a series of books, class sets of books, like *Art Detective* and often it (the book) might be referring to the studio area we are covering - say we're doing printmaking - and so we start off and distribute these books and find the chapter (printmaking) which will often have various examples of the various methods and pictures of artists' works. It could also be showing reproductions, samples of students' works - I guess it's kind of a bit chalky and talky, but often we will distribute things around the room so they can discuss it in a group. Most often it's either looking at a text book or looking at me or something I've been talking about, and asking them to give me their thoughts.
E	I usually start off with talking them through what I want them to actually do in sample one, and I use the stepping out process, then I give them one to do on their own in a written form. So I might give them a photocopy of a studio work, or I might use that book *Old Masters - New Visions* and have them looking at, for example, limited palettes, with still life - I found a couple of examples in there when we were talking about limited palette (for our studio work) and that was quite good.
F	Most likely to be verbal - we compare and contrast different works, videos we can use magazines, books, other students' work, upper school work.

Having determined some details of the participants' methodology for teaching visual arts history/criticism, teachers were asked how successful they considered these strategies to be in supporting their students' visual arts education and what limitations were incumbent in the process.

Teacher A did not offer comment about the success of her approach and identified the greatest limitation to successfully teaching visual arts history criticism as being her knowledge level. Teacher C considered that there was great room for improvement in the way this content was incorporated into her programme and teaching. She identified limited teaching resources (books, prints) and time constraints, as the greatest obstacles to success. Teacher B considered that her success in teaching this content was "pretty good". This teacher did not identify variables which she considered interfered with her successful handling of this material. Teacher D considered that "it was very hard to stand back and objectively be the judge" about the success or otherwise of results in this area. She identified her students' lack of pre-extisting knowledge about art history as being the greatest impediment to successfully dealing with the content in the art classroom. She distinguished "popular culture" from "fine art" in the interview, noting that her student's recognition of visual and popular culture generally was quite good. She considered that the symbols of popular culture were well known to her students; she did not comment however, on their ability to interpret those images or to draw meaning from them. Teacher D further noted that it was unlikely that her students would be motivated to visit an art gallery of their own volition and she considered that this ignorance of fine art remained an obstacle to formal success in teaching visual arts history and criticism. Teacher E considered that she was having a reasonable degree of success in handling the material and identified a requirement for students to do "too much writing" as being potentially harmful. She expressed concern that students may be "turned off" wanting to do art in the future. Finally, Teacher F considered that she had been successful in incorporating some visual arts history into her art lessons. She commented that she could "sometimes see evidence of art history coming through in the studio - it depends what you are looking for - you know if you are looking at texture, or colour, or something - sometimes you can see it in the style or technique the students use." Teacher F did not consider that the approaches she employed in dealing with visual arts history were

limited in any significant way and further commented that she simply adjusted the style of teaching to suit the needs of the particular class, thereby eliminating possible obstacles to successful learning.

Category Six   -   Key Statements

* All teachers in the sample reported that they utilized the study of visual arts history and criticism in support of their students' studio work, rather than in pursuit of critical analysis skills for the development of the student as a "whole person".

* All teachers in the sample noted students' dissatisfaction when asked to write about visual arts history. Teacher F abandoned the enterprise of asking students to write about art history. Teacher E by contrast required her students to complete formal essays on art history. The remaining teachers in the sample tended to utilize worksheets where students made short observations about the content being covered.

* Most teachers in the sample attempted to formally include the study of visual arts history/criticism at least once in every project. In most instances teachers were able to complete two projects per semester.

* Teachers in the sample focused specifically on the formal qualities of artworks and prioritized identifying connections to the students' studio work over developing long term critical analysis skills.

* Most teachers in the sample employed videos, books, prints and posters in support of teaching visual arts history and criticism.

* Teachers E and F considered that they were having some success in teaching visual arts history and the remaining teachers appeared unsure.

4.2.7   *Category Seven: Contextual Considerations*

Having asked teachers *how* they employed visual arts history and criticism in the teaching of middle school students, participants were asked to explain (a) *why* they considered the study of visual arts history/criticism important to the structure of the middle school art curriculum in the first instance and (b) to declare what motivation was responsible for the material being approached from one perspective rather than another. Teacher A stated that she was not convinced that the study of visual arts history/criticism was always a valuable undertaking. The remaining participants strongly expressed the belief that the study of this material was very valuable. When asked to elaborate on this position, the teacher participants identified both instrumental links to their students' art works and the establishment of a knowledge base which would give students a sense of "links to the past". The justification based on establishing an historical connection to past artists and art movements was limited to maintaining a knowledge base of names, dates, important art works and some appreciation of the progression of art styles. The teacher participants consistently expressed this historical-knowledge-base motivation as a self-contained entity and did not offer comment about possible consequences for the student's development as a whole person. The notion that the study of historical and contemporary artists might facilitate the development and enhancement of critical thinking skills was not identified as a motivation.

Despite having an instinctive sense that knowing about past art traditions would be good for their students, the teachers in this study appeared not to have moved past a superficial encounter with this content. Questions about the meaning of the visual metaphors inherent in many traditional and contemporary works of fine art were not linked to issues of personal identity and the education of students as whole people. The bigger picture seemed inconsequential in the process of educating students about methods, materials, techniques, formal elements and principles of design. Once again visual arts history/criticism seemed subsumed into the production of a finished studio art work. Table 19 records explanations given by teachers as to why they incorporate visual arts history/criticism in their teaching of middle school students. It appears the study of visual arts history materials/content is undertaken in support of the studio product and remains sublimated to this larger goal.

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Table 19   Category Seven : Contextual Considerations

Question: Why do you incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in your teaching of
                middle school students?

Teacher	Response - Illustrative text.
A	Well firstly because it is a requirement (of the Curriculum Council) so that would be my biggest motivation, the fact that it's expected, but also because I think that sometimes it's really important - it's an important way and a useful way of getting an idea across or sort of supporting what you're saying to students. It also gives them a sense that they are not isolated. They are not practicing art in an isolated way. That things have gone on before them, for years and years, and they are just part of this big progression of art. They are sort of mixed up in this wider circle, as it were. But there are other times when I question why we are doing it.
B	I could'nt bear to leave it out, I think it would be like missing a big piece of it (the overall art programme). I feel it is fairly integral to an art programme. I think there are so many artists they don't get to hear about - important pioneers - Australian pioneers - and I could'nt leave it out.
C	I think it is important for students to understand that ideas don't come from just their heads, that we live in a visual world, and that today was made up of yesterday.
D	I think that art is more than just getting them to come in and just paint and draw - I think they've got to broaden their concepts and be exposed to a whole range of things. I think it's passing on information - it's broadening their ideas. It's using the stimulation of a reproduction of a painting as a springboard for talking about ideas that might lead them to have other ideas.
E	Well I explain it to the kids as you can't do things in a vacuum, that by looking at what other artists and craftspeople have done, in the particular area that we are doing in class, they get ideas for their own work - they get more appreciation of the degrees of difficulty and technical skill involved.
F	I think that it's an essential element, if you are an art teacher, and art is the subject that you are looking at - if you don't study artists and art periods, it's irrelevant.

To attempt confirmation of the contextual information provided by teachers in the sample, student questionnaires from all six schools were analysed to determine students' perceptions about the reasons for talking about visual arts works. First of all, students were asked whether they considered that it was a good idea to talk about visual arts history during art classes. Secondly, students were asked whether they ever felt

inclined to offer their own opinion about the famous art works which were discussed during their art classes. Finally, students were asked whether other class members seemed interested in hearing their opinion about these works and conversely whether they would be interested in hearing opinions from other students.

Almost half the students in the sample seemed to consider that it was a good idea to talk about visual arts history, with the remaining students maintaining that they were unsure whether talking about visual arts history was a valuable undertaking. School 4 had student responses split into thirds, between negative, unsure or positive reactions to this material however it is difficult to discern the reasons for such distribution. Of equal interest is the response of students at School 5, where 70% of students considered that talking about visual arts history was a valuable undertaking. When reconciling School 5 student responses against the teacher's approach to the material, it seems significant that Teacher E reported having a rigorous approach to visual arts history, and unapologetically required her students to complete art history essays and other written materials.

In School 6 where Teacher F stated that she did not require her students to write about visual arts history, results which were similar to those of the other schools were recorded. In School 6, 47% of students reported being "unsure" about the value of the experience, with 23% reporting the inclusion as "worthwhile", whilst 30% rejected the experience as "worthless". This result appears to suggest that not requiring a written response exerted neither a negative or positive consequence on students' attitudes toward the material in School 6.

The following tables (Tables 21, 22 and 23) present students' perceptions of (a) the value of talking about art history during art classes, (b) the incidence of students offering an opinion about visual arts works, and (c) the interest their classmates would have in hearing their opinion about visual arts works.

Table 20   Category Seven : Contextual Considerations
                Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from all six Schools

Question: Do you think it is a good idea to talk about art history during art classes?

School	gender distribution Male Female (number of students)		Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	strongly disagree	7
				disagree	-
				unsure	40
				agree	53
				strongly agree	-
2	17	-	B	strongly disagree	29
				disagree	6
				unsure	47
				agree	12
				strongly agree	6
3	-	25	C	strongly disagree	8
				disagree	16
				unsure	36
				agree	40
				strongly agree	-
4	6	20	D	strongly disagree	11
				disagree	19
				unsure	31
				agree	31
				strongly agree	8
5	13	10	E	strongly disagree	-
				disagree	8
				unsure	22
				agree	65
				strongly agree	5
6	17	15	F	strongly disagree	26
				disagree	4
				unsure	47
				agree	23
				strongly agree	-

Table 21   Category Seven : Contextual Considerations
                  Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from all six Schools

Question: Do you ever give your own opinion about "famous" artworks?

School	gender distribution Male Female (number of students)		Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	never	47
				occasionally	47
				often	-
				always	6
2	17	-	B	never	35
				occasionally	53
				often	-
				always	12
3	-	25	C	never	52
				occasionally	40
				often	-
				always	8
4	6	20	D	never	54
				occasionally	23
				often	23
				always	-
5	13	10	E	never	31
				occasionally	65
				often	4
				always	-
6	17	15	F	never	56
				occasionally	41
				often	3
				always	-

Note: "Famous" (in this context) refers to those visual arts works which would most commonly be
          employed in middle school visual arts classrooms, including (according to the teachers
          surveyed in this sample) works/Artists such as:

          Post Impressionists; Pop Art; Australian Artists; Impressionists; Renaissance Artists;
          Surrealists; Cubists; Expressionists; Art Nouveau/Art Deco; other "European" Fine Arts Works.

Table 22   Category Seven : Contextual Considerations

                Amalgamated Student Questionnaires from all six Schools

Question: How interested do you think other members of your class are
                in hearing your opinion about famous art works?

School	gender distribution Male Female (number of students)		Teacher	Student Response	Class %
1	8	7	A	not interested moderately interested very interested	60 40 -
2	17	-	B	not interested moderately interested very interested	76 18 6
3	-	25	C	not interested moderately interested very interested	52 48 -
4	6	20	D	not interested moderately interested very interested	65 35 -
5	13	10	E	not interested moderately interested very interested	39 61 -
6	17	15	F	not interested moderately interested very interested	69 31 -

Students were asked how often, if ever, they offered their opinion about visual arts works. Additionally, they were asked whether they considered that their peers were interested in hearing this opinion. Generally students reported that they seldom voiced an opinion about visual arts works which were being discussed in the art classroom. Further, with the exception only of pupils at School 5, students indicated that they believed their peers were generally uninterested in hearing their opinion about visual arts works. Consistent with earlier results, School 5 participants had a more positive attitude to the study of visual arts history/criticism materials, which may derive from issues related to student self-esteem. It remains unclear what factors dispose students at this school to view the study of this material more positively that their counterparts, but socio-economic factors combined with high expectations for their own academic achievement appear to be recurrent themes. These factors, in combination with apparently rigorous standards for written work imposed by Teacher E, seem likely to both derive from and contribute to, higher levels of student self-esteem in this school context.

Category Seven   -   Key Statements

*   All teachers considered visual arts history content to be valuable.
*   The value ascribed to this material (in all cases), seemed limited to an instrumental connection to the studio work being undertaken by students
*   A number of teachers practiced a chronological approach to the study of visual arts history, but most reported a focus upon the formal elements and principles of design. Most commonly, teacher participants undertook this study to provide students with exemplar materials, techniques, methods and themes to be emulated in the students' own studio work.
*   None of the teacher participants reported an interest in the "personal growth" which might occur from mastery of critical analysis skills associated with interpretation of metaphors embedded in many traditional and contemporary visual arts works.

*   Students reported a positive attitude to talking generally about visual arts works but they did not consider that they often voiced a personal opinion about works being discussed.

*   Pupils generally reported that they did not feel confident that other students would be interested in hearing their opinion about visual arts works.

4.3   Conclusion

In this chapter data collected from interviews conducted with six visual arts teachers and from questionnaires completed by six middle school classes have been presented and analysed. The simultaneous presentation and analysis of data was undertaken in an effort to maintain the integrity of the data which was based on teachers' and students' perceptions. Collection of data from teacher participants derived from the use of both broad questions and related funnel questions. Results were presented as narrative text in Tables One through Twenty Two. Key Statements for specific categories of questions synthesized similar and divergent responses, thereby allowing conclusions to be drawn.

Chapter Five provides a discussion of the Key Statements and Conclusions, and outlines the basis upon which the two recommendations emanating from the study have been made.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF KEY STATEMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1   Introduction

The new Curriculum Framework and outcomes-based initiatives requires of educators a shift in emphasis from what the teacher can teach, to an approach which "emphasizes the desired results of schooling" through the attainment of specific educational outcomes (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 6). Within *The Arts* learning area, the prescribed outcomes for the visual arts are interconnected and interrelated through the criteria of mastery of aesthetic understanding and arts practice (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 6).

The study of visual arts history and criticism falls most directly into the outcome areas of Arts Responses and Arts in Society. The documentation produced by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia to support the implementation of the new Framework espouses the philosophy that the study of the visual arts contributes to "the development of the students' understanding of their own values about aesthetic experience as they are evidenced in their own lives" (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 57). The assumption that the student will acquire critical thinking skills which will be applicable to the student's life outside the context of the school, echo the end-in-view of Discipline Based Art Education and the positions adopted by McKeon (1994) and Reid (1995) cited in the review of literature.

The assumption that the study of the visual arts (and particularly visual arts history and criticism) will contribute to the development of analytical skills which will enable the student to interpret the meanings embedded in visual culture, is shared by local and international writers. Interestingly, this theoretical assumption has not been proven to have substance in the classroom practice of the participants in this study. In preference to provoking or encouraging students to question the metaphoric content of visual arts works, visual arts history was used simply as a teaching aid for studio work. The apparent misalignment between theory and practice evidenced in this study, has clear implications for the implementation and sustainability of the Curriculum Framework.

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5.1.1 *Reconciliation of Key Statements against original research questions and resultant recommendations*

For the reader's benefit the original propositions/questions employed in this inquiry are re-stated:

1   How do middle school visual arts teachers approach the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism and what activities and/or applications are utilized in this process?

2   What value do middle school students place on visual arts history and visual arts criticism?

The analysis of Key Statements which derived from the seven categories of inquiry has been synthesized into several conclusions:

- The teachers in this sample use visual arts history in preference to visual arts criticism in the education of middle school students.

- Teaching approaches employed in the study of visual arts history is largely confined to narratives/monologues by the teacher, which occur for a short period at the commencement of a new art project.

- Teachers in the sample utilize teaching aids such as posters, prints, video tapes and art history texts as visual exemplars of the formal elements being discussed.

- The study of visual arts history is explicitly utilized as a vehicle for exemplifying techniques, styles and materials/methods for the completion of the studio work undertaken by students.

- Teacher participants instinctively appreciate the essential value of the study of visual arts history. Any desire however, to study visual arts history/criticism for the intrinsic value of such study, or for the life-skills that might derive from such study, is impaired by the teachers' perception of what students will tolerate.

- Students often hold a considerable amount of power in their ability to determine what content and approach will be used in the implementation of visual arts appreciation/history/criticism.

- As a consequence of student behaviour patterns, some teachers abandon or modify educational content which might otherwise be considered worthwhile.

- Student acceptance of content is a significant factor in the teaching of visual arts history and visual arts criticism.

With respect to the value middle school students place upon visual arts history and visual arts criticism, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- Students acknowledged that visual arts history was occasionally included in their art classes, and confirmed that this material was generally presented in oral as opposed to written form.

- Students held the view that visual arts history was infrequently included in their art lessons.

- Students were unsure whether their teacher was knowledgeable about about visual arts history.

- Students were unsure about the value of including visual arts history in visual arts classes.

- Most students did not offer a personal opinion about the arts works being discussed.

- Students perceived that other students would not be interested in hearing their opinion about the visual arts works being discussed.

Reconciliation of these conclusions with the new Curriculum Framework Student Outcomes Statements validates the assumption that the Framework is misaligned with the actual classroom behaviour evidenced in this study. There is an unequivocal expectation embedded within the Framework that students will develop critical analytical skills through consideration, discussion, written analysis and synthesis of personal and critical response to contemporary and historical visual arts works:

Students (will) respond to arts experiences using processes of inquiry. They (will) experience authentic arts works, observe, categorise and make initial responses. They refine these initial responses by examining the use of specific elements used to create the work and the unique relationships developed within the arts work itself. They explore the connections between particular arts works and others, considering aspects such as style, form, genre, context and culture. They exercise their capacity to express their preferences about arts works, use values and make informed evaluations about them. (Curriculum Council Framework, p. 56, 1998)

Furthermore, there is an expectation that students will develop these skills through frequent and wide ranging exposure to visual arts works and their meaning. This expectation is ill-founded in the light of the findings of this study.

5.2   Recommendations deriving from this study

A "complex understanding of the purpose and function of the arts in Australian and other cultural contexts" as espoused in the Curriculum Framework documentation (Curriculum Council, 1998, p 5) is not an achievable outcome if contemporary teaching practice (evidenced in this study) remains the norm. Clearly, without confronting the fact that students have limited opportunity to acquire and practise the skills which would lead to such understanding, the Outcomes expectations are conceptually flawed. In order for these outcomes to be achievable, the teachers in this sample must change the way they teach their students.

It is possible that a discussion-style encounter with visual arts works (where the teacher modelled analysis of the formal elements, meaning and metaphors inherent in the art work) as advocated by Marsh (1994, p. 35) in her study with students in Years 11 and 12 could provide an appropriate place to commence such a process of change. With frequent opportunity for practise, middle school students (like their Year 11 and 12 counterparts) could be encouraged to verbalize comments in response to the teachers' observations about the stereotypes and covert meanings implicit in many

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works of arts, as well as offering further comment about the more obvious physical elements of the artwork.

The first recommendation deriving from this study relates to the need for teachers to model appropriate interaction with visual arts works and thereafter, for students to have opportunities to participate in the process:

Recommendation One:

There is an urgent need for classroom teachers to actively model critical and personal response style interaction with visual works of art, in order to facilitate the Outcome expectation that students "understand the role of the arts in society and appreciate the ways in which the arts have shaped their own lives, modern societies and past times, places and people" (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 57)

Such modelling of critical analysis and personal response should be demonstrated frequently and students should be encouraged to participate in the experience of discussing, debating and writing about the meaning and significance of visual artsworks. This recommendation should be implemented alongside, rather than in place of, current practices of periodically analysing visual artsworks from a formal elements and principles perspective.

By modelling verbal and written responses to visual arts works, teachers will clearly demonstrate to their students that they are knowledgeable about visual arts history and they possess the necessary analytical skills. By demonstrating expertise in this area, teachers will provide a sound model and raise their students' confidence in taking part in reflecting and responding components of the visual arts course.

The inclusion of a critical and personal response style interaction with arts works has the potential to deliver to students opportunities for acquiring and developing the skills

which would make the outcomes identified in the Curriculum Framework for the Arts Responses and the Arts in Society areas achievable. However, the premise that such opportunity would be provided requires that the teacher be able to model the technique. Based on the commentary of the teachers interviewed in this study, it is likely that most of the participants would lack the confidence to model in-depth analysis of visual artsworks. This lack of confidence perhaps derives from inadequate pre-service exposure to art theory/history criticism techniques and a long-standing tradition (deriving from Unit Curriculum initiatives) of employing the study of visual arts history/criticism explicitly for its relationship to the studio work.

None of the research participants reported that their knowledge of visual arts criticism would be adequate to undertake in-depth analysis of the meaning inherent in art works. Clearly the knowledge base of these teachers is sufficient only to allow a superficial encounter with the physical appearance of an art work in most instances. In order to advance to a critical and personal response style interaction, teacher knowledge bases must be extended from one which is bounded by a facility for description of formal elements to one which also allows meaning/s to be extracted from contextual considerations.

The second recommendation deriving from this study relates to the need for teachers to undergo professional development sufficient to facilitate the implementation of Recommendation One.

Recommendation Two:
There is an urgent need for professional development with teachers who will implement the Curriculum Framework at the middle school level. This professional development should focus upon the development of skills which will allow the teacher to model the description, analysis, interpretation and judgement processes described and promoted Marsh (1994) in her personal and critical response methodology.

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Finally, this study has suggested a tendency in some instances for classroom teachers to *accommodate* student demands about levels of enjoyment and the modification/abandonment of specific content which pupils consider inhibits their enjoyment. If students presently shape the way in which interaction with visual arts works is undertaken and if they successfully manipulate a low-key, low demand model of studying visual arts history/criticism, then it is clear that the Outcomes Arts Responses and Arts in Society will not be achieved. Some reassessment of this practice should underpin the two recommendations deriving from this study.

5.3   Conclusion

In this brief chapter, key statements arising from the analysis of data have been discussed and two recommendations have been made. It has been shown that current practice does not provide fertile ground for the implementation of two significant outcomes within the Arts Learning Area.

Chapter Six identifies the implications these recommendations have for the implementation of the new Curriculum Framework.

CHAPTER SIX
IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

6.1   Introduction

Acting on the recommendations developed in this research during the period in which the Curriculum Framework itself is being implemented has the potential to prove both highly successful and financially viable because the impetus for change has already gained momentum. The Curriculum Council of Western Australia has already commenced the development of support documentation,consultation and review designed to support the shift to the outcomes-based education prescribed by the Curriculum Framework. The need for professional development identified in this research could, therefore easily, be structured into the existing programmes being offered to teachers by systems and sectors preparing for the future.

The recommendations deriving from this study require a different mind set from the one which has enabled students to often determine the form of visual arts history/criticism education within their art programmes. At a surface level, this mind set might be manifest by teachers simply refusing to negotiate with students about the form and content of visual arts history/criticism in visual arts courses. However, at a deeper conceptual level the implementation of such recommendations is problematic. The Curriculum Framework is built upon a philosophy which espouses the value of students achieving prescribed "outcomes", through a process of self determination:

> Students develop and learn at different rates and in different ways,
> constructing new knowledge and understandings in ways which link
> their learning to their previous experiences. The developmental
> approach of the Curriculum Framework accommodates these needs.
> ... The Framework provides a balance between what is common
> to the education of all students and the kind of flexibility and openness
> required for education in the twenty-first century.
> (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 17)

The teacher is a facilitator in such a relationship rather than a prescriptive and autocratic transmitter of information. The recommendations in this study should therefore be viewed as a *means to an end*. Although somewhat autocratic in style in their rejection of the notion of negotiating with students about content to be studied, such recommendations nonetheless open the door for the teacher to introduce a model of visual arts education where aesthetic criticism skills are modelled appropriately for the first time. Once a personal and critical response style methodology characterizes the interaction students have with visual arts images, the time and place of that interaction could be determined by the student. The maturity required to know when the time is right, however, will remain beyond the grasp of the ordinary pupil unless some appreciation of the intrinsic value of visual arts history and criticism is instilled in students. The recommendations deriving from this study seek to reclaim a decision-making process which will ultimately benefit students in the education and service of their life-world interests in a manner advocated by Reid (1995).

Data from the schools sample in this research has provided insight into contemporary teaching practice in the domain of visual arts history and criticism within middle school art education. The recommendations to emerge from this study would have implications for all six teachers who participated in the study because none of the teachers presently approaches the study of visual arts history/criticism from a critical and personal response style platform. Significantly, none of the teachers interviewed in this study expressed any concern about the difficulty of reconciling their present teaching style with the demands of the Curriculum Framework. This may well be explained by the fact that many schools are still at the talking phase of embracing the new approach. It is equally possible and plausible, however, that these teachers may not yet appreciate the gap which exists between their own approach to the study of visual arts images and the requirements embedded in new initiatives of outcomes-based education. In either case, the timing of this research seems fortuitous and it is hoped that the publication of this document will, in part, be a catalyst for a review of the positions presently assumed by the participants in this study. Thereafter, significant implications may well exist for the wider schools community.

6.2   *Impact of limitations of this study on generalising conclusions*

The limitations of this small scale research undertaking identified in chapter three of this document do not permit the researcher to generalise beyond the indicative stage with respect to the wider schools community. Gender bias in the teacher sample may have a role to play in the final results of this study. It is possible that male participants might have reported different methodologies in the handling of visual arts history and criticism with middle school students. Similarly, the small size of the sample in the first instance may have skewed the results of this study in one or another direction which might not have been evident in research undertaking of a larger scale. Finally, the very nature of perception-based inquiry is fraught with difficulty in the enterprise of extrapolating conclusions to the wider schools context. In this instance the researcher has referred again to the work of Measor (1985) for validation of the "fit" of respondents' descriptions within the context of this inquiry.

6.3   *Conclusion*

As a visual arts educator with over 15 years classroom experience, affirmation of the perceptions of both teachers and students in this study as being valid representations of contemporary classroom practice has been provided by the researcher's understanding of the art education process. The experience of the participants in this small sample has a "truthful and believeable" quality which suggests plausibility. This plausibility provides a platform from which further inquiry, involving a larger sample over a longer period of time, can derive. It is hoped that such an undertaking might emanate from this first foray into the domain of the transition from post Unit Curriculum art education to Outcomes-based visual arts education and the Curriculum Framework.

Extracts from student commentary noted on questionnaires:

Question: *Can you tell us anything else about your school and the way art history and art criticism has been used in it?*

"We have to do it - I don't enjoy it" (male student, School 1)

"No - I don't know anything about art history" (female student, School 1)

"We don't talk about art history or artists. We just talk about our own thoughts. Art History is boring and no-one would really want to discuss it because it's a waste of time" (male student, School 2)

"No-one really cares about it" (male student, School 2)

"We did an art time-line, viewing art history, and we experimented with ideas" (female student, School 3)

"We always use other people's art work and copy and modify our ideas" (female student, School 3)

"It doesn't appeal to me at all - I find it very boring and don't pay any attention" (female student, School 4)

"I don't know anything about art history and criticism - I didn't learn it before, and I wish I'd had a chance to learn it" (female student, School 4)

"Majority of the walls around the school are decorated with pieces of art" (male student, School 5)

"She (teacher) talks too much about art" (male student, School 5)

"Although this is my first year in art, we have learned a lot about art criticism and history. Sometimes in social studies we'd learn about it - and often in English too" (female student, School 6)

"Recently we did art history on ceramic sculpture. We talked about whether it was worth making them, what message they were trying to tell us and our thoughts on them - I really enjoyed it" (female student, School 6)

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APPENDIX ONE

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Note to Participants:

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please answer the following questions which ask for your opinion about art history and art criticism. Your answers will not be assessed and will remain anonymous.

Background information:

Gender:　　　Male _____　　Female _____　(tick as appropriate)

Year level:　　　_____

Definitions:

visual arts history

> *The study of artists, art movements and art works*
>
> *(e.g. paintings, ceramics, and sculpture).*

visual arts criticism

> *Talking about works of art and making a judgment about them, in terms*
>
> *of how successful they are and whether you like them.*

Questions: (circle most appropriate and make comments)

1　　　Do you ever talk about art history in your art classes?

　　　always　　　often　　　sometimes　　　seldom　　　never

2.　　　If you do talk about art history how often during the term would this happen?

　　　every class　often　　　sometimes　　　seldom　　　never

3.　　　If you do talk about art history, in which part of the art lesson does this occur?

　　　beginning　　　　　　middle　　　　　　end

4.　　　If you do talk about art history in class, who introduces it?

　　　teacher　　　I do　　　other students　　　other teachers

5.   Do you think it is a good idea to talk about art history during art classes?

strongly   agree   unsure   disagree   strongly
agree   disagree

6.   Do you think your teacher knows a lot about art history?

strongly   agree   unsure   disagree   strongly
agree   disagree

7.   Do you ever give your own opinion about "famous" art works which are
discussed during art history?

always   often   occasionally   never

8.   How interested do you think *other members* of your class are in hearing
your opinion about "famous" art works?

very interested   moderately interested   not interested

9.   How interested would *you* be in listening to, and discussing other student's
ideas and opinions about "famous" art works?

very interested   moderately interested   not interested

10.   How often would the whole class/most of the class (teacher, you and other
students) participate in a *pre-planned discussion* of "famous" art works?

Frequently   often   occasionally   never

11.   How often would a *spontaneous or unplanned discussion* of famous
art works involving the whole class occur?

Frequently   often   occasionally   never

12.   Do you use ideas gained from talking about "famous" art works to evaluate
your own art work and those of the other students in your class?

Always   often   sometimes   never

INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The Principal of   has given approval for the school's
participation in a small-scale research project being conducted by a post-graduate
student from Edith Cowan University.

The research will involve your child's (art class) participation in the completion
of an anonymous questionnaire of 12 questions, looking at the use of art history
in Western Australian schools.

The results of the study will be passed to the Western Australian Curriculum Council in
thesis form and should provide valuable information about current teaching trends.

In the event that you would prefer your child **NOT** to participate in the study could you
please contact the school secretary to advise your decision, and your child will be
supervised by another teacher while the questionnaire is completed.

Thank you for your support of this valuable research project. Please direct any inquiries
to the school secretary who can provide further details and answer any questions which
may arise.

_____

School Signatory

(date)

SCRIPT FOR TEACHERS TO READ TO QUESTIONNAIRE PARTICIPANTS
SEVERAL DAYS PRIOR TO ADMINISTRATION OF
QUESTIONNAIRE

SCRIPT:

"In the next few days this class will complete a short questionnaire for a university research project by a student from Edith Cowan University.

You have been invited to take part in the study.

The research is looking at art history and the ways that it is used in schools, and your views will be very helpful in understanding what presently happens and how we can best plan for the future.

The research is not compulsory and is not part of your grade or assessment tasks. If you would prefer not to participate you will be supervised by another teacher in the school library.

Please let your class teacher know before the day if you would prefer to be excused from the event.

Does anyone have any questions they would like to ask?"

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.

Could you please answer the following questions in relation to your teaching of students in *middle schooling* (years 8-10). If you are thinking of a specific class when answering these questions, please identify the nature of the group.

Personal information:

1. Please identify your age range:

21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45
46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	

2. Have you worked in professions other than teaching?
3. Did you make a continuous/immediate transition from secondary school to university/college to teaching?
4. How long have you been a teacher; a visual arts teacher?
5. When did you last undertake professional development in support of your visual arts teaching?
6. Have you been involved in curriculum development for art either within your school or with an external agency?
7. What formal teaching qualification do you possess? Place of origin?

Background questions:

1. Are you employed on a full-time or part-time basis?
2. Do you have a temporary or permanent position?
3. Please briefly describe the history of your teaching career?
4. Does art exist as a distinct department within your school or is it a subset of another department?
5. What is your position (seniority) within the department?
6. What are the average number of lessons you would have with students in middle schooling in any week? How long is each lesson?
7. How would you describe the socio-economic and cultural background of students you teach in middle schooling.

Ethos of the school:

1. Are you free to structure your art programme in any form you wish?

2. Do you *routinely* participate in professional development courses to improve your art teaching skills?

3. What degree of support from the school administration exists for teachers to undergo regular professional development?

4. Do you stage a whole school art exhibition at the end of each year?

5. What degree of parent contact would occur as a normal part of your teaching?

6. How accountable are you to parent demands/concerns?

7. Is there pressure for you to favour "product" over process in your teaching?

General philosophical orientation:

1. Can you describe the essential components you consider comprise an adequate art curriculum for students in middle schooling?

2. Would you describe your personal approach to teaching art as child-centred, discipline-based, contextual or 'other' (please elaborate)?

3. Would you describe your teaching style as authoritarian, laissez-faire or student centred?

Clarification of terminology:

What do you understand by the following terms:

1. visual arts history?

2. visual arts criticism?

3. visual inquiry?

4. visual arts appreciation?

5. studio work?

Your professional practice:

1. How would you describe the breadth/extent of your personal knowledge of historical/contemporary artists and movements in art?

2. How would you rate your ability to teach/employ visual arts history and visual arts criticism in an art lesson?

3. How useful was your pre-service training in the preparation for teaching visual arts history and visual arts criticism?

4. Do you believe that you incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in your art lessons for middle schooling?

Questions for teachers who believe they DO incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in their teaching:

1. Can you please explain why do you incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in your teaching?

2. How often do you do this?
   (e.g. every lesson, for every project, once a term ...)

3. What methods do you use in this process?

4. At what part of the art lesson does this occur?

5. Do you consider the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism a "valuable attribute" or a "necessary evil" within your art programme?

6. What visual arts history/criticism content do you consider essential for students in middle schooling?

7. Do you combine the use of visual arts criticism *with* visual arts history?

8. Do you consider that there is a noticeable difference in the quality of students' work which results from a process including visual arts history and visual arts criticism, compared with work where this does not occur?

9. How do your students respond to the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in art lessons?

10. How successful do you consider the techniques, strategies and methods you currently employ in the teaching of visual arts history/criticism have been in supporting your student's art education?

11. Can you identify any limitations or benefits in your approach to visual arts history/criticism with students in middle schooling?

Questions for teachers who believe they DO NOT incorporate visual arts history and visual arts criticism in their teaching:

1. What are the reasons why don't you presently include visual arts history and visual arts criticism in your teaching?

2. What circumstances would encourage you to include visual arts history and visual arts criticism in your teaching?

3. What factors which make the inclusion of visual arts history and visual arts criticism difficult or impossible in your classes?

4. What comment can you make about the place visual arts history or visual arts criticism might occupy in the future in your art courses?

5. Are there sufficient resources within your school to enable you to adequately deal with visual arts history and visual arts criticism should you desire to do so?

6. Please make a final comment about the place of visual arts history and visual arts criticism in art education practice today?

Final commentary:

1. Who are your favourite artists and craftspeople?

2. Which art movements or art periods are your favourite.

3. Which artists do you dislike?

4. Which art movements or art periods do you dislike?

Thank you for your participation.

FORM OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT FOR VISUAL ARTS SPECIALIST TEACHERS

Dear _____

I am a visual arts teacher with a career spanning fifteen years in art education in secondary and primary schools in Western Australia.

As a part of my Masters of Education degree at Edith Cowan University, I am gathering information about the way in which the teaching and use of visual arts history and visual arts criticism varies within Western Australian schools with reference to middle schooling (years 8-10).

I would be most indebted to you if you would be prepared to take part in the study, which would involve an initial interview of up to three quarters of an hour. Additionally, I would like to administer a brief survey questionnaire to a group of middle school students of your choosing.

The study is designed to gather information about teachers' perceptions of the place visual arts history and visual arts criticism presently occupies within their day-to-day teaching. The survey of students is intended to complement teachers' perceptions of their work in this area. Participant anonymity is assured and all contributions will be confidential. Interview transcripts will be provided for perusal and approval where a participant so desires. The study is not designed to measure individual teachers' performance, but rather seeks to gain insight into general trends and common professional practice.

The study will involve six visual arts specialist teachers from both the independent and state school systems, and the results will form the basis of a thesis which will be made available to the Curriculum Council of Western Australia.

I would be happy to discuss any queries you may have regarding the study, and I can be contacted at home after 6pm most days on ▮▮▮▮▮ or at work at St. Stephen's School Duncraig on ▮▮▮▮▮ during working hours.

Can you please indicate your willingness to participate in the study by completing the consent declaration below and returning same to Lisa Paris, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮ at your convenience.

Thank you for your valuable assistance in this important work.

Yours faithfully,

Lisa Paris.

Date _____

_____

Visual arts History/Visual Arts Criticism and its Applications:

A study of the contemporary use of visual arts history and visual arts criticism with students in middle schooling in six Western Australian secondary schools.

I _____ (the participant) have read the information provided regarding the proposed study and I acknowledge that any questions I have raised have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study and reserve the right to withdraw from the research process at any time. I give my consent for research data gathered for this study to be published in thesis form, provided neither I, nor my school or students are identifiable.

Signed _____

Full Name _____

Dated _____

FORM OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dear _____

I am a visual arts teacher with a career spanning fifteen years in art education in secondary and primary schools in Western Australia.

As a part of my Masters of Education degree at Edith Cowan University, I am gathering information about the way in which the teaching and use of visual arts history and visual arts criticism varies within Western Australian schools with reference to middle schooling (years 8-10). The research is timely as the 1998 Curriculum Framework for the arts legislates for the formal inclusion of visual

arts history and criticism. Accurate information about current professional practice may indicate areas of need in terms of professional development prior to the implementation of the Framework.

I would be most indebted to you if you would consent to *(teacher's name)* taking part in the study. This teacher has informally indicated their willingness to participate in the research. Additionally, I would like to administer a brief survey questionnaire to a group of middle school students of your choosing. The questionnaire is designed to complement the interview of teachers and may offer some confirmation of teacher perceptions in this area.

Participant anonymity is assured and all contributions will be confidential. Interview transcripts will be provided for perusal and approval where a participant so desires. The study is not designed to measure individual teachers' performance, but rather seeks to gain insight into general trends and common professional practice.

The study will involve six visual arts specialist teachers from both the independent and state school systems, and the results will form the basis of a thesis which will be made available to the Curriculum Council of Western Australia.

I would be happy to discuss any queries you may have regarding the study, and I can be contacted at home after 6pm most days on ████████ or at work at St. Stephen's School Duncraig on ████████ during working hours.

Can you please indicate your willingness for (*teacher's name*) to participate in the study by completing the consent declaration below and returning same to Lisa Paris, ██████████████████, at your convenience.

Thank you for your valuable assistance in this important work.

Yours faithfully,

Lisa Paris.

Date _____

_____

Visual arts History/Visual Arts Criticism and its Applications:

A study of the contemporary use of visual arts history and visual arts criticism with students in middle schooling in six Western Australian secondary schools.

I _____ have read the information provided regarding the proposed study and I acknowledge that any questions I have raised have been answered to my satisfaction. I give my consent for research data gathered for this study to be published in thesis form, provided neither my school, teachers or students are identifiable.

Signed _____

Full Name _____

Dated _____