

University of Strathclyde

Department of Sport, Culture and the Arts

The Place and Value of Art and Design and Drama
in Preparation for Curriculum for Excellence –
Perceptions and Opinions

by

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degree of Master of Philosophy

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Abstract

This study examines opinions on the place and value of art and design and drama in secondary education in Scotland. It does so as the education system as a whole prepares for reform with changes to approaches in teaching and learning with the introduction of the new Curriculum for Excellence.

The study examines views of teachers, pupils and local authority staff across eight council areas in the central region of Scotland. It also draws on views from literature as comparisons are made in relation to the place of art and design and drama, and arts education in general.

This study provides a snapshot of views across central Scotland, involving 160 participants directly linked to art and design or drama education at secondary level. It provides a platform for discussion on the place and value of art and design and drama education at a very significant time in Scotland. It records and reports key views and opinions as schools prepare for a Curriculum for Excellence.

The study involves a range of research approaches; an extensive literature review, questionnaires to teachers of art and design and drama, questionnaires to teachers of a range of other subject areas, questionnaires to secondary pupils, semi-structured interviews with local authority staff responsible for arts education across secondary schools in entire local authority areas.

The results are discussed and analysed, with key findings and themes illustrated. Drama education was generally believed to be more likely to contribute to a range of other areas within the curriculum than art and design. Both subjects were considered high with links to pupil attitude, motivation and achievement, as well as skills in critical thinking and communication. Yet more than half of art and design and drama teachers believe their subject is not as valued as other subjects in their schools. The study found that teachers of other subject areas are more confident that opportunities in art and design and drama will improve with CfE, than the teachers of the subject areas themselves.

At a very key time in Scottish education where creativity across the curriculum is prominent, the study concludes with relevant views summarising key themes and opinions. It could be of interest to teachers, curriculum planners and others involved in arts education. It is a record of opinions for the purpose of information and discussion, and a basis for comparisons or further study. It is a recent and relevant snapshot of views from a range of sources.

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