

The Arts: essential learning for *all* teachers

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From the: National Affiliation of
Arts Educators

Background

The National Affiliation of Arts Educators is the peak arts education professional association. It is a coalition representing the Australian Institute for Art Education [AIAE], Ausdance, the Australian Dance Council, Australian Society for Music Education [ASME], CAMEO Council of Australian Media Organisations, Design Education Council of Australia [DECA] and Drama Australia, the National Association for Drama Education. It has a long history of working with government being instrumental in ensuring that The Arts were one of eight key learning areas in the Australian curriculum.

The Arts and Teachers for the 21st Century

A society in which arts practice is not endemic risks its future. The support of professional artists is a laudable policy but far more important is offering all citizens, and their offspring, the opportunity to actively participate in arts practice – to make their own culture.

Creativity, engagement, cohesiveness, well-being and respect for difference will be inevitable outcomes.

Jon Hawkes, Creative Engagement.ⁱ

The NAAE endorses the general thrust of the discussion paper in its focus on innovation and creativity as goals and conditions for learning and teaching. In particular, we concur with the concept that “innovation is ... intimately involved in the social conditions in which it is produced” [page 11ⁱⁱ]. The future culture of innovation for teachers and schools is dependent on teacher education that fosters imaginative, responsive and critically reflective learners. These are integral features of arts learning.

The NAAE asserts that these integral features of arts education are the foundation for a well-rounded, inclusive education for every child. Anticipating the needs of students and teachers of the Knowledge Economy and Information Society, teacher education must include study of the arts and their associated pedagogies.

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Learning in a culture of innovation

'The arts not only provide the practical framework for developing new community cultures, but also can help to build social capital, overcome serious communication problems and boost productivity growth in economic activity'.

Dr Onko Kingmaⁱⁱⁱ

- The characteristics of the teachers needed for the 21st century are found in arts practice, arts knowledge and arts education pedagogy. These characteristics include amongst other things creative action, use of imagination and interpretative abilities that are fundamental to innovative capacity.
- The arts offer different ways of knowing that embrace divergent ways of thinking. Divergent thinking encourages adaptability, flexibility, self-reliance, initiative and team work.
- Multiple literacies are essential in a culture of innovation in a society that is shifting towards dominant visual literacies. Multiple literacies^{iv} meet the needs of diverse learners by using different learning styles as ways of interpreting the world.
- The Arts provide essential ways of communicating in the 21st century. They reflect multiple intelligences^v identified in the work of Howard Gardner and Eliot Eisner.
- Research from *Champions of Change* [2001]^{vi} shows that the arts transform the environment for learning. This research supports the intrinsic value of arts education being beneficial for all students.

Therefore, the NAAE affirms that learning in and through the arts is crucial in any learning environment designed to develop a culture of innovation.

Developing a culture of innovation in schools

When the arts become central to the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery.

Champions of Change page ix

- Arts classrooms are cultures of innovation and inquiry, where teachers model the wide repertoire of teaching and management skills and resources called for in the discussion paper.
- The arts have always drawn on the knowledge of mathematical, scientific and technological understandings and continue to do so in the 21st century. Schools as centres of innovation need to embody this symbiosis.
- The arts are intrinsically social. In learning through the arts students encounter issues of social cohesiveness, diversity, cultures, identities, values and ethics that enable them to participate in democratic society.
- Results from the current arts education research being undertaken by the Australia Council and the Australian Research Council will provide us with Australian examples as a starting point to better prepare teachers to develop the creative and innovative capacities of school students.
- Considering the *Leonardo^{vii}* effect, it is important to reiterate the inter-dependent relationship between the arts and the sciences in schools. There is no cultural or social value in separating the arts and humanities from sciences and technologies. Doing so may have detrimental social and cultural consequences. This is particularly evident in the emerging school culture that relies on cross curriculum relationships.

The NAAE calls for school curricula to have broadly inclusive approaches that incorporate the arts, humanities, sciences and technologies. Knowing and making meaning of the world in the 21st century means harnessing the full variety of human intelligences.

Teacher Preparation, Professional Learning and Development in a Culture of Innovation

Pre-service teacher education

- The arts components of current pre-service teacher education are inadequate or have been severely eroded in primary teacher education. The consequences for developing a culture of innovation are severe and must be redressed.
- The artificial separation of primary and secondary teacher education further compounds a culture that marginalises arts education through fostering a separation of sciences and the arts. The 21st Century needs an holistic approach.
- Secondary pre-service arts education needs to assert its role in a broadly inclusive culture of innovation.
- Teachers as reflective researchers can only be truly informed through a firm grounding in the arts so that information can be gathered, models developed and meaning can be constructed. Qualitative inquiry methodologies need to be concurrently developed and used along side quantitative methodologies. These are inherent within arts practice and need to be part of pre-service teacher education.

Professional Learning and Development In-Service

- The shift from a well-rounded approach to a narrow focus on some aspects of professional development [literacy, numeracy, science and maths to the exclusion of other areas] will have long term consequences for developing a culture of innovation.
- The Arts foster a strong sense of personal identity as a foundation for lifelong learning and the best teachers are life long students. Again research in *Champions of Change* shows that arts rich schools have teachers who are more “open, flexible, knowledgeable and engaged in their own on-going learning”. [page 45].

Therefore the NAAE asserts that pre-service and in-service teachers need to be well grounded and skilled practitioners in using arts methodologies and strategies across the whole curriculum to ensure that innovation is enhanced within teaching and learning.

Leadership at all levels

"And so to be involved in some way with the arts is to have access to that pool of knowledge that is both shared and eternal

John Ralston Saul^{miii}

- Teachers need to model leadership to students and the community.
- Leadership in the 21st Century requires the use of Emotional Intelligences [Goleman^{ix}] which are directly derived from an arts based education. Arts learning environments embed interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Arts education enacts team building and is collaborative by its very nature. The knowledge and understandings developed are transferable and sustainable within a Knowledge Economy.
- The arts model democratises leadership. Students in arts learning environments are empowered to make decisions and understand consequences. Teachers as planners of these learning environments need to gain and use these democratic skills.
- Principals in schools need to have practical and well-grounded arts education and to model innovation, problem solving and interpersonal attributes. In their principal leader roles, they need to actively incorporate arts education opportunities for all students. In exercising their decision making and ethical responsibilities they need to draw on a range of strategies and models informed by arts practice and pedagogy.
- Principals need to educate parent groups, industry and the wider community about the benefits of arts education as part of a rounded education. The qualities needed in future employees are fostered in and through arts education.

The NAAE asserts that all levels of leadership in education need to be grounded in a renewed understanding of the arts in education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the NAAE asserts that the 21st century is fundamentally about the productivity of the mind. Teacher education needs to take serious account of the metacognitive nature of learning and contemporary brain research that continues to reinforce the integral part the arts play in developing action for schools in the 21st century.

Excellence and innovation are critical to our collective future in generating the industries we require to enhance the nation's economic and social wellbeing. Creativity and innovation drive not only the cultural industries, but also developments in science, technology, industrial and management practices, all major contributors to our continuing socio-economic growth ... Australia's cultural industries are sunrise industries, geared to the innovation that is requisite to industrial and economic development.^x

Arts Education Senate Report

ⁱ J. Hawkes, *Creative Engagement*, **Groundswell** Regional Arts Australia National Conference 2002.ⁱ

ⁱⁱ DEST, Discussion Paper: *Young People, Schools and Innovation: towards an action plan for the school sector*, 2003

ⁱⁱⁱ Groundswell conference Cross currents panel: Regional Regeneration and the Arts (this from the Abstract).

^{iv} NAAE, *More Than Words Can Say: A View of Literacy and the Arts*, Canberra, 2003

^v H. Gardner *Frames of Mind* New York, Basic Books, 1993, E Eisner *The Kind of Schools we need: personal essays* Portsmouth, NH Heinemann, 1998

^{vi} Arts Education Partnership [USA], *Champions of Change*, www.aep-arts.org/Champions.html 2001

^{vii} Leonardo effect: <http://mitpress2.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo/isast/leostory.html>

^{viii} John Ralston Saul, *On Equilibrium* (p 42) 2001

^{ix} D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam, New York, 1995

^x Senate Environment, Recreation, Communications and the Arts References Committee, *Arts Education*, October 1995.