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A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE
REVIEW OF RESEARCH LITERATURE

<u>EXPRESSIVE ARTS</u>

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Introduction

If we are to prepare successfully for the twenty-first century we will have to do more than just improve literacy and numeracy skills. We will need a broad, flexible and motivating education that recognises the different talents of children and delivers excellence for everyone.
National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (2001)

Research suggests that the arts play significant part in the education of all pupils. The findings of numerous, wide-ranging studies indicate that the Expressive Arts fulfil a vital function in the development learners, meeting many of the outcomes described in the "Purposes of the Curriculum 3-18" diagram outlined on page 15 of "A Curriculum for Excellence". In the following review of recent research, it is evident that the arts provide meaningful contexts through which learners can actively participate in a wide range of learning experiences. It is evident that learning should take place *in* the arts: each separate discipline has its own knowledge and skills base. But learning also takes place *through* the arts. Because of the high level of **active engagement** and enjoyment experienced during good Expressive Arts lessons, learners gain a sense of **achievement** and increased **self-esteem**. Across the arts areas, learners are offered a very wide and varied range of experiences, enabling them to **communicate** in a number of ways, for example, orally, visually, through body language and through music. The **collaborative** nature of many arts activities enables learners to develop skills in **working co-operatively** with others, often in **problem-solving, creative** situations. The arts also offer many opportunities for learners to be **pro-active** and **enterprising** within **meaningful and relevant contexts**.

Extensive research from many countries cites the benefits and outcomes of arts education. However, it is worth noting here that a wide-ranging search has uncovered only a few research-based studies into the most beneficial ways of developing and delivering a systematic, progression-based arts curriculum in schools. Perhaps this is indicative of the complex nature of the expressive arts. The many overlapping skills and concepts, together with the emotional/affective dimensions and the elusive nature of "talent", do not match themselves to an objectives-based, cognition and skills model of progression.

Arts Education – Learning *In* the Arts

In "Arts Education and the European Dimension", Bell (1998), reviews the role of the arts in the definition of a model of a curriculum for the new millennium. Both cognitive and aesthetic modes of learning are identified as vital and the arts are described as the

fourth "R", alongside reading, writing and arithmetic. In this model, children are recognised as artists in their own right, with ideas and abilities that go beyond being able to copy adult work. A clearly focused programme should lead children from initial exploration toward proficiency, self-discipline and artistic control.

In a chapter on developing the curriculum, "All Our Futures" (2001) states that "a balanced arts education has essential roles in the creative and cultural development of all young people" (p.69). A wide-ranging review of the curriculum is suggested and a particular review of arts education is recommended. In the Early Years, "there is a striking case for a more developed provision for creative and cultural education" (p.76). In Key Stages 1 and 2, there should be a concentration on raising the standard of numeracy and literacy but, at the same time, "the requirement to teach the arts and humanities on an equal basis…must be reinstated" (p.77). In Key Stages 3 and 4 there was concern that too many children were able to drop subjects such as the arts and to sacrifice breadth for specialisation, "too much and too soon" (p.81). More breadth and balance would allow valuable opportunities to extend the base of creative activities.

Bloomfield (2000) suggests that there are four types of knowledge and understanding underpinning the arts and that these should inform the planning of the curriculum.
- participation – children's knowledge of how to, for example paint, move, work in role, create music;
- repertoire – children's knowledge through experiencing and collecting their work;
- critical skills – children's knowledge of the qualities and special nature of the arts;
- contextual skills – children's knowledge of the historical, social and cultural worlds that inform their work.

Bloomfield sets out a model of an Arts curriculum that incorporates both single subject sessions and integrated arts sessions. Planning formats allow curriculum developers to consider four stages of the learning and teaching process: creative thinking – forming ideas; creative process – working through ideas; creative communication – realising through ideas; and critical response to the lesson. The teacher's role is defined as: helping children to form their ideas; helping children to test their ideas; helping children to communicate their ideas; and helping children to respond to the arts.

Arts Alive (2003) report is the outcome of the QCA development project set up to identify ways in which the contribution of the arts to pupils' education can be maximised. Research has found that the clearer and more specific a school's plans, the greater the chance of it achieving its intended outcomes. When planning an arts programme, schools need to take into account:

- breadth – range, coherence and balance;
- depth – focus and outcomes;
- progression – through the careful planning, this ensures that pupils are constantly challenged and enabled to develop their artistic skills, knowledge and understanding.

QCA's research suggests that sometimes:
- progression is lacking in the way the arts are taught over a key stage;

- more attention is given to the broader aims and specific content, in terms of the art forms selected, than to the development of arts skills and knowledge.

Recommended exemplification of standards provided for art and design, drama and dance and music may be found on the websites for the Arts Council and National Curriculum in Action (see bibliography).

Finally, Smith (1998, 2000) explores four different, increasingly learner-centred approaches to curriculum theory and practice which anyone undertaking curriculum design should consider:
- Curriculum as a body of knowledge to be **transmitted**.
- Curriculum as an attempt to achieve certain ends in students - **product**.
- Curriculum as the **process** of learning and teaching.
- Curriculum as **praxis**: based on informed, committed action (and action research).

Arts Education – Learning *Through* the Arts
Extensive research has firmly established the central role that the Arts play in the education of all learners. A few key reports are outlined here. 'Eloquent Evidence: Arts at the Core of Learning' (1999) is an extensive review of research into the place of the arts in education was carried out before the Goals 2000:Educate America Act. This compilation focused on studies published since 1985 which employed sound methodologies. Key finding of this report were that:

- the arts are serious, rigorous academic subjects and are an essential aspect of human knowing.
- the arts have far-reaching potential to help students achieve education goals;
- reading, writing and math skills can be enhanced through the arts;
- creativity is naturally developed through the arts;
- high-risk Students are helped through the arts;
- understanding of one's self and others expands with arts education;
- the arts prepare students for jobs;
- the arts industry is a source of future employment for students.

In 'Champions for Change' (1999) the American Arts Education Partnership and the Chicago Arts Partnership Education (CAPE) commissioned seven teams of highly regarded researchers to examine arts education programmes. Their key findings included evidence that learners can attain higher levels of achievement through their engagement in the arts. A crucial finding was that learning in and through the arts can help to "level the playing field" for learners from disadvantaged circumstances. The researchers found that the arts provide learners with authentic experiences that are engaging, real and meaningful to them and that cognitive, social and personal competencies were developed. A summary of the findings are grouped under two heading:

Why the Arts change the learning experience:
- The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached.
- The arts reach students in way s in which they are not otherwise being reached.
- The arts transform the environment for learning.
- The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of the young people.

- The arts provide new challenges for those students already considered successful.
- The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.

How the arts change the learning experience:
- Enable young people to have direct involvement with the arts and artists.
- Require significant staff development.
- Support extended engagement in the artistic process.
- Encourage self-directed learning.
- Promote complexity in the learning experience.
- Allow management of risk by the learners.
- Engage community leaders and resources.

This research provides compelling evidence that the arts can and do serve as champions of change in learning.

These two studies have been echoed by work the UK. The Scottish Arts Council in partnership with SEED and seven local authorities is about to launch Arts Across the Curriculum (AAC) inspired by the Champions for Change project. (See the Scottish Arts Council website.) In research carried out under the auspices of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Harland et al (2000) undertook a three-year study into the arts education in secondary schools. Their hypothesis was that engagement in the arts can boost general academic performance. Findings from the study include effects on the pupils such as:
- a heightened sense of enjoyment, excitement, fulfilment and therapeutic release of tensions;
- an increase in the knowledge and skills associated with particular art forms;
- enhanced knowledge of social and cultural issues;
- the development of creativity and thinking skills;
- the enrichment of communication and expressive skills;
- advances in personal and social development;
- effects that transfer to other contexts, such as learning in other subjects;
- the world of work and cultural activities outside of and beyond school.
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Other effects included positive effects on the culture of the school, increasing involvement of the local community (including parents and governors) and increased quality of the arts themselves as an outcome. The report concluded that to achieve the full cannon of effects from the arts, pupils were required to have experience of **each** of the individual art forms.

In conclusion, Wilkinson et al. (2003) examined the practice of increasing instructional time in English, mathematics and science in 547 Virginia schools in order to increase test scores in these subjects. Teaching time was gained by decreasing the time given over to arts subjects. The finding of the study concluded that the reallocation of instructional time did not result in higher test scores and that the students had been denied important educational experiences.

Research in the Areas of the Expressive Arts
Music
In 2001, BERA publishes a wide-ranging review entitled "Mapping Music Education in the UK". In any consideration of the development and provision of music education in schools, this review is essential reading. A number of the key points from this and other research are outlined, here.

Hallam (2001) states that learning in music falls into categories: *enculturation*, the general progress that takes place as a result of our innate musical capacity, shared cultural experiences and general cognitive development; and *generative skills* – those which increase as a result of education, specialist musical experiences, self-conscious effort and instruction. In reality, these two areas are often intertwined for the learner. The research into musical *enculturation* suggests that children are both sophisticated listeners and music-makers from early infancy onwards and the ways that they understand music are constantly evolving. Some models prioritise age-related change, others, experience-related change, often linked to individual preferences. The research concerned with the acquisition of *generative skills* has largely been from within a classical music tradition and has not taken into account pedagogical issues such as individual differences, interactions, teaching and learning styles. Cox and Hennessy (2001) expressed surprise at finding no substantial evidence of recent research on pedagogy in music education.

In The Arts Inspected (1998) Mills presented case studies reflecting good practice in music teaching and identified features which characterise it: high expectations, direct instruction, verbal analysis, the elicitation of demonstrations and overt encouragement. The inspection findings also revealed a detachment of much A level teaching from the practical and creative continuum through Key Stages 1 to 3.

Models of 'good practice' are seen as a useful way to encourage teachers to reflect on and develop their own teaching, although criteria for what constitutes good practice are often assumed rather than discussed or made explicit. Harrison and Pound (1996) found that lack of confidence in non-specialists in, for example, the guiding of processes such as composing, was a concern. Downing et al (2003) found that music generated the greatest teacher anxiety concerning lack of expertise or confidence.

Welch (2001) concluded that there is "an uneven research literature of how children learn and develop musically, in which normative data often have to be inferred from many small-scale studies because of the relative lack of longitudinal evidence, particularly in relation to the effects of schooling on musical development" (p. 42).

Swanwick (1994) suggests a model of curriculum planning, focused on formative rather than summative objectives, that identified 'layers' of musical understanding rather than descriptions of activity. These entail:
- awareness and control of sound materials;
- awareness and control of expressive character;
- awareness and control of form;
- awareness of the personal and cultural value of music.

In "Aims and Purposes of Music: (2005) the DFES describes three features of progression in music: breadth of experience; challenge/demand of the experience and

depth of learning; and quality of the outcome. Quality in music is not just dependent on accuracy, but, more importantly, on the way that sounds are used expressively. In music it is much better to revisit and consolidate learning than to constantly attempt to try new things. The aim should be to do *more of less* in order to achieve quality. Five strands of progression are identified:

- ongoing skills - singing, listening and responding, for example through movement or dance;
- descriptive skills - using and controlling the expressive musical elements;
- disciplined skills - rhythmic skills, which develop the sense of pulse and rhythm, and melodic skills, which develop the sense of pitch and phrase;
- ensemble skills - performing the music of others.

Finally, some researchers have focused learning *through* music. Hallam (2001) reported that involvement in music can:

- promote spatial-temporal reasoning skills;
- enhance cognitive development;
- develop transferable skills, raising academic achievement;
- enhance self-concept;
- encourage pro-social skills.

Drama and Dance

Why Imagination is Essential in the Drama Classroom
O'Toole and Dunn (2002), describe dramatic play as 'one of the central ways in which young children learn about the world, about themselves and about human nature' and how and why human beings behave in the way they do.
Key Points:

- Drama in the classroom does not require a stage, costumes, props or script. The vital component is imagination and the creation and investigation of imaginary worlds.

- There are three phases of drama, the initiation phase, the experiential phase and the reflective phase.

- Of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that permits teachers and pupils to give credence to alternative realities.

- Critical thinking and questioning are the essential processes of teaching and meaningful learning in the drama classroom.

Identifying Learning in Drama
Baldwin, (2004), this book aims both to help drama practitioners understand more about the brain, thinking and learning, and to help those who are interested in these to understand more about drama as a learning tool and methodology.
Key Points:

- Teachers are urged to create complex shared, imagined and sustainable worlds in which whole classes of children contract to enter alongside their teacher who is also an active participant within the dramatic story being constructed.

- Within these shared, imagined worlds the children may have a play agenda and the teacher may have a learning agenda which can become synonymous in practice.

- Teachers who understand not just children and learning, but also how drama works, can make imagined experiences not only cognitively compelling and challenging, but aesthetically powerful and vivid.

Innes, Moss and Smigiel, (2001), describe how drama can support and transform students understandings. They describe two projects undertaken with pupils to identify their learning in drama. The categories the pupils responded to were: *Learning about Drama; Learning about Personal Growth and Capacity; Learning about Others and the Self in Relation to Others; Learning about the World; Implicit Understandings made Explicit.* The second project undertaken in the study interviewed children identifying how drama had supported their learning within the following categories: *Learning that Supported Literacy; Learning Critical Thinking Skills; Learning Cooperative Group Skills; Understanding Theatre Skills and Forms; Developing Knowledge of the World.*
The two projects demonstrated that within drama students not only have the capacity to understand and discuss their own learning, but also are able to provide insights into how their learning took place.

Key Points:
- The importance of the student voice as a way to achieve empowerment.

- In developing school improvement strategies, the views of the pupils are of fundamental importance.

- The encouragement of, and listening to the student voice is central to drama teaching practice, communication and collaboration are key processes in the drama classroom.

- To identify what our students understand and subsequently learn in drama, it is imperative that we not only listen to the voices of the researchers and teachers, but also to the questions posed by the students themselves.

- Expand their pedagogical understanding of what it means to teach drama, and equally expand their understandings of what students can experience, understand and learn in the drama classroom

Praxis in the Drama Classroom
Taylor, (2000), identifies ten principles of drama praxis to help teachers and students to 'manipulate the elements of drama in the classroom. He gives the reasons for drama praxis as the insights to be made and the revelations to be had. He identifies the ten principles of drama praxis as:
Driven by inquiry; teacher as co-artist; promotes a yearning for understanding; is well researched; generates rather than transmits knowledge; tightly balanced yet flexible structure; pursues engagement and detachment; powered by risk-taking; logically sequenced; rich in artistry.
Key Points:

- The audience in the drama classroom are the teacher and the students working alongside each other as participants within the drama being created and explored.

- Teachers and pupils need to be able to understand how drama can be manipulated in the classroom and why it works in relation to pupils' understanding and learning,,so that audiences can appreciate and be transformed through the drama.

- The power of the dramatic art form to raise levels of consciousness.

- That curriculum develops in context, it is a lived and dynamic event which demands the ongoing and immediate interaction of teachers, students and their communities.

- Activate teachers and students to believe in their own worth.

- Transforms people's understanding of their world.

Praxis in a Scottish Secondary Drama Department
Mitchell & Cooney (2004), use Taylor's ten praxis principles to describe the research they undertook together whilst working in different educational contexts in Scotland; Mitchell a university-based teacher and Cooney a secondary school-based teacher both sought to discover within their collaborative study, whether existing standards and curriculum frameworks within Scottish secondary drama actively exploited the creative power and possibility of imagination within the classroom.
Key points:
- What are the boundaries which prevent pupils from creating and engaging in fictional worlds within the secondary drama classroom?

- The vital power and potential of story in teaching and learning in drama.

- Evidence of how Taylor's praxis principles can be meaningfully used to support pupils' engagement and understanding within the Scottish secondary drama curriculum.

Educational Drama in the Teaching of Education for Sustainability
McNaughton, (2004). McNaughton examines the use of drama in the upper stages of primary school based on environmental themes.
Key Points:
- That the active, participative learning central to drama is instrumental in helping children to develop skills in communication, collaboration and expressing ideas and opinions.

- The immersion in the imagined context and narrative allows the children to feel sympathy for, and empathy with people who are affected by environmental issues and problems.

Teaching Drama 11-18
Nicholson, (2000), this collection of writings is about how students learn to explore and communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings in a diversity of dramatic languages. Drama

teachers and practitioners share their experiences of working with young people in the 11-18 age range, they offer practical ideas for teaching, and reflect on how the concepts, skills and knowledge described in their practice contribute to students' learning in drama education.

Key points:

• The shared view that drama offers students the time and space to develop new ideas and insights in a range of contexts, and that by working in the medium they may learn how to use different dramatic conventions, genres and structures to communicate with others.

• Unlike many traditional education practices which are dominated by the written word, drama is a 'multi modal' art form, and necessarily requires students to use visual images, movement and sound as well as words.

• In practice participants in drama use visual, kinaesthetic, aural and verbal qualities to shape, symbolize and represent their thoughts and feelings into dramatic forms to support their understanding and learning.

• That the main challenge which confronts teachers in the drama classroom is how to balance the need for clearly structured learning objectives with the kind of flexibility which leads to innovative and creative drama.

• How to introduce students to a range of cultural forms and dramatic practices, and encourage them to feel physically, intellectually and emotionally involved.

Drama in the Early Years

Toye & Prendiville, (2000), write that 'if we accept that teachers of early years pupils see story as having a central role to play in the curriculum and that the children they teach arrive with the necessary skills 'to do' drama, the fusing of the two offers an expansive resource for teaching and learning.'

Key points:

• Drama as a way of teaching and therefore can be applied across the curriculum.

• Using drama in your teaching skills takes you beyond merely transferring knowledge and building skills as it also involves negotiating meaning in order to gain understanding. This is done through the active participation in a fiction.

• Drama in education has its roots in social role-play, drama uses symbols, the creation of fictional contexts and role-play.

• Children arrive at nursery or reception classes with the ability to take part in drama .

• Teachers can use these skills for specific learning objectives by stepping into the fictional work of the children through using drama strategies, in particular, teacher in role.

• Drama and narrative form work well together if the drama explores the story rather than merely acting it out.

The Action of Curriculum: When Objectives Meet Practice

Gallagher, (2000),describes curriculum as a moving form. That is why we have trouble capturing it, fixing it in language, lodging it in our matrix. Whether we talk about it as history, as a syllabus, as classroom discourse, as intended learning outcomes, or as experience, we are trying to grasp a moving form, to catch it at the moment that it slides from the figure, the object and goal of action, and collapses into the ground of action.' She speaks of the commitment Canadian schools have to the secondary curriculum and its capacity to 'stimulate a sense of inquiry and life-long learning.'

Key Points:

- The objective to stimulate a sense of inquiry can be observed rather easily by teachers by observing their students participating within the creation, investigation and reflection of the fictional worlds they are constructing within the classroom. That it is the second part of this objective which is far more difficult, and that it is perhaps an 'impossible goal' that 'it is truly what we might call a vision of education, an end in view.'

- That stimulating a commitment to life-long learning can only be measured over a lifetime. But because it is not a negligible goal, teachers must do their best to map it onto their practice at every level.

- That perhaps the best that teachers of dramatic arts can do is invite students to conceive of possibility. In order to do this, they must work in the imaginative mode, and 'the fiction allows us to live through an alternative to rigid attitudes, giving us a world of dramatic possibility. The more we do so, the more intelligence becomes a factor in our lives.'

Visual Arts

Describing the fast changing face of today's Art and Design classroom and curriculum planning, Coutts (2003) reflects on the rapid transition, which has occurred within the last 20 years and discusses the influencing factors that have shaped new modes of teaching and learning.

> "Pupils will engage in active problem solving and often work in together in small design teams. Assessment will be based on folios of work using grade related criteria with categories such as 'investigation and research, considering possibilities, and evaluation'" (p. 475).

Coutts also concluded by commenting on what the visitor to the best of today's Art & Design classrooms and hopefully all of tomorrow's would find.

> "The visitor would leave with a feeling that pupils, regardless of ability, are engaged in purposeful activity rooted in real life contexts. Art and Design education clearly has a central role in a balanced curriculum" (p. 476)

Addison and Burgess (2000) place the arts as being useful, critical and transforming and, therefore, fundamental to a plural society. They suggest strategies to motivate and engage pupils in making, discussing and evaluating both visual and material culture. Working with children in the visual arts can also raise issues, question orthodoxies and identify new approaches to developing knowledge and abilities. Through creativity,

which can be central to a two-way process of communication with the teacher, children are empowered within the classroom. The following areas of knowledge are identified:

General Pedagogical knowledge

. Knowledge of theories and principles of teaching and learning
. Knowledge of learners
. Knowledge of principles and techniques of classroom behaviour and management

Subject content knowledge

. Ideas, facts, concepts of the field
. Relationships between ideas, facts and concepts
. Knowledge of ways new knowledge is created and evaluated.

Pedagogical content knowledge

. Understanding of what it means to teach a given topic
. Understanding of principles and techniques to teach a given topic.
(Addison and Burgess, 2000, p327 – 331)

Drawing on the Right Hand Side of the Brain
Edwards (1992) encourages us as teachers to take into account and understand the L mode and R mode hemispheres of their brain. To do this she presents a series of visual exercises which are set up for the reader to part take in but also from partaking to evaluate their findings and own understanding . Edwards also presents theories behind visual literacy and how to nurture it. Drawing strategies are discussed which are enquiring and instruct an analytical approach into young learners visual literacy and vocabulary. Pedagogies for teaching are built around findings from research and address key visual art elements and concepts like contour, foreshortening, negative space, as well as looking at the development of symbol systems in a young child and how to develop visual literacy further.

Teaching Art in the Primary Curriculum
Callaway and Kear (1997) clearly address pedagogy and give advice on curriculum planning and preparation for an effective primary visual arts curriculum. They highlight aspects of cognitive development and understanding which can only be taught through the arts, some of which are arguably only accessible through the visual arts, these being -
1. First-hand, practical, sensory experiences
2. Developing, processing and representing ideas
3. Responding to problems
4. Developing critical, visual awareness
5. Refining practical skills in the use and control of materials and equipment
6. Investigating, exploration and discovery
7. Study of the ideas, processes and products of other artists
8. Developing personal and individual modes of expression
9. Observing and scrutinizing in detail

The language and understanding of the visual elements, line, tone, colour, texture, pattern, shape and form are investigated through case studies as are concepts such as perspective, positive and negative forms, composition, symmetry, contrast, mood and atmosphere amongst others.

Technical and investigative processes, critical analysis and evaluative techniques are also discussed. These have been rooted in the practical and theoretical in an attempt to explain what underpins the visual arts and its importance in the place of child development.

<u>'Primary Art, Investigating and Making in Art'</u>
Clement and Page (1992) describe the principles of teaching Art and Design as being, aims and objectives, attainment targets, image making, structure and sequence, cross-curricular issues, assessment and appraisal. By analysing research and case studies they examine the place of critical and contextual studies within an inspiring visual arts curriculum programme.

Conclusion
This review indicated that no curriculum can be complete unless in includes the expressive arts. However, for arts education to meaningful and systematic, issues of provision must be addressed in terms of both the resources required and in initial training and CPD for specialist and non-specialist teachers.

The arts inform as well as stimulate, they challenge as well as satisfy. Their location is not limited to galleries, concert halls and theatres. Their home can be found wherever humans chose to have attentive and vita intercourse with life itself. This is, perhaps, the largest lesson that the arts in education can teach, the lesson that life itself can be led as a work of art. In so doing the maker himself or herself is remade. The remaking, this re-creation is at the heart of the process of education. (Eisner, 1998 p.56)

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