

Outsider on the inside: Examining quality primary visual art education from an Artist's
perspective.

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly. This work has not been submitted previously at this or any other educational institution. The work was done under the guidance of Dr Margaret Fitzgibbon and Dr Michael Flannery at the Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. I agree that the Library may lend or copy this dissertation upon request.

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Abstract

Artists' perspectives can offer insights untethered by the structures of the educational system.

This study is an examination of contemporary artists' perspective of quality visual art in primary school, through the programme of the Artists in Schools Scheme. The research is pursued in a phenomenological approach using a qualitative methodology. Through the method of semi-structured interviews and the process of thematic analysis, this partnership which aims to contemporise the visual arts curricula is explored from the position of the artist.

Utilising the four lenses of quality established by Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland and Palmer (2009), this research delves into the insights of Irish artists and their experience and process of implementing quality visual art provision. The outcome of this study evidenced thoughts of similarity in perspective, with an additional lens of quality to consider when trying to maintain excellence in art education. From an artist's perspective, as an observer both inside and outside primary school walls, there is much to be deliberated from their insights and experiences in the classroom.

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Chapter One: Introduction

According to the national Artists in Schools guidelines (2006), the purpose of inviting the artist into educational settings is to further enrich the curriculum, to complement the pupils' art education and to assist students in broadening their development by allowing them to engage and collaborate in the practice of art. The sea of contemporary visual art is vast and, as portrayed by Findlay (2014), ever expanding with new techniques, new art forms and exciting new applications. So, the course of collaboration with a contemporary practising artist is the boat and sail for schools to navigate through this sea of visual arts. The partnership of a school and artist is an opportunity to contemporise the art curriculum and help ensure that the curricula remain relative.

The concern of sustaining and ensuring quality in art education is not a new one. Nevertheless, to maintain and impose quality is a mission of complexity as the arts education field is full of complex views, of what quality implies and what the goals of art education should be (Bodilly, Augustine & Zakaras, 2008). It is the continuous process of examining and appraising these perspectives on art education, as articulated by Ní Bhroin (2012) and O'Donoghue (2012), which will better inform and develop a closer relationship to quality in art provision for future learners in Ireland. As the artist is welcomed into the classroom in varying educational formats from school partnerships to residences, what is the artist's perspective on creating quality art experiences in an educational setting? Remer (1996) expresses how the artists who have experience in school partnerships hold a most unique perspective as "both an external witness to and active participant in urban schooling" (Remer, 1996, p.318).

However, research including the artist's perspective of visual art education is underdeveloped. In the field of arts education, an ample volume of the literature is concerned

with student outcomes and statistics or focused from the perspective of the teacher (Reid, 2020; Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). Grounded on deliberations from the World Conference on Arts Education (2006) in Lisbon, the artists' perspectives and participation in the processes of arts education are "insufficiently recognised" (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, [UNESCO], 2006, p.16). Hickman (2008) has continued to advocate for further research in this area, and Granville (2012) echoes this. Granville advocates a further need for research in arts education in Ireland, as he describes the disconnect between the art world and education.

There is also a state of churn in the space where art and design practice meet art and design education. This churn is visible for example in the perceived gulf between contemporary art practice and the conventional art curriculum of schools, or in the limited range of qualities assessed in most school examinations compared to the qualities that designers' value. (Granville, 2012, p.3)

This raises the question of what is deemed as quality or excellence from the viewpoint of the artist in responding to the needs of the subject of visual art, both for its learner and educator in primary school education.

Rationale and Significance

This year the primary school curriculum is being redeveloped by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. They have published a document titled 'Draft Primary Curriculum Framework' with the aim of establishing a high standard curriculum for the future (National Council of Curriculum Assessment [NCCA], 2020a). The Irish curriculum is long overdue a review since its publication twenty years ago and has become disconnected from changing expectations of a primary curriculum in the contemporary Irish classroom. This developing

document is exploring the “purpose of a primary education of tomorrow’s children and what priorities, structure and components within a curriculum can support this” (NCCA, 2020a, p.3).

In order to build and develop this new framework the NCCA (2020a) have created an online section dedicated to consultations on the new Draft Primary Curriculum Framework. This contains information on consultative seminars, opportunities to participate in focus groups, along with questionnaires and written submissions to be completed by parents, organisations and professionals who have been involved in the field of education. This forum is easily accessible online to each of these groups. The creation of these consultation forums aims to support debate and discussion on the proposed new outline with the hope that it will help inform and improve all the subjects of the future curriculum (NCCA, 2020a). “The consultation is your opportunity to have your say on the proposals set out in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework” (NCCA, 2020a, p.4). How many artists are aware of this consultation or will contribute? With such an opportunity to highlight areas of concern in visual art education, it is a crucial time for all stakeholders to contribute, debate and discuss the proposed new framework including the voice of the expert in art making, the Artist. “Whilst focusing on the school and the child in art education, it is important to ensure that the voice of the artist is equally apparent” (Barnard, p.17, 2010).

Chemi (2019) highlights the unique position artists experienced in a study of partnerships between school institutions and professional artists. She reveals the importance of discussing the development of artistic content in schools and the potential that artists have in bringing “new insights about the challenges and rewards of their roles” (Chemi, 2019, p.109).

Carlisle (2011) also echoes how “arts education partnerships offer the ability to tap into additional perspectives” (Carlisle, 2011, p.144), which will assist in developing excellence and sustain art programmes in education.

Statement of Purpose

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the artists' perspectives on visual art in primary school education. The specific focus is to investigate the experience of contemporary artists' who were involved in delivering visual art provision through the 'Artists in Schools Scheme'.

This particular scheme is one of the longest running Arts Council initiatives, that facilitates practising professional artists from various disciplines to partner with a school. The artist in turn makes a series of visits to the school in order to deliver a specific artistic project. The artist's engagement and collaboration with a school is viewed as an important 'gateway' to the arts (The Arts Council of Ireland [ACI], 2006).

Research Question

The anchor question for the research asks, what is quality primary school visual arts education from the perspective of an artist? The specific focus of this study is to explore the ethos and experience of professional artists who choose to engage in classroom partnerships with schools. This study explores the artist's insight into the concept of quality in visual art teaching and how the artist's opinion and assessment of art education could be beneficial in the pursuit of quality in arts learning. The study examines the artist's ethos into the process of achieving valuable art provision and the functionality and dynamic of the artists' collaborations with educational initiatives.

Overview of Methodology

As the study is an exploration of the artist's insight, perspective and individual experiences in art education; the research adopts a phenomenological approach using a qualitative methodology. This approach holds particular attraction with art educators because "phenomenology is concerned principally with individuals' lived experience, focusing on individuals' consciousness and how it influences their relationship with the world" (Hickman, 2008, p.18). The research sample comprises of contemporary practising artists who have all undertaken the Artists in Schools Scheme in visual art at primary school level in Ireland. The majority of the sample hold a formal education in the area of art and design with two artists trained in a higher diploma in art, craft and design education teaching and one participant trained as a primary school teacher (see **Table 2**, Profile of Participants). The qualitative instrument of semi-structured interviews is used to retrieve data on the area of research. The data from the interviews is extensively analysed using a method of thematic analysis of interview transcripts, to investigate the nature of quality primary school visual arts education from an artist's perspective.

Researcher Positionality

My interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about the experience of artists' in educational surroundings, has come from my own experience of working with people in educational contexts such as, galleries, art centres and schools. My position as a researcher could affect parts of the study. However, being consistently mindful of one's position will help limit the possibility of researcher's bias impeding the study. "It is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research" (Sultana, 2007, p.380).

As a practising artist and artist facilitator, I believe in the value and lasting effect that a quality arts education can have on a student's schooling experience. My view on arts education is that it is a fundamental aspect of a child's education. I believe artists provide a different viewpoint on educational provision as they have come from a different experience with the subject and I am interested if these perspectives can be of benefit to the world of education. Although I have varied experience in collaborating with schools and educational projects, I have not participated in the Artists in Schools Scheme created by the Arts Council and run by the local arts office. I think I will possibly find some commonalities in the artists' experiences as I am aware of the joys in the process of art facilitation and the challenges that can occur. I entered into this research study in the hope of developing the artist's perspective on quality in visual art in primary school education.

Organisation of Dissertation

Overall the structure of the study takes the form of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. The second chapter is an overview of literature pertaining to the research topic. Chapter three situates the study within a methodology, describing the aspects of design and research approaches. The fourth section presents the findings and discusses the results of the study in light of the research question. Then, finally the study's conclusion gives a summary of the findings and reflects upon their practical and theoretical consequences.

There is a need to maintain continued research in the area of arts education from different perspectives to ensure and build upon a quality arts education. This study provides an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of the relationship between the artist's perspective on quality and pursuing quality in visual art in a primary school setting. The next chapter begins by

reviewing the rationale, quality and diversity in primary curricula for visual art education along with exploring the essence of an artist and their existence in educational settings.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

When designing visual arts provision, it is important to explore and consider the characteristics of visual arts education which are most fundamental for a successful and effective programme. I am interested in finding out the contemporary artist's insight to what needs to be considered when ensuring a valuable visual art provision and to explore the benefits, functionality and limitations of artists' collaborations with educational initiatives

Rationales for Visual Art in Education

It is our human nature to create and understand the marks we make. Art is one of the universal languages all human beings understand and use to communicate. In contemporary society more than ever before, we depend on visual imagery to communicate, understand and retract the information we need from everyday living. It is paramount that everyone receives an arts education (Knight, 2010; McMaster, 2010; Sabol, 2011, Wittber, 2017). "Such an education enables people to become informed citizens, critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and productive members of society" (Sabol, 2011, para.2). With such an emphasis on visual imagery and communication in this digital age, the visual arts contribution to education can be rationalised in this manner expressed by the president of the National Art Education Association in the USA, Dr. Sabol (2011). But should this be the focus and purpose for art education?

There is no one rationale for visual art in the classroom, just as each artform has its own unique purpose, expression and technique. The subject of art is complex, rich and multidimensional so when reflecting on rationales for art education it must be considered that they will be just as multifaceted and dynamic. But before the dawn of the digital age, Efland (1990) suggested three philosophical arguments of influence for art education which are still relevant today: the expressionist; the re-constructivist; and the scientific rationalist.

Succeeding the principal views of Efland (1990) on the expressionist rationale, Siegesmund (1998), emphasises the important role of art as a channel for self-expression, which can be used as an essential release and access to the unconscious creative nature. It can be an important tool for manifestation in a student's learning journey. When we compare the aims and principles of the current Irish primary visual art curriculum against this proposed rationale, it greatly reflects an expressionistic motivation "to help the child express ideas, feelings and experiences in visual and tactile forms (. . .) to promote the child's understanding of and personal response to the creative processes involved in making two and three-dimensional art"(National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, [NCCA], 1999a, p. 9). Arts education used in the expressionistic perspective can result in positive development in the student's creative nature and self-confidence. It allows for individual expression and contemplation without a logical rationale of right and wrong (Bumgarner, 1992; Davis, 2008; Efland, 2002).

Southworth (1982) advocates the importance of the visual aesthetic function of art and the nature of individuality, "visual arts deal with an aspect of human life that no other area does: the aesthetic contemplation of visual form" (Southworth, 1982, p.25). Studying the aesthetic function of art helps train the eye in varying levels and possibilities of quality and understand the act of art making.

Understanding how important individual self-expression is for a child's development, Southworth (1982) also expresses the concern of focusing on art solely as a means of expression, when doing so, we can pigeonhole it, in turn reducing its function and status in the educational curriculum. But categorising and legitimatising art as an expressive agent is a dominant rationale throughout the 20th and 21st century education system (Daichendt, 2010). In terms of assessing visual art from this expressionist rationale, how do you assess individual expression? Graham

(2019) considers how a systematic assessment for visual art can be pointless or rather impossible. Gude (2013) suggests a contradiction between the process of educational assessment followed by the process of authentic art making.

Efland's (1990) second major categorisation, the re-constructivist stream, focuses on the significance of critical thinking in art education and using creative expression as an active agent for social change. This rationale promotes the importance of using art education to introduce students to artworks and the historical artists who use art as tools for social change. It also is a channel to expose students to contemporary artists making art which advocate similar ideologies in their present society.

Eisner (1997) and Freedman (2003) discuss how art education can inform students how to critically analyse aesthetic values placed on objects by societal systems and encourage complex thinking through art. This approach displays the power of art; not only can it be a powerful tool to express inward manifestations, but it can also illustrate how expressions can effect change and create connection.

Lastly Efland's (1990) third categorisation of rationale for art education, scientific rationalism. "As a form of inquiry, the arts are justified in claiming the position of a discipline within education (. . .) While there is much of value with-in the expressionist stream, it offers no clear epistemological justification for art education" (Siegesmund 1998, p.210). Educators who pursue the term scientific rationale petition that art can offer a way of knowing and believe art can be a form of enquiry (Hickman, 2004). The scientific rationale echoed by Hickman (2004) deliberates the importance of how art has been used as a form of knowing and inquiry for decades, as physicists, zoologists, surgeons and architects have been using the drawn line to enquire, solve problems and gain more knowledge and insight about their subjects.

Vahter (2016) advocates the importance of not rolling out an arts education from just one philosophical rationale. You want students to experience the visual arts with all the unique qualities which set them apart from other subjects, qualities such as creative freedom and recognition of emotions, an emphatic perspective and the ambiguous nature of art making, where technically there is no right or wrong (Hoffman 2008).

One of the unique features of visual arts, and, one of the reasons it should be included in education, is the function of emotional development that it brings to the curriculum (Galton, 2008; Armstrong & DeBotton, 2013). Hoffman (2008) draws upon this focus of emotional development in her literature as one of the invaluable features of an arts education. When studying visual arts, students gain insight in how to express emotion and engage in empathy through appreciation of artwork and the creative process as, “the arts unlike other subjects address, embody and convey emotions” (Hoffman, 2008, p.23). This allows for the growth of resilience and emotional intelligence as it helps students acquire an empathic perspective which can benefit their wellbeing, future working relationships and critical outlooks. Giving students an opportunity to cultivate emotional dispositions is beneficial on every level and domain. This is one of the vital learning opportunities that other subjects simply do not provide. This also emphasises the significance of individual expression in art education and creating art for art's sake.

Visual arts have incalculable qualities and educational systems crave quantitative proof of value. Arts education is regularly called into dispute because it deals with immeasurable qualities which puts a huge strain on the subject in a growing system of standardised testing, data analysis and league tables (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). From a growing advocacy of arts education and the value of visual art in a curriculum, it highlights what an art

education can contribute. For example, advocates promote natures such as courage, self-discipline, motivation, persistence and resilience, all attributes developed from creativity which is at the heart of the artmaking process.

Hetland, Winner, Veenema, and Sheridan (2013) carried out a qualitative ethnographic study to identify potential cognitive skills and working styles that emerge from studying and learning visual art. Four kinds of potentially generalisable skills were revealed in the study, i.e. envision, expression, observation and critical judgment. Under pressure to justify the art education curriculum, advocates maintain that skills gained from a visual arts education are interdisciplinary. But the research is not quite consistent and heavily relies on the transfer paradigm so there is not enough evidence to promote visual art as having a positive influence on interdisciplinary skills. "The assumption that learning the arts, transfers skills and behaviours outside of the arts seems to pervade arts education policy in most OECD countries" (Winner et al., 2013, p.29).

Some advocates claim the skills obtained and dispositions developed from visual art can be transferred to other areas of the school curriculum. Winner et al. (2013) explain how difficult the transfer paradigm is to demonstrate and prove. This assumed transfer can be problematic when trying to appraise visual art education. On reviewing the literature on transfer, it is evident that the transfer paradigm is not impossible but rather that its testing, research and investigative evidence is not diverse nor in depth enough yet. One area where there is strong evidence of transferability, however, is in relation to observational skills (Dolev, Friedlander & Braverman, 2001). Justifying and evaluating arts learning in terms of other disciplines can overshadow its unique qualities, pigeonhole it and reinforce the idea that it is more of a luxury than necessity (Hallman, Gupta & Lee, 2008).

This calls into consideration the relationship dynamic between the artworld and the educational world, the artist and the classroom. How is art education ensuring quality in the artistic process in order to try and fulfil these multi-faceted art education rationales? How is the artist role utilised in education to support authenticity of the artistic process and expressionistic rationale?

Taking characteristics from each rationale and justifications of value discussed, they strongly display validation and the importance for the inclusion of visual art in education. Elements which provide education for visual literacy, individual expression, critical thinking, exposure to other cultures and artists work, learning methods of inquiry, developing emotional intelligence and building students muscles of creativity all contribute to a balanced education.

The qualities that visual art develops are crucial components of the rounded general education that all young people should experience. These personal characteristics and attributes include creativity, critical judgement, working with others or working individually, providing and receiving constructive criticism, and respecting differences . (NCCA, 2020b, para. 6).

The Essence of the Artist

The title and position of the artist in society constantly diversifies from the master craftsmen, the renaissance inventor, the court artist and the modern revolutionary, an activist to arts for art's sake artist (Giddens, 1992; Gombrich, 1966). Is it the artists duty to record the stages of societies history, is it their responsibility to educate or obligation to inspire and restore passion? What is the essence of the artist? The role of the artist is complex and hard to generalise. There is no one single answer. Nor a single designated place for an artist in society which is part of the artists distinctiveness. Of course, when we think of places associated with the

artist, the artist studio comes to mind but even the classic studio space is not a commonality among contemporary artists today, as artistic practice strays far away from the mould of a traditional studio artist (Thornton, 2014). It is one of the nuances of the artist, the ability to use any space they choose and allow it to reveal itself as a location for discovery be it a residency, classroom, forest, hospital or an empty room. They observe, absorb and create new perspectives on civilisation. Thornton's (2008) observations on the artistic world, describes how the artist makes their own role. How it is not just a job but an identity and this perhaps is one of the more defining qualities of the artist.

The role of the artist can be customised in so many ways, yet it holds an inclusivity as the artist may reside, work with and take inspiration from many extremely different places, people and pieces of the everyday. Constructing their own role best eclipses how each artist is unique and diverse, in turn it is even harder to categorise and classify their contribution as they are somewhat of a paradox. Artists create work fuelled by their societal environment but exist outside of society's institutions (Furlong, 2010).

One of the more discernible roles of the artist in society is how they use their art as a tool for social change, "using art as a lens to engage critically with social conditions and values" (Daichendt, 2010, p.18). But what makes an artist different to a politician or social scientist who also feels social responsibilities? Bruguera (2018) believes the difference lies in freedom. Scientists, activists or professors must work in parameters, with guidelines and certain truths. The artist does not need this framework and still participates in these activities.

When examining the contributions visual artist bring to education there are a few aspects to consider. Visual artists bring their crafted skills from their chosen specialities which they are continuously honing and building upon.

Along with their crafted technical skills they bring heightened sensibilities, the way in which artist stimulate us to see, hear, connect and experience more of what is around us and within us (Schein, 2001). When visual artists are teaching the skill of drawing, they are teaching the skills of how to look, "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice" (Berger, 1972, p.1). The artist teaches us not just to look at the physical details of our surroundings but to read between the lines of life's conditions and to think beyond what we already know.

Foley (2015) depicts the habits artists employ as a critical perspective and a disposition that is comfortable in ambiguity. Ambiguity is part of the creative process which artists comfortably reside and place their trust in. One of the main differences that guides the approach between the artist and teacher in education, is the artist is able to prevent the unknown or the assessment process to govern their outcomes.

Artists bring an extraordinary extensive range of knowledge and experience to a classroom. They've developed skills far beyond the textbook understanding of a painter or sculptor as artists offer a playfulness, a spirit of enquiry and an openness to visual art projects. Contemporary artists negotiate religion, war, politics and sociology into their artistic practice. From this they bring a different kind of quality assurance when assessing artwork with their critical eye, as they can apply their skillset, sensibilities and experience with materials. These attributes offer a differing set of quality factors in assessing the classrooms artwork as a whole and individually (Furlong, 2010).

Graham (2009) discusses how an artist teacher process of engagement, often can involve spontaneity and divergence rather than the more familiar and usual prescribed layout associated and used in other curriculum subjects. He believes that an artist can transform the way that learners interact with the teachers, subject and the learning environment by "creating conditions

for learning, that encourage diversions, unpredictable equities, and substantial engagement with issues that are important to both the teachers and the students” (Graham, 2009, p.86).

Green (1978) observed authenticity as a hinderance, “artists create difficulties everywhere because of the way they prize authentic experience and resist explanatory systems or social structures that render students and teachers as passive receptacles” (Green, 1978, p.169). Is the classroom the most appropriate place for the unpredictable and spontaneous approach to visual art? Does it in turn then effect the classroom dynamic for other elements of the curriculum? Artist can build collaborative dynamics for a creative work environment (Hall & Thomson, 2016) but is the physical classroom space conducive to quality in a creative process?

Artists contribute their assorted skills, diverse experience and unique disposition in the way they work and view the world but what perhaps is their most valuable attribution to education is their second nature in creativity. Creativity has been and continues to be a subject of exploration (Csikszentmihalyi 1996; Sternberg 1999). The artist is somebody who specialises in creativity, it is a process that exposes unpredictable things to be discovered. The creative process is not completely understood, “it is widely agreed that creativity is complex, has many facets and occurs in all domains of life” (Lucas, 2016, p.279). But creativity is deemed as a vital inclusion within our educational structures (Claxton, 2007, Fisher & Williams, 2004; Robinson, 2001) and has been branded as an essential skill for social and economic benefit for a pupil's future (Cutcher, 2014). The nature of creativity is not simple to pin down. The artist and creativity share many attributes such as, challenging assumptions, observing connections, inquiry and experimentation, imaginative thinking, risk taking, looking at things in a new way and taking advantage of the unexpected (Fletcher, 2001; Lucas, 2016, Wittber, 2017).

One hundred and ten B.Ed. Primary students in Sydney Australia enrolled in two compulsory Visual Arts Education units of study, that were surveyed in March 1999 and then in October 2001 to ascertain how they felt about the prospect of teaching visual arts in a primary school context. The findings of the research revealed several significant differences between the initial data and the final data (Gibson, 2003). The students who selected a specialist in art to assist in teaching believed that knowledge and skills could be passed on more effectively by a person who had more interest and who was able to offer better opportunities. There were also those who thought that specialists could make art more extraordinary. Those who opted for generalist teachers to teach art reiterated that art was no different from other general subjects, that the classroom teacher would know the children and their abilities and also identified the integration of art with other classroom activities (Gibson, 2003).

Similar to Ireland, a large number of artists participating in artist and school partnership programmes in the United States do not have any formal background in educational theory or structured pedagogy. They are transferring artistic knowledge in the classroom without any teacher training (Hunter-Doniger, 2015). Is this perhaps an advantage, that they are not familiar with the preconditions or structured elements of example pedagogy? They are not influenced by academic outputs and are untethered by school structures. They can bring a fresh perspective and approach into the classroom (Hall & Thomson, 2016). There is no formulaic approach to creativity hence its tricky nature to sustain in a structured classroom or achieve a predictable outcome. Artists are ruled by the creativity in the artistic process rather than outcomes and assessments. The Artists in Schools Scheme and other artist partnerships in education are an important reminder of this approach to the subject of visual art.

However, others are skeptical of artists who do not have a background in teaching, Rollins (2004) describes the view that in addition to an artist's deep knowledge of subject matter, teaching artists need a combination of pedagogical knowledge and support that assists in the classroom dynamic. But what if the classroom dynamic is hindering the quality of the art provision?

Art educators should be trying to move beyond traditional teaching in the visual arts and strive to develop their own pedagogical approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that draw inspiration from best practices and contemporary curriculum research (Popovich, 2006). Diamond & Hamlin (2003) like many other educators have posed the question about what counts as technique and whether teaching traditional skills and techniques serves as contemporary forms of expression in visual art education for the contemporary art learner. Is the artist's practice central in programs like the Artists in Schools Scheme, created in order to contemporise the curriculum or is it just the technical skills of the artist that are sought to be utilised by the teacher and school?

Quality Arts Education

Identifying signs of quality can be challenging let alone trying to achieve and sustain them in arts learning. What constitutes quality in visual arts education and how can it be continually assessed and realised? According to the 'Road map for arts education' research discussed at the World Conference on Arts Education, if the partnership of generalist teacher and art specialist work in unison, has an invested mutual interest in pedagogy, access to the materials and further education then there is the correct foundation for quality arts education to grow (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2006).

Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland and Palmer (2009), from their pursuit of what constitutes quality art education produced a research study, 'The Qualities of Quality Understanding Excellence in Arts Education', conducted at Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero. This extensive study provides advancement in the understanding of quality in arts education. This study addressed three questions: How do arts educators in the United States, including theorists and administrators etc, conceive high-quality arts learning and teaching? What markers of excellence do educators look for in the activities of art learning in the classroom? And, how do a program's foundational decisions, as well as its ongoing day-to-day decisions, affect quality? This study focuses on quality artmaking experiences in pedagogical sites. However, as Wilson (2009) highlights, this is a paradox as quality arts education doesn't just happen in the classroom, particularly in this contemporary art era.

Four lenses of quality emerged from the study, these comprise of student learning, pedagogy, community dynamics and the environment. Seidel et al. (2009) found these four lenses emerged as the most important indicators which contribute to excellence of learning in art education see **Figure 1**. Of course, Seidel et al. (2009) reminds the reader that these lenses are only the starting point of rudiments found through their observations, which further illuminates the rich and complex nature of the arts learning experience. They are not a check list nor a recipe but are rather to be understood as a tool to assess the process of your teaching or learning practice.

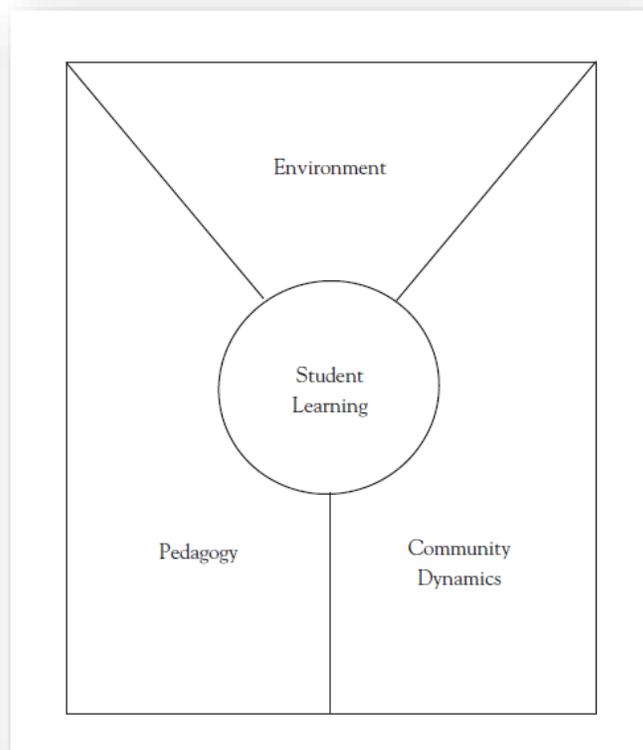


Figure 1. Diagram 1: Four Lenses on Quality (Seidel et al., 2009, p.46).

I have compiled all the sub elements within each lens of quality from this study into a table, see **Table 1**. It displays all the most advantageous areas which emerged from Seidel et al. (2009) research. I have created the table in order to better unpack each lens and to explore the elements in relation to the artists' perspectives in art education and the role they play in realising quality art provision in arts in education.

Table 1

Sub Elements of the Four Lenses on Quality by Seidel et al. (2009)

Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment
Engagement, purposeful experiences	Authenticity	Respect and trust among all participants	Functional, aesthetic space and materials
Experimentation, exploration, and inquiry	Modelling artistic processes, inquiry, and habits	Belief in student capacities	The arts occupy a central place in the physical environment
Emotional openness and honesty	Intentionality, flexibility & transparency	Open Communication	Sufficient time for authentic artistic work
Ownership	Making learning relevant and connected to prior knowledge	Collaboration	

When considering what quality in visual art education encompasses, Seidel et al. (2009) grouping of qualities reveal that each differing lens is multifaceted. The value of these lenses is advocated in other research, Dinham (2013) emphasizes the importance of continually reviewing arts provision, to ensure the authenticity and development of an artmaking experience. The Irish Visual Art Teacher Guidelines discuss the importance of collaboration in the classroom community, “allow both individual and collaborative work where children can share ideas” (1999b, p.64). Csikzentmihalyi, (2014) examination of creativity explains how a person’s different environments effects their creative process. From these lenses there are so many factors to be balanced, from generating the correct atmosphere, the functionality of the environment, an openness for creativity and experimentation while also ensuring trust in the facilitator and

students. This study conveys how the provision of a quality art experience has several layers to consider. Some of these elements were echoed when exploring the essence of the artist and are very representative of the qualities and dynamics of an art practice. It raises the question that without collaborating with contemporary artists and sharing perspectives of the creative process in a classroom setting, do all teachers have enough resources of information and artistic experience to sustain and balance these factors of a quality visual art provision?

Ideas about what constitutes quality can and should vary across settings, depending on the purposes and values set by the program and its community. One of the last and perhaps most vital factors in the process of quality, performed in all aspects of contemporary art practices and in turn should exist when implementing art provision; is to question. This is one of the constant skills the artist brings into all artistic exchanges and engagements (Foley, 2015). This is key when creating valuable art education. Artists are trained to curiously question, disassemble, assess and examine their methods, thought process and execution of work. The different types of idiosyncratic process-based practices of artists provide what can be extremely useful models for teaching, learning and transdisciplinary inquiry (Chemi, 2019).

Certain actors are responsible for ensuring that the conditions for quality exist, while the core of the experience is the engagement of the child and teacher (be it an artist or an arts specialist). Therefore, evaluations could be multi-layered as well, determining that the conditions are available for a high-quality learning experience and then focusing on the quality of that experience itself. (Bodily, Augustine & Zakaras, 2008, p.79)

Bodily et al. (2008) express the importance of retrieving the perspective of each participant in the learning partnership, including the perspective of the artist. These perspectives can help build the elements needed to be considered, in order to gravitate towards quality in art education.

As effectiveness lies within high-quality, developmentally appropriate, and easily accessible methods of engaging young children (Tan & Gidson, 2017).

It is necessary to question, review, analyse and reflect on the attributes of visual art education programs in order for them to develop and flourish. Is this happening with past and present visual art initiatives which involve contemporary artists in primary education? Is the artists contribution being assessed, evaluated and utilised? Seidel et al. (2009) four lenses can be especially useful in focusing attention on different aspects of excellence in arts education settings: learning, teaching, community, and environment, do these lenses align with the Irish visual artists viewpoint on quality? Are these qualities being fulfilled or reviewed in Irish art classrooms through the different artist educational partnerships or one of the longest running initiatives, the 'Artists in Schools Scheme'? Bamford (2006) asserts that poor-quality arts experiences, create more damage to children's creativity than no engagement in arts education at all.

Comparing Primary Visual Art Curricula

Art is an extraordinary way of understanding and knowing the world. Some of the core aims expressed in the Irish visual art curriculum involve developing a pupil's aesthetic sensitivity to the visual elements of our world while developing a child's personal individual artistic expression. Its intention is to provide opportunities to experience new media, learn new techniques, while also trying to build an appreciation for visual art through the exploration of artists (NCCA, 1999a). When reviewing the elements and aspects which create the Irish primary visual art curriculum there are both strengths and weaknesses to be recognised. The repeated emphasis on the importance of the creative process (NCCA, 1999a), is a strength of this curriculum as it reflects the genuine process of the contemporary artist, which supports the

delivery an authentic quality learning experience. Freer (2007) echoes this importance of the creative process for purposeful engagement that is created in residency programs or art school initiatives, which “enable students to act as co-artists, then, involve students in the artistic process by largely eliminating the distinctions between artist and student” (Freer, 2007, p.270). Encouraging a method of guided discovery in a visual arts curriculum allows the teachers to create authentic creative experiences for their students while encouraging true artistic engagement, “in an art lesson, the children should remain the designers: this role should not be taken from them” (NCCA, 1999b, p.12).

The Irish visual art curriculum also provided a detailed accompanying document, Visual Art Teacher Guidelines which contains exemplars and guidelines for lessons on each strand with illustrations, (NCCA, 1999b). These guidelines are quite ample in terms of providing inspired starting points and they outline organisational elements for each strand in terms of materials, classroom climate and environment, workspace, time and display. Ní Bhroin (2012) expressed how this accompaniment was a rarity compared to curriculums of a similar nature from the United Kingdom or overseas.

The Australian curriculum assessment and reporting authority have only recently released sample portfolios for visual arts to demonstrates student learning in relation to the achievement standards in 2016 and 2017 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting authority, [ACARA], 2016). So, in some ways the developers of Irish curriculum were forward thinking in their approach and vision to the revised curriculum. However, since its initiation the curriculum and the guidelines are yet to be updated.

When we compare curriculum guidelines to neighbouring nations the public schools in the USA are required to meet local and state standards with each state having its own varying

standards, but the national standards are voluntary for visual arts (National Art Education Association, [NAES], 2020). The USA national guidelines were revised in 2014 expressing an emphasis on the four pillars of creating, presenting, responding and connecting (National Core Standards, [NCS], 2014). These objectives place importance on collaboration, investigation and play with materials in their visual arts curriculum. With varying and voluntary standards, Seidel et al. (2009) is a welcomed cohesive review of quality standards and aims for the arts in the USA.

While the statutory guidance for the National curriculum in England: art and design programmes of study is less elaborate in its descriptor with no accompanying exemplars, there is a link provided to a forum of educators, for art and design resources to be. The objectives of National curriculum in England for art and design hold great commitment for the skill of observation to be gained through the advised use of a sketchbook in the curriculum, while it also places an emphasis on attainment targets for each stage of learning exchanged (Gov.UK, 2013). The 'targets' within the context of a prospectus to engage creativity, raises a question if these attainment targets aren't reached has the creative process been a failure? How do you assess the artistic process of creativity?

The Irish Visual Art Teacher Guidelines and exemplars are aimed to be used in a non-prescriptive way but as parameters to give teachers a sense of what can be ventured in the subject of visual arts (NCCA 1999b). But we must consider that with an open creative descriptor, each teacher may interpret these guidelines differently which should not be a negative for the teaching process, as a willingness to experiment with different approaches in order to foster creativity is at the heart of the creative artistic practice.

The Irish curriculum (NCCA, 1999a) highlights the need for a balance between looking and responding to art and art making with strong encouragement to utilise local facilities such as galleries and museums. Guiding the teacher and students to the importance of physically seeing and interacting with artwork is vital for quality art education (Holt, 1997). I feel one of the key words used in the Irish curriculum guidelines is the word 'challenging': "The atmosphere during the art class must always be challenging, motivating and supportive and must allow the children to express understanding of their world in a personal way" (NCCA, 1999b, p.11). This is an important reminder that the creative process of art making is unique, challenging and unpredictable; not every project's success will result as a perfect pleasing presentation of a finished artwork.

The Irish primary school curriculum is now twenty years old and currently under review to be updated. Its last two reviews, an Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools English, Mathematics (Department for Education and Science, [DES], 2005) and Visual arts' and the Primary Curriculum Review (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, [NCCA], 2005), revealed commonalities in their findings such as, a scarcity in using resources like online galleries or computer technology, an inconsistency of looking and responding and poor inclusion of three dimensional work in the visual art curriculum. The reports also highlighted challenges faced with the learning environments functionality.

In the DES (2005) report it was recommended that pre-designed templates should be avoided in lessons in order to provide the pupils with opportunities for individual expression, and it was also highlighted that strands need to be engaged with on a more consistent level, "the creative environment was hindered due to lack of appropriate stimuli and approaches while it

was found that in some classrooms ‘pupils’ creativity was hindered through the use of templates” (DES, p.41, 2005). This finding show that the objectives of the curriculum are being contradicted through the use of templates, it limits pupil’s individual expression, creative control and ownership over the work. Also, it reveals that there might be a misconception that the purpose of visual art is to create a finished product. Hickey’s (2005) case study on Issues and Challenges in Implementing the 1999 Curriculum for Visual Arts: in a Junior School also revealed a strong focus on replication, leaving lessons more product orientated which does not quite celebrate the individual artistic process echoed in the curriculum. Regimenting visual art like this in the classroom goes against its goals as a curriculum, “to standardise forms of artistic expression can stifle creativity and thereby encourage passivity” (Tan & Gibson, 2017, p.297).

The DES (2005) report and Ní Bhroin’s (2012) research on how the Irish visual art curriculum has been implemented explores the shortfalls in teaching skills in visual art which was linked to a lack of confidence in teachers own art abilities even with the accompanying guidelines and a two-day in-service training in visual arts.

This is not unique to Ireland, however, as Chapman (2005) noted the trends internationally in basic skill sets and experience noticeably lacking in art making at primary school teacher rank, ensuing in low levels of confidence and competence in visual art. Yet according to Jarvis (2011) there is a more significant need for enthusiasm for the quality of art, craft and design to take place in classrooms, regardless of any lack of competence or perceived lack.

Art doesn’t follow similar patterns to the other subjects; it is unique in its nature as it doesn’t quite have the features of right and wrong in the process of creation. It does, however,

have appropriate approaches and quality fundamentals as mentioned previously, in order to ensure a fulfilling art education (Hoffman, 2008).

Bringing contemporary art into schools and communities enables educators to promote curiosity and encourage dialogue and critical thinking about the world and the issues that affect our lives. Contemporary artists address both current events and historical ideas. These references help educators and students make connections across the curriculum. As artists continue to explore and employ new technologies and media, the work they create encourages media literacy in an increasingly media-saturated society (Contemporary Art in Context, [CAC], 2019). When we review the Irish visual art curriculum it holds a comparable aim “to foster a sense of excellence in and appreciation of the arts in local, regional, national and global contexts, both past and present” (NCCA 1999a, p.9). But is this happening in the classroom and what are the quality standards?

O'Donoghue (2012) expressed concern of how neither review conducted from the Department for Education and Science (2005) and NCCA (2005) explored the currency or relevance of the curriculum for the contemporary art learner of the 21st century. The Irish curriculum consists of six strands, drawing, paint & colour, print, fabric & fibre, construction and clay (NCCA 1999a). Teachers struggled with some elements of the three dimensional strands such as ‘Construction’ (NCCA, 2005) but here also lies an opportunity to introduce new contemporary art forms and technologies to creatively approach what material can be included in the ‘Construction Strand’. Avoiding three dimensional elements of a curriculum limits the range of contemporary art that pupils are exposed to. Retrieving the perspective and insight of the artist can aid in the development of approaching certain strands in an innovative manner.

All the strands in the curriculum are heavily anchored in visual properties but just as we have more than one sense (other than sight) there are also more properties and senses of art to explore, “primary teachers in Ireland continue to promote traditional forms of art making rather than seeking opportunities to introduce students to new art forms and practice” (O’ Donoghue, 2012, p.141).

Some countries are expanding the curriculum content for contemporary learning by adding new strands. For example, in the Australian revised curriculum, they created a separate strand to visual art called ‘Media Arts’. Creating a strand for technology - separate to visual art will allow both areas to flourish rather than suffer under the strain of integration. Within the Finnish curriculum for visual art the objectives and core contents for basic arts education include nine different art forms including: architecture, audio-visual art, visual arts, and craft (National Board of Education Layout Pirjo Nylund, [NBELPN], 2002). The Finnish guided objectives are quite robust compared to the other curricula mentioned. Within the aims of the curriculum for visual arts there are objectives for both basic and advanced studies in the area of visual art. There is also the same layout of intent for craft which has its own prospectus. It is separate from the central content for visual arts, (NBELPN, 2002). Unlike the other curriculums mentioned. Such attention to detail and regard for the different artforms in the subject of visual arts helps instil a value and respect for the subject in the curricula while exposing the pupils to relevant contemporary art.

Downing (2008) questions if contemporary art practice is an appropriate component of the school’s art curriculum? The Irish curriculum aims to use visual art to create a natural and enjoyable way of extending and enriching the child’s experience of the world. Visual arts activities enable the child to make connections between the imaginative life and the world and to

organise and express ideas, feelings and experiences in visual, tangible form (NCCA, 1999a). A contemporised curriculum enables students to understand that contemporary art is part of a cultural dialogue such as ideas about beauty, cultural identity, family and community (Ching, 2015; Hardy, 2006).

But is it accessible and meaningful for pupils or beyond their comprehension? Do the forms of contemporary art make it problematic for inclusion in classroom practice, if teacher-self efficacy is low with the current curriculum (Chapman, 2005; DES, 2005; NCCA, 2005), how do we expect the teachers to incorporate contemporary art into the classroom? Perhaps the permanent inclusion of an artist in residence or art specialist teacher need to be considered in a school establishment for the future rather than just aligning arts and education with each other through arts in education initiatives (Department of the Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht [DAHG], 2012) To support, work alongside teachers and students and bridge the gap between the art and education world. These questions illuminate the importance of both perspectives of the teacher and the artist to be voiced and to work more closely and in unison in the realm of visual art education. “High quality Arts Education requires highly skilled professional art teachers, as well as Generalist teachers. It is also enhanced by successful partnerships between these and highly skilled artists” (UNESCO, 2006, p.8).

The research of Blagoeva (2019) confirms that contemporary art forms with their integrative nature can enrich the educational process by adding different experiences and viewpoints to previously acquired knowledge. “Unconventional art forms (such as art installations, assemblages, art performances, etc.) provide favourable opportunities for students and teachers alike to reflect upon the possibility for discovering the aesthetic value of trivial objects and phenomena through artistic conceptualisation” (Blagoeva, 2019, p. 11). However,

Hislop (2018) reminds us that “curriculum are just statements of what we aspire to provide for children” while the lived reality differs greatly” (Hislop, 2018, p.17).

The Artist in the Domain of Education

Artists enter the world of education to share their expertise in many different forms. In the education domain in Ireland, there are artist residencies in schools and colleges, artists in schools, CPD training, and creative partnerships evolving in the new Creative Ireland (2020) programmes. Creative Schools are part of the latest arts in education model in education.

Each school is supported by a Creative Associate in developing their individual school plan and creating links between the school and arts & cultural organisations. The initiative supports schools to develop and implement their own Creative Plan while strengthening the relationships between schools and the broader cultural and community infrastructure”. (Creative Ireland [CI], 2020, para.3)

Only in its early years of the development, this addition of the creative associate to connect schools with artists shows the want and necessity of artists entering the art education world. However, without consistent and thorough evaluation from all participants involved in partnerships of this kind both new and old, these initiatives can become a form of decoration.

Other models of the artists relationship within the education settings include CPD training and TAP, creative Teacher-Artist Partnerships. CPD stands for ‘Continuing Professional Development’ which are activities, workshops or courses for professionals to engage in to develop and enhance their abilities (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2020). The Teacher-Artist Partnerships is a new programme of continual professional development, which is a Creative Ireland Department of Education and Skills led and approved Summer Course offering training and in school residency opportunities for teachers and artists.

(Arts In Education, [AIE], 2019). This program offers training for artists and teachers with an emphasis on how to collaborate in the educational environment.. Chemi (2017) articulate these observations from their research in Denmark on the success and down-falls of artist in school partnerships, “Will, commitment, passion for the arts must be present for both parties. The problem is that the two parties are often ignorant of each other” (Chemi, 2017, p.39).

In recent years in the United Kingdom there has been a policy focus in education engaging a wider range of adults to work with young people (Department for Education and Skills, 1998, 2001, 2003). The government’s Creative Partnerships, introduced in 2002, promote partnerships between artists and teachers, cultural institutions and schools (Hall, Thomson, & Russell, 2007). Hall et al. (2007) research wishes to understand more about the impact of creative partnership policies on educational practice and explore how the artists teach. Whether their ways of teaching differ to teachers’ pedagogies and what is the impact of the artists’ involvement on the development of arts pedagogy in schools (Hall et al., 2007). One of the main differences outlined in the study was how the artist held an ability to progress and coach for better performance, and a succinct instinct to judge the outcomes of the art process. The artist’s highly visible pedagogy influenced the teaching assistant that worked alongside the artist but appeared to have little influence on other teachers. It was noted how there was little to none exchange of pedagogic identities between artist and teacher (Hall et al., 2007). This was also echoed in Chemi (2017) research in artist and school partnership. The lack of evaluation and documentation of the practising contemporary artist that facilitates in the classroom encourages these poor connections and boundaries to continue in these well-intentioned projects, which can only hinder the quality of art education and undervalue such art initiatives.

Depending on the creative formats being created in different local art authorities across Ireland, artist residencies can be supported and available to various educational institutes (The Arts Council of Ireland [ACI], 2017). Artist residencies cover an extensive field of activities, schemes and programs for artists. There is no single model for a residency, it can take many formats and be based in a broad range of organisations. They are offered by different institutions such as government, academic, artist run, museum or gallery lead, retreat, micro-residency or nomadic. Residencies can last from as long as week to a year and in some instances the artists also resides in the host environment, they are working in (Glennie, 2014). "They provide a new context, a framework for the development of a new project, research into a topic of interest, and/or the actual production of new work" (Upmeyer & Zizlsperger, 2016, para.1).

However, what all residencies have in common is an invitation for an artist to engage with an environment and for them to undertake some element of their practice in this context (Glennie, 2014). Other than providing a new interesting space in which the artist can immerse themselves and which will hopefully spark new waves of creativity in their work, conceptually the artist can provide and share new ways of thinking and working while presenting a unique perspective to the place they reside. The purpose of residencies is to support sustained engagement and exchange between artists, academics, researchers and students and to engage with a wider public through exhibitions or workshops (Upmeyer & Zizlsperger, 2016).

Bresler, Destefano, Feldman & Garg (2000) makes the point that artistic residences in schools may not always create a positive influence, as the school constraints may hinder the process. An artist's limited presence or interaction in the environment can have a negative aspect on the work and create less of an impact. There are many challenges to the development of such artistic relationship with schools or educational settings. particularly if the school has not

prepared for the engagement. Addison and Burges (2000) discussed how the potential for all participants in such partnerships is vast, as it is seen as an opportunity to bridge the separation of the art and the artist from the public and enable young people to observe engage and collaborate with artists. However, they express how an artist residence can be disadvantageous if it is “seen as a panacea” (Addison & Burges, 2000, p.99). These programmes will not benefit arts education if they are viewed as a prop or decoration in the area of art. The key to the successful implementation of such partnerships is collaboration. “Successful partnerships are dependent on mutual understanding of the goals towards which the partners are working, and mutual respect for each other’s competencies” (UNESCO, 2006, p.8). Both side need to be equipped to enter into partnerships.

One of the longest running initiatives in Ireland which seeks to enrich the school experience for young people and aims to provide a quality arts experience, is the Artists in Schools Scheme. The Artists in Schools Scheme is a mix of the partnership programs and residency model and involves the artist working with the students and teacher in the classroom through visual arts. The range of artists facilitating are from various disciplines such as dance, architecture film etc. My study will explore the visual art experiences characterised by collaboration between schools and the contemporary artists.

The aim of art partnerships is to contemporise the art curriculum. They are trying to keep the art curricula relevant and to provide a gateway and opportunity for all to engage with the ever-expanding arts (ACI, 2006). Addison & Burges (2004) explain the importance of collaboration with contemporary artists, “it is by means of such partnerships that it is possible to challenge emerging educational practices and at local level prevent practice becoming formulaic or turning into a new orthodoxy” (Burgess & Addison, 2004, p.34). Bresler et al. (2000)

reiterates this point when discussing how artists provide a fresh outlook as they “are less susceptible to being eroded by school culture” (Bresler et al., 2000, p.12).

Bamford (2009) discusses how the involvement of contemporary artists and/or arts organisations in formal education sectors can help pupils understand the complexity of contemporary practice, enrich their learning experiences and ensure validity. The Artists in Schools' Scheme and others of its kind are essential opportunities for teachers to engage with and observe a different approach and process of art making in education.

When we explore the Artists in Schools guidelines, it focuses on the importance of evaluation as a learning tool, participation, implementation and evaluation. For a programme to be effective all partners must play their roles actively in the triangular relationship of pupil, artist and teacher which is at the heart of successful Artists in School practice (ACI, 2006). Yet these guidelines fail to include any previous experiences of the scheme from a teachers or an artist's perspective. The guidelines explain how evaluation is often a responsibility of the participants. Without any outside impartial body reviewing and evaluating the process, it could be suggested that it hinders the artist and the teacher in giving completely honest, focused feedback without compromising their opportunity to be involved in the scheme in the future. Without a structure for evaluation the opportunity is lost to use the insight of the artist to help build on the model of quality in the visual arts curriculum. Is there an appropriate space and time to critique the process and outcomes of this scheme?

The Points of Alignment Report, special committee on arts in education highlighted the need for information, advice and dissemination of art school initiatives (The Arts Council of Ireland, [ACI], 2007). The resources like the Arts in Schools Directory and the Artists in Schools Guidelines are welcome (The Arts Council of Ireland, 2004; ACI, 2006) but “they need to be

updated continuously, to be accompanied by other materials such as DVDs, and to be underpinned by seminars or workshops” (Arts Council of Ireland [ACI], 2007, p.22). Artists can volunteer their experience of Irish art education schemes to the Arts In Education website and blog (Arts in Education [AIE], 2020). But for one of the oldest art education initiatives there should be more research conducted on the process of artist in the schools. It is important to understand the relationship among artist and art educators as they impact the framing and transmission of visual art perceptions (Burgess & Addison, 2004).

There seems to be a gap in the literature regarding the artists experience in art education in Ireland at a primary level. The report from a meeting of Young People and Policy Makers in March (2010) found that “Young people, as well as professional artists and facilitators should be asked for their input to teacher education programmes” (Arts Council of Ireland [ACI], 2010, p42). If we compare the thirty-three pages of the Irish Artists in Schools Guidelines (ACI, 2006), against the one hundred and eighteen pages of the Artist in schools: a handbook for teachers and artists from the UK, it's fair to say that although the UK version is almost a decade older - it is far more comprehensive than the latest Irish Artist in Schools guidelines (Sharp, Dust, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, & Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1997). The UK artist in school guidelines shares frustrations, commonalities and successful methods from previous years from both a teachers and artist's perspective. It provides relevant advice gathered from previous research studies for teachers and artists while sharing an outlined evaluation process. It guides both the teachers and artists on how to evaluate each part of the process (Sharp et al.,1997). These guidelines could of course be updated taking into consideration the diversity in current contemporary art practices, but they help provide at least some artist perspective on the process in art education. One of the most recent studies interested in the insight of the artist in Ireland

was a study titled 'Heads up', conducted by Connolly, Rogers, O'Sullivan & Ridge (2016). Recreate is an enterprise which repurposes end of life materials from industry into art supplies. One of the aims of the 'Heads up' study was to examine the impact of professional artists working alongside teachers and educators in inclusive educational setting over an extended workshop period. The findings from this study revealed that "the presence of an artist on sites were deemed to be the strongest contributing factors in the project's overwhelming success" and "Heads up acted as an effective approach to continuing professional development with results indicating considerable changes in teachers practices across a number of domains" (Connolly et al., 2016, p.54). One of the main focuses of this project was exploring the creative journey of reuse materials. These materials are used in one of the strands which is neglected most in the visual art curriculum 'Construction' (DES, 2005). What if a format like this study was conducted for each of the strands in art education?

In 2016 the Danish education system delved into a research project to explore educational partnerships. In the research carried out there was an even contribution and evaluation of student, teacher artist and the cultural mediator. The research categories assisted in harvesting a broad number of findings to show what specific learning outputs all the participants experienced. Exploring each involved contributor's perspective created a more in-depth and thorough evaluation of the initiatives (Chemi, 2019).

A similar research project was conducted in Ireland but on a much smaller scale; a more condensed version of the evaluation of the Artists in Schools programme in Limerick 2017/2018. Nine schools took part in the programme in County Limerick between February 2017 and March 2018. Artists delivered four workshops in each school. The artists were deployed by the following festivals: Eva International, HearSay and Open House. A new approach to the delivery

of the Artist in Schools Programme was to pilot the idea of partnering with festivals as organisations with a capacity to bring a broader artform base to the schools' programme experience (Bowen, 2018). Though a compact report, it did manage to get a perspective from each party involved. The research comprised of both a quantitative and qualitative approaches and included recommendations and references for future projects participants.

It seems there is an inconsistency regarding the voice of the artist being present particularly in Ireland. Artists tend to be sensitive to the observation of qualities and to the attention to multiplicity (Chemi, 2019). The artists are recruited as the experts in their field to help expose students to the diverse arts in society. Practising contemporary artists can help gauge development and ensure authenticity of the art medium, measure sustainability and help assess if the objectives of the project need to change or be altered. Therefore, the artist perspective is invaluable to visual art education in primary schools. The artist perspective is relevant because the importance of children experiencing directly the work of contemporary artists was noted by Ofsted (2010) to increase academic achievements and confidence. Vahter, (2016) also expresses how it is an invaluable chance to observe the practising artist function in a classroom promoting experiential learning and uses contemporary art as a tool for knowledge construction in a primary level. Thus, it is important to evaluate the artist's experience in the classroom to improve the next experience of future schemes and so the concepts and process can be revisited and continued to inform the curriculum.

One could argue that it would be more effective to concentrate energy on more resources for the teacher in the visual arts rather than documenting the artist's perspective and process at work in the classroom. There is debate, however, centring on whether educators can teach creativity. This leads to the following question: is it harder to teach artistic processes if the

educator doesn't practice a creative artform themselves? Bamford's (2009) international enquiry maintains that there is a straining twofold between teaching art as free expression, with an assertion for creativity and imagination, against the reasoning and discipline-based skills required to fully participate in the arts. Bamford (2009) questions if the best way, is to just be in the presence of creativity. Each artist that participates in an Artists in Schools Scheme is unique. The artists differ in their pedagogical philosophies, therefore providing an ever-expanding pool of unique knowledge for the educator. Tan & Gidson (2017) argue creativity and imagination cannot only be nurtured but can be taught when educators guide young children's own creative thinking or behaviour. Addison & Burges (2000) debate that introducing students to the work of one artist can give them a limited view on contemporary practice, students should be introduced to a diversity of practice regularly.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the various rationales which justify the inclusion of art education in the school curriculum. It explores the unique attribute of the contemporary artist and how they can be of benefit when ensuring quality in visual art provision. It discusses the complex nature of quality and how to sustain it in an educational setting while investigating the formats which accommodate the artist in the domain of education.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The following chapter outlines the design methodology and methods used to conduct my research. It will discuss the background for my design choice and why the methods and instruments used were most suitable in order to develop an approach that matches my objectives. It outlines the ethical considerations, data analysis and positionality that were reviewed during the process of the study while also delineating the limitations of the chosen research method.

Research Question

What is quality primary school visual arts education from an artist's perspective? This is the question that forms the basis of my research. The topic of investigation is the perspective of the artist's experience, focusing on a council-led scheme that aims to contemporise the visual arts curriculum. I wish to obtain a clear idea of the value, quality and functionality of the Artists in Schools Scheme established by the Arts Council of Ireland (2006), critically from the artist's point of view.

Qualitative Research Method

A phenomenological approach was pursued with a qualitative method when conducting my research. Phenomenology is a philosophy which values the perceptions and understanding of the individual lived experience (Rolling, 2013). A phenomenological approach and a qualitative research method involved studying visual artists' experience of the Artists in Schools Scheme, with the intention to condense their individual encounter of the scheme to an account of universal essence (Hickman, 2008). The characteristics of phenomenology provided rich data and an opportunity to potentially create a practical outcome which could make a difference in the area of art education (Cottrell, 2014).

A qualitative method of research was pursued for this study as there are many synergies between an artist's practice and qualitative practice. Leavy (2015) explains this similarity, describing how in both instances of artistic and qualitative practice, the practitioners may aim to illuminate or build understanding, develop new insights, challenge assumptions or disrupt dominant narratives, "both practices are holistic and dynamic involving reflection, description, problem formulation and solving and the ability to identify and explain intuition and creativity in the research process" (Leavy, 2015, p.17).

A qualitative method of approach best compliments investigating the artists' experiences and insights into pursuing quality in art education. This method was most appropriate for conducting my research as the nature of qualitative research "endeavours to extend our understanding of human behaviour, individually and collectively, by investigating the underlying causes for people acting and thinking as they do" (Cottrell, 2014, p.93).

Sample Selection. The sample frame and criteria for the interviewees were artists that had undertaken the Artists in Schools Scheme in visual art, at a primary school level in Ireland. Convenience sampling was used to conduct this research study, to investigate the nature of quality visual art education from an artist's perspective. Convenience sampling, which can also be referred to as availability sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling which is dependent on data collection from people that are readily available to the researcher (Lavrakas, 2008; Taherdoost, 2016).

This was the most appropriate technique when considering the range of limitations facing the process of the research for this study e.g., time constraints, affordability and accessibility. In relation to sample size a minimum of twelve artists were required to be interviewed. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) explain that within any study, if the aim is to

discover a common perception or insight among a moderately harmonised group at minimum twelve interviews is necessary. Newton (2010) highlights the strength of finding similar perspectives from in-depth interviews in a small sample size. “It is the power of semi-structured interviews to provide rich, original voices which can be used to construct research narratives that gives the method its invaluable quality” (Newton, 2010, p.6).

Data Collection. In order to satisfy the objectives of the study, the most suitable qualitative tool to respond to my research questions was semi-structured interviews. This type of interview embraces traits from structured and unstructured interview designs. “A fixed set of sequential questions is used as an interview guide, but additional questions can be introduced to facilitate further exploration of issues brought up by the interviewee, thus almost taking the form of a managed conversation” (Millward & Cachia, 2011, p.268). The semi-structured interview creates a conversational and informal tone with a relaxed atmosphere which allows for time and space for the participants to respond in their own words to the research topics (Cachia & Millward, 2011; Schatz, 2012). This was a critical element for my research as it focuses on the individual experience and the artists’ personal insights on visual art in primary education; open-ended questions gave the interviewee freedom to speak widely on the topic, gather more in depth data and allowed a range of responses in related areas to the research sphere to emerge. The interviews were carried out face to face in a quiet private setting which enabled me to capture the individual’s point of view, emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding my research area (Newton, 2010).

Ethical Considerations. The ethical considerations pertinent to this project included ensuring informed consent, confidentiality of participants and academic integrity. A submission to the MES proposal assessment and ethics committee was made and approved to carry out this

research study. I ensured that no one was harmed physically, psychologically or otherwise in the research process. All participants received a detailed document before the interviews, explaining the purpose of the research and what was required of them along with a consent form. The documents were reviewed with the participants before the interview to ensure they fully understood the process before signing agreement and consent forms. I received either written or oral consent from each participant. All participants of the study were informed that through agreement I could use their responses and data as part of my research with absolute privacy. Newton (2010) emphasises how semi-structured interviews create a format for participants to reveal private thoughts and feelings and that these qualities are valuable to the researcher but are also ethically very sensitive. Therefore, a high level of professionalism in respecting and maintaining trust of each person's perspective is paramount.

The recorded data collected is stored in a secure location to ensure that privacy of data is maintained and will be destroyed by May 2022. I certified complete confidentiality so not to hinder participants possible future involvement in any Arts Council schemes. No participants were identifiable within the research or in any other publication relating to this study. I have ensured appropriate acknowledgement of all sources used through citing and referencing. No material was used if permission was refused.

Interview Preparation. Planning the interview procedure was essential in order to utilise both my time and the participants' time efficiently. Preparation was necessary to ensure consistency in the research process. It was key for the semi-structured interview to practise setting the right tone, securing appropriate settings and to be comfortable and conversational with my interview topics. Cottrell (2014) describes the typical interview issues to be prepared for in the data collection process, by considering the scenario of face to face interviews. These

interviews are more demanding than a phone interview and to consider how interviewees may be more self-conscious which can impact their answers. It is important for interviewers to practise creating a safe relaxing atmosphere and maintain a neutral position within the interview process, ensuring facial features and body language is interested and warm but impartial.

Pilot Interview. It was essential in my research to gather insights and perspectives from the artists in their own words. It was critical to pilot my interview procedure in order to exercise my interview skills and ensure the appropriate data retrieval and a consistency in my data collection (Cottrell, 2014). Before conducting all the semi-structured interviews, a pilot interview was organised with an artist colleague. This artist had completed an artist in school partnership overseas which had similar objectives and structure to the Artists in Schools Scheme created by the Arts Council of Ireland (2006). For my pilot interview I drafted a certain set of questions and topics, which were grouped thematically to guide the interview towards my research objectives while leaving space for other topics to emerge during the interview. When a mutual time and place was agreed upon for the pilot interview, I used two small digital recorders with the participants permission. The recorders were essential for future data analysis, but they also allowed me to be more actively engaged in the conversation without distraction (Adams, 2010).

On reflection of the pilot interview process, the anchor questions and topics were key to influence the direction of the conversation and not to spend too much time following tangents. An interview guide consisting of core and associated questions to the research subject is essential and is only improved through pilot interviewing (Creswell, 2007).

Enduring silence patiently was key, to allow the artist to thoughtfully respond to my questions. Accurately exhibiting the interviewees voice, ensuring their feelings and opinions are truthfully portrayed gives validity to the interview process (Patton, 2002).

Some interviews were conducted over the phone or by video call due to social distancing enforced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, some of the interviews were missing the element of face to face interaction and direct contact, allowing me to see non-verbal communication which assists in capturing a personal insight according to Newton (2010). I had to become more aware and receptive of the participants' tone and hesitations in their responses over the telephone, in order to best understand their feelings and where to lead the conversation. Cachia & Millward (2011) explain how telephone-based communication parallels that of a semi-structured interview because of the informal atmosphere and the flexible choice and order of questions, as the conversation develops and is influenced in direction by the interviewer.

Researcher Positionality

With a phenomenological qualitative approach, it can be difficult to identify the impact of the researchers own subjective role (Cottrell, 2014). With this in mind, I have considered my own bias views and limitations. I became fully aware of my potential vested interests and positionality throughout the research process, as they can influence my methodological approach. As a practising artist and a teaching artist, I have experience in both areas of this research. I have never participated in the Artists in Schools Scheme; therefore, I am interested to explore how these two worlds collide and work in unison. In my perspective, I believe art education partnerships need to be reviewed with the contemporary art learner in mind in order to help maintain a standard of excellence and relevance in our art education. I am interested in gaining the perspective of artists' experiences in primary visual art education, intending to develop their insights into what is entailed in quality visual art learning experiences.

Data Analysis

The method of thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data for this study.

This involves exploring the data to identify common themes or patterns that emerge repeatedly (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Punch, 2001). Thematic analysis should be exercised if the research is interested in examining people's views, opinions, values and individual lived experiences (Evans, 2017). A thematic approach to analysis was advantageous as Nowell, Norris, White & Moules (2017) explain how this method is most useful for emphasising parallels and disparities, producing trustworthy unanticipated insights and for analysing perspectives of the individual. Also, thematic analysis provides flexibility in the approach which can be tailored to needs of the study, ensuring a detailed and complex report of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A disadvantage to be considered when using thematic analysis, is this method relies on the researcher's judgement. There is a risk of missing distinctions in the data as it is a subjective process. While the researcher is interpreting the data, it is crucial to maintain a process of reflexivity on each choice and decision (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Rolfe (2006) also highlights the challenge regarding this process of qualitative analysis as there is no recognized consensus about the standards by which this kind of research should be judged.

It is paramount to ensure and maintain that the data collected is analysed in a creditable and trustworthy manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guest, MacQueen & Namely (2012) convey the validity in a thematic analysis as it is data driven therefore through the rigorous process of rereading, studying and immersing yourself in the data there is more opportunity to discover themes not previously considered. In order to ensure trustworthiness and to quantify the research and analysis conducted, a self-reflexive journal during the study was maintained (Morse & Richards, 2002; Stark & Trinidad, 2007; Tobin & Begley, 2004) This allowed me to reflect and examine thoughts, synthesise and evaluate choices and decisions of the research process.

Limitations

No research method is perfect, Cottrell (2014) notes; there are always areas of limitation and disadvantages in aspects of a phenomenological qualitative methodology, such as generating unusable information which can be time consuming to work with. When using semi-structured interviews, I retrieved a lot of interesting data as I was investigating personal attitudes, experiences and attributes to a certain narrative but not all of this data was usable. Some limitations were out of my control like the Covid-19 pandemic which led to the final interviews being conducted over the phone rather than face to face in order to adhere to the HSE guidelines enforced. Patton (2002) highlights when using the process of semi-structured interviews comparability can be reduced because of the word changing, and sequence of questions will differ with each interview. However, each interview will develop its own consistency and rhythm which can be analysed.

Gathering contact information for participants was more time consuming and complicated than I had previously anticipated. A list of artists who were part of the Artists in Schools Scheme, over the last two years was available on the County Council website. However, some of the information was incorrect regarding schools and the area of arts pursued with the partnering artist. This led to wasted pursuits of enquiries for interviews with artist that didn't meet the criteria of my sample framework. When the misinformation was corrected few of the artists who matched the sample framework had a strong online presence, such as a website or social media platform with their contact details available. This led to investing more time in trying to retrieve contact information for some artists and relying on word of mouth or social media platform invitations for participants.

Conclusion

This study was conducted using a phenomenological approach and a qualitative research method through semi-structured interviews to examine quality visual art provision from the perspective of the sample frame of artists that had undertaken the Artists in Schools Scheme, in visual art at a primary school level. This chapter has outlined the case for choosing this approach and method while reviewing and justifying the data collection and thematic analysis process. The limitations were acknowledged and trustworthiness to this approach were discussed along with the researcher's positionality and the study's ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings and analysis from a qualitative research study that examined quality primary visual art education from artists' perspective. The following chapter illustrates the relevant data collected and outlines the method of how the data was analysed for this qualitative research paper. It identifies the key findings and evaluates the significance of the results in light of the research questions, literature review and conceptual framework of the study.

Thematic Analysis

The research instruments of semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the artists' experience of art facilitation in schools. Thematic analysis was the approach taken to examine and analyse the study's accumulated data. It is a method which helps identify and organise recurring themes within data which facilitates the researcher to examine and report on recognised patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework of guidance for conducting thematic analysis was maintained throughout the vigorous process of analysis. Familiarising yourself with the data, creating codes and categories then searching for themes among them. Review themes then define and name them. Finally, produce a report of your findings.

Inductive and Deductive Approaches. In my analysis of the data, I used both techniques of inductive and deductive thematic analysis. "Inductive analysis is a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (Nowell et al., 2017, p.8). While Nowell et al. (2017) explain how a deductive method involves approaching the collected data with some predetermined ideas of themes that you suppose may appear, grounded in existing knowledge and literature. Boyatzis

(1998) advocates inductively creating themes from the collected data and producing themes deductively from previous research. This use of coding for my study helped define the main themes and categories emerging from the semi-structured interviews.

Utilising the process of inductive coding provided space for new themes to emerge from the participants discussions (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Employing a deductive thematic approach involved examining the artists' experience in facilitation using Seidel et al. (2009) suggested lenses of quality for arts education. The inductive and deductive process complemented the research questions by allowing the perspective of the artist to be integral to the thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Fereday, J. & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006).

Participant Description

Firstly, a quick review of what motivated the artists to participate in the Artists in Schools Scheme at primary school level. Eight out of the twelve artists decided to part take in the scheme to make connections, gain experience in teaching and viewed it as an opportunity to be creative with a new demographic. While the remainder referred to it as a way of supplementing their artistic practice. The sample of participants all define themselves as practising contemporary artists. Table two as seen below details the artists area of practice, levels of formal training in art and design and their relatability to the term teaching artist, ten being most relatable. The artists are of mixed genders, ages and at varying stages in their careers and hold diverse experience in art facilitation. Each artist has a supporting career or a dual identity which is not uncommon for professional artist living in Ireland (Laws, 2018). These careers include artist facilitator of course, lecturer in further education colleges, creative associate, youth arts co-ordinator, substitute primary school teacher, art therapist, arts administration and psychotherapist. Among

the artists there are a range of disciplines practised, a mixture of painters, textile artists, ceramicists and mix media artists as seen in **Table 2**, Profile of participants.

Table 2*Profile of Participants*

Name	Medium	Practicing	Level 5&6	B. A	M.A	H.Dip	Teaching Artist
Artist A	Mixed media	√	√	√			9
Artist B	Ceramics	√	√	√			10
Artist C	Paint	√	√	√			6
Artist D	Mixed media	√	√	√	√		8
Artist E	Ceramics	√	√	√	√	√	10
Artist F	Mixed media	√	√	√	√		8
Artist G	Paint	√	√	√		√	4
Artist H	Paint	√	√	√	√		6
Artist I	Mixed media	√	√	√			8
Artist J	Paint/ Textile	√	√				9
Artist K	Paint/ Textile	√	√				8
Artist L	Mixed media	√	√	B.Ed	√		1

Findings

As discussed in chapter two, the in-depth research initiative ‘The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education’ conducted by Seidel et al. (2009), formulated four lenses each comprising of elements to assess and establish excellence in arts education. The lenses comprise of student learning, pedagogy, community dynamics and environment. Employing these lenses as a framework, from the process of deductive thematic analysis, I have created an adapted table see, **Table 3**. This table encompasses the emerging elements for quality regarding visual art provision in primary school from the perspective of the artist.

Artists’ Perspectives on Student Learning

Table 3

Priori Lenses adapted from Seidel et al. (2009) Four Lenses of Quality in Art Education: Emerging Categories from Student Learning

Priori Lenses			
Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment
Emerging Categories			
Autonomy			
Student-Agency			
Exhibiting			

When conducting my analysis with respect to the lens of student learning, what emerged was how the artists’ shared a strong viewpoint on learner autonomy, student agency in the process of creating art and an emphasis on the value of exhibiting students’ artwork. All twelve artists discussed the role of engagement in their projects. When questioned about how they

measure the success of a project, each participant referenced purposeful student engagement with an orientation to ownership, student agency and individuality.

Autonomy. Learner autonomy was advocated among all the artists and was connected to the aspect of freedom and self-expression in the creative process during facilitation.

In my class I never give the tools to the children I just set them on a separate table and the kids can go and get them themselves, whatever they need. This gives them a power that you know, you would not normally have in an educational setting. (Artist B, 2020)

Artist B is one of the more experienced facilitators from the participant sample and a specialist in ceramics. Artist B was especially passionate about using the correct tools for each strand and encouraging students to take charge of their creative process. The opportunity for choice and the artist's reference to power reveals an intention to encourage independent learning. If we consider the artist's speciality of working in the discipline of ceramics, the process of a designated supply area can also be read advantageous by demonstrating the methods and role of each different tool when interacting with clay.

This method simulates a 'Reggio Emilia Environment', an approach where the learning environment for students is viewed as the third teacher. This term indicates that the space and the supplies in it, are purposefully arranged, and students are taught the proper method in using materials irrespective of age (Reggio Emilia Approach [REA], 2019).

Student autonomy emerged from the interview data as the participant sample would associate student learning with freedom, choice of artistic direction and creating a positive environment which encouraged inventive thinking and challenges. Each artist expressed the level of excitement and anticipation when students realised; they were permitted to do what their imagination and available materials could culminate. As Artist A, discussed their first experience

of the Artists in Schools Scheme, the artist described pupils' reactions when they explained within reason, the possibilities in the art session, "I explained you can do whatever you want, and one little child responded in shock whatever I want!!??" (Artist A, 2020).

With such a level of disbelief and excitement in the power of choice from students expressed by the sample collectively, it would suggest that learner autonomy is not a frequent occurrence in visual art in those classrooms. Especially within the strands of clay and construction or mixed media projects as Artist B, D, E, J and K (2020) referenced children's unfamiliarity with the material and conversations with teachers of their avoidance and fear of these strands.

These findings of the artists' approach in the classroom are consistent with the literature of the Visual Art Teacher Guidelines (NCCA, 1999b). The prospectus references the importance to promote individuality and autonomy in the creative process. These findings also match the results observed in the Primary Curriculum Review (2005), which revealed particular avoidance in three-dimensional strands of visual art.

Student agency. Encouraging activities that were meaningful to pupils, stimulating and prompted self-expression was an important part of the artists' process in embracing creativity. Illustrating the pupil's voice was embedded in the artists' approach to student learning as they reviewed their experiences in the classroom. Artist A discussed creating a space for individuality and expression in the use of journals, encouraging students to fill the journal with what they found interesting. This was a common practice among the sample, "Journaling was very important, just creating an awareness for them (students) around how they were feeling, about what they were doing at the time and how they evaluated their art" (Artist A, 2020).

The process of journaling models artistic habits of the contemporary artist and provides a safe place for a student to be reflective and honest. It is an exercise which is not assessed in terms of right or wrong but rather self-initiated and guided by the educator. It also offers a private retreat for a pupil who may be self-conscious or shy about their work but still fully able to participate in the expressive quality of visual art making.

A sense of ownership, self-expression and student-agency in student learning were again highly important aspects from the artists' point of view when working with pupils, particularly concerning building an authentic meaningful artmaking experience. This finding corroborates the views of Elfand (1990) and Siegesmund's (1998), who convey the significant role of art in education as a channel for self-expression. They align with the unique aspects which art brings to education described by Hoffman (2008) such as emotional development and wellbeing as it is, a subject which offers a space to convey feelings.

Exhibiting. Eleven out of the twelve artists had an element of exhibition of work or a presentation of some form. Some were exhibited in the classroom, some in a space within the school while others were unveiled in a gallery setting with an invitation to friends and family. Half of the artist sample described the exhibiting of work as a celebration. There was no obvious correlation between the artists that did so, as it was an equal mix of the more experienced artists and early career art facilitators. It was surprising the repetition of the word celebration among the research participants. They explained how evoking a sense of celebration, of accomplishment can build a sense of self-efficacy in students even when each artwork can be exceptionally individual, "A celebration, it is very nice because the children come along and they build pride in their work and self-worth, self-confidence and growth, you know, a value in their own creativity" (Artist F, 2020). Artist F one of the more experienced facilitators with regards to school

partnerships, expressed from their years of experience the importance of exhibiting artwork and how it elevates the whole process of art making for a child.

The process of exhibiting the finished artwork was not just about finding a free spot to display the work, each artist would consider environments which were most suitable for the artworks. Artist H who's sculpture project was based on the novel 'Little Women', transformed the classroom with materials and décor from that period, to show the students how such material interpretation enhanced their artworks. Artist H expanded the process and collaborated with the local library to organise a public exhibition of the groups work in the library gallery.

When the artists discussed the process of exhibiting student artwork, they referred to the sense of ownership it instilled in students and how such a process helped develop a critical eye and creative consideration. They recalled how the process of exhibiting builds confidence and pride in a student's creativity. Artist J (2020) described how the artwork from their project was hung in the hallway in a permanent location, a fantastic achievement for the pupils. Not all the projects ended in a gallery or with school presentation, but even the artwork hung in the classroom was taken through the same considerations of exhibiting. Each artist that facilitated an exhibition referred to exhibiting the artwork rather than displaying it and defined it as the natural end to a project, emulating the process of creating and exhibiting work from their own art practice.

These emerging categories under the lens of student learning favour the importance of Southworth's (1985) and Daichendt (2010) advocacy of the process of art as an individual expressive agent, which helps create a sense ownership for students in education. All of the artists encouraged the use of different mediums and having a tactile approach to materials while urging independent thought and initiative in the creative process. These contemporary artists'

insights reflected engaging purposeful experiences, exploration and emotional openness which further supports the elements of Seidel et al. (2009) quality lens of student learning. As the artists wished to deliver an authentic art making experience, their perspectives expressed on student learning in art education is comparable to the learning process of an artist as they engage in artmaking.

These findings introduce a new element to be considered under student learning, exhibiting artwork. When engaging the phases and creative experience of exhibiting artwork, the artists' observed how it nurtured self-efficacy and confidence in student learning. In the Visual Art Teacher Guidelines (1999b), it discusses the organisation of display areas and encourages the presentation of work in the classroom and school. In this section, the repetition of the word display dominates the description of exhibiting: "Principles of good display apply equally throughout the school building, as they do to art exhibits within the classroom" (NCCA, 1999b, p.34). Partnering the concept of display and exhibition can lean towards decoration and limit some of the important aspects of the process of exhibiting. Such as, the process of curation, which provides a space for students to critique, think creatively and begin to learn how to assess pieces of art. The process of exhibiting and curation also contributes to the aspect of looking and responding in the curriculum. Allowing students to be part of exhibiting their own work makes the process more relatable and assists in familiarising the function and purpose of a gallery and art museum.

Artists' Perspectives on Pedagogy

In referencing Seidel et al. (2009) second lens of pedagogy, the most dominant elements which emerged from examining the data collected was creating a sense of freedom, the creative process and the product and the nature of ambiguity and flexibility in artmaking.

Table 4

Priori Lenses adapted from Seidel et al. (2009) Four Lenses of Quality in Art Education: Emerging Categories from Pedagogy

Priori Lenses			
Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment
	Emerging Categories		
	Freedom		
	Process & product		
	Ambiguity & flexibility		

One of the most repeated words in the entirety of the collected data was the word freedom. With each interview there was an emphasis on freedom to explore artistically, freedom in the creative process and freedom in the choice of materials. The passion and focus on freedom, exploration and experimentation was evident in every interview, in the zeal in which each artist discussed its importance. Artist A, a mix media artists when discussing their experience of facilitating in a classroom environment, described the significance of giving permission for freedom, “They knew that they could get as messy as they wanted, they knew that these were the rules set out in the beginning, there is no right way or wrong way here” (Artist A, 2020). The use of the word messy from the point of the view of an artist translated to experimentation, letting go of inhibition and being completely expressive. Artist A wanted the pupils not to be distracted by usual restrictions and to concentrate on immersing themselves in the artistic process. From the perspective of an artist, the nature of creativity is messy, messiness

can unlock creative possibilities and ideas. But the idea of freedom in mess was not associated with the dynamic of a classroom.

The curriculum (Irish Primary school) states that the children should be allowed to freely explore materials and express their own ideas. My art is based on that whether I'm working with young pre-schoolers or grannies. It's equally important to everybody that they are, you know, given freedom to explore not just told this is what you to do. (Artist D, 2020)

As Artist D deliberated the value of permitting freedom in visual art, they expressed a sense of frustration as they often found themselves having to justify and reinforce the difference in visual art objectives compared to other subjects. Artist D highlighted that when trying to provide authenticity in the creative process of art making it involves experimenting, playing with tools and materials while not worrying about the outcome. Artist D & E are the two artists which hold the most experience in school partnerships through the Artists in Schools Scheme, they both noted how over time visual art easily fades into the structure of other subjects and can become rigid, losing its unique inventiveness.

Some artists displayed freedom in process of creative risk and exploration of adventurous materials, as one recalled how a project snowballed and developed into creating a pond on school grounds while another discussed the process of spray painting instead of painting with a brush.

I gave them spray paint. And they were so excited. They couldn't believe it. They were excited to wear the gloves and glasses and special masks. And it was great to see them work in groups and build teamwork. I showed them how to use it and they were so excited to be given the chance to use something they normal don't use. (Artist B, 2020)

Artist B (2020) a veteran arts facilitator in schools, when reminiscing over this particular art project recalled how students seemed to “have wings” and almost appeared “taller” during the project. The chance to use such grown up materials and giving students expressive freedom offered a new approach to making artwork even if it didn't go the way they expected. The importance of wearing certain clothing such as aprons, gloves and masks seemed to influence the creative mindset and elevated the value of the activity. The artist and assisting school staff collaborated with small groups at a time working outside. It could be considered that without the Artists in Schools Scheme, there wouldn't have been the opportunity to work with this kind of process.

The utilisation of freedom in the introduction of new contemporary art material of spray paint, consolidates the research of Blagoeva (2019) that using contemporary art processes can reveal new viewpoints on familiar processes in the educational practice. This artistic engagement highlights a core objective of the Artists in Schools Scheme, which is to expose schools to contemporary art practices.

These emerging categories demonstrate the high regard the artists' place on freedom in the artistic process and in turn hold it as a vital ingredient for quality provision. The findings support Bruguera's (2018) view of that the essence in an artist and artmaking, is freedom. They also highlight the connection between the Irish primary curriculum advocacy of guided discovery in education and the value the artist places on the artistic creative process in education. “In an art lesson, the children should remain the designers: this role should not be taken from them” (NCCA, 1999b, p.12).

Creative process & product. Across virtually all the comments collected about the nature of creating art in education, ten out of twelve artists remarked on how the process of free

exploration and experimentation must come first. It should come before technique and producing a finished piece. Every single artist expressed how the focus and emphasis shouldn't be on the product. The creative process is vital from the perspective of the artist for an authentic art experience, as Artist F expressed "it's always about process rather than product" (Artist F, 2020). Even going back through the emerging findings so far of autonomy, student agency and freedom these are all critical ingredients to the creative process.

I think you should give them the freedom and say nothing, nothing about how it should look or what way you want it to look.... that it should be red, that it should be brown.

Give them real freedom while they work. Show them some techniques and what you can make, then let them be. (Artist B, 2020)

This artist as mentioned previously has a diverse and a lengthy record in facilitation, highlighted the importance of not constantly replicating a previous project but adapting and reimagining it for each facilitation. Artist B, emphasised to try and build a point of interest and authenticity from your approach for yourself and for your students. This point of view was shared with Artist E who doesn't agree in repeating same exact project in a school and Artist C (2020) who explains when you repeat projects or teach in a constant step by step exactly how-to technique, you will only get know how to do that one thing in one certain way, you will lose the creative process of discovery.

It is so important to have a focus on creativity because children are process driven and sometimes the pressure of producing something takes away from what can actually be beneficial for their learning and their own personal development. A strong focus on using different materials as developmentally that's so important for a child to get hands-on with materials. (Artist I, 2020)

Artist I expressed such passion for the creative process and like many of the artists discussed the important balance of teaching different techniques and directing student on certain methods but also stepping back, forgetting about the product and allow space for imagination, discovery and creativity. The perspective of ensuring space and balance between the creative process and technique from the artists' is validated Des (2005) report as it conveyed that predesigned templates hinder the creative process.

I think teachers put pressure on themselves to produce a product, and have preconceived idea of what art should look like, but not every kid is going to make a piece of perfect art.

I think showing them how to be creative and teaching them how to make a piece of art are two different things. (Artist D, 2020)

This remark highlights an aspect mentioned in the review of the literature regarding the process of assessment in visual arts. As Artist D comments on the pressure of producing a product. A mass of predesigned products is easier perhaps to assess but as Gude (2013) conveyed previously in chapter two there is a clash between the process of educational assessment and the process of a genuine creative process. This artist's comment posed an interesting question which Foley (2015) recommends educators to regularly contemplate, are we teaching art or teaching to think like an artist? Or is it both?

In each interview I asked the artist how they associate themselves with the title teaching artist. I shared Eric Booth's definition which is: "a teaching artist is a practising professional artist with the complementary skills and sensibilities of an educator who engages in peoples learning experiences in through or about the arts" (Booth, 2003 p.3).

Each artist rated their connection to the term out of ten, one being not relatable at all and ten being very relatable see **Table 2**. Each of the artists didn't rush to answer, often thinking out loud and sharing their thought process and rationale behind their choice of rank.

Unexpectedly, the lowest ratings came from Artist L a qualified primary school teacher and Artist G a qualified secondary school teacher. Artist G (2020) discussed their experience of teaching and working with a curriculum, in this context at secondary level and described it as less of a collaboration of giving and receiving but emphasising it as the cycle of a relentless focus on product and technique. Artist G discussed how the curriculum was far removed from the creative process. The artist's reference to cycle implies the systematic nature which is part of curriculum assessment. Artist G discussed that the creative process was an afterthought. For them art is a connection to the individual and found at second level schooling, the structure didn't allow much space for this.

But assessments as Seidel et al.(2009) examined, can help us develop what we value in art but if the goal is to remake designated templates of work it goes against some of the values and attributes of art making expressed by the artists such as freedom self-expression and authentic artistic inquiry.

Ambiguity & flexibility. On examination from the interview transcripts a strong reference to the necessity of ambiguity and flexibility was made, and the key role they play in the process of making art. Artists seemed comfortable not knowing where a process could take them as they discussed how the nature of experimentation and inquiry in artmaking involves a lot of uncertainty and adaptivity.

It's vital to be open to exploring different ideas not being hung up on the product, listening, being reactive to what's going on in the classroom. Willing to let the project go in an entirely different way to where it was envisioned. (Artist F, 2020)

The aspects of ambiguity and flexibility are knitted into the other elements of freedom and the creative process previously mentioned. Artist E is the artist with the most diverse training and experience in art education with a higher diploma in education in secondary school education, a master's in art education and extensive years in further education while pioneering and advising the Artists in Schools Scheme when it first began in their locality. Artist E really summed up all the aspects which every other artist referred to at some point when discussing the pedagogical factors involved in ensuring a quality art provision in education. "Don't be afraid to fail, there's no rush, happy accidents are welcome, sometimes things don't go right, push yourself out of your comfort zone, there must be freedom for expression and a space for experimentation" (Artist E, 2020).

These findings reveal that from the perspective of the artist quality in visual art, in education should focus on the artistic process not just the end product for display. The concepts for art making from the view of the artist should be individual and imaginative not systematic.

Artists' Perspectives on Community Dynamics

Community dynamics from the perception of the artists' revealed the elements of trust in student capacities and a co-learner relationship between student and artist. It emphasised the importance of the relationship between the artist and the school establishment.

Table 5

Priori Lenses adapted from Seidel et al. (2009) Four Lenses of Quality in Art Education: Emerging Categories from Community Dynamics

Priori Lenses			
Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment
		Emerging Categories	
		Trust	
		Co-Learners	
		Partnership	

Trust. Half of the sample discussed the importance of building a rapport with the students when making art. Building a dynamic of trust was something that needed to be considered when working in a creative process. As the research was reviewed through the artists’ experience of the Artists in Schools Scheme the element of trust in the partnership between student’s teacher and artist, emerged as a significant factor in the process of implementing quality art provision.

We (adults) can be a little rigid about what we are producing and the way we go about it while working with children in art , micro managing the process, it can be nice just remember the joy of the process and themselves are discovering something new and to see it a little bit more from their perspective, the joy of discovery. (Artist I, 2020)

The sub text of this comment emphasizes the need to trust the capabilities of the student but also trust the creative process. This artist’s choice of discipline is ceramics, a medium which is

formed in techniques and systems, but one must also listen to the reactions of the material and equally rely on faith and trust, as creations are left to be fired by the temperament of the kiln.

When working with students each artist displayed a universal trust and belief in student capacities. This trust emerged to be vital when classrooms were collectively creating. As all the artists' worked from an ethos of no right and wrong in the creative process, this led to an instinctive sense of trust and belief for the children's unique visions and approaches with art materials.

Co-Learner. "It was a collaboration, like with any other artist except they were smaller and younger and much more imaginative"; is how Artist A (2020) described working with the pupils. Each of the artists respected what the student could bring to the creative table and recognize that they could equally learn from them too. The artists' worked in conversational practice in a non- hierarchy.

I would ask and consult with the children; it was important for them to put their own stamp on what they were doing and to be an active part in the art project. Children always have great ideas and are so very easy to collaborate with, they are so open. (Artist J, 2020)

This highlights the emphasis the artists' placed on co-creation. They viewed the interaction in the classroom as a shared making process with a co-authorship on the work. As I reviewed the interview transcripts it appeared that artists reluctantly used the word teaching when describing their interactions in the classroom, 'working with' was the most frequently used term. The word teaching was only articulated when referencing a demonstration of a specific technique to a group. Artist J (2020) described it as, "a partnership you have, both learning together, it's a collaboration, that's why I think it's also slightly different to the way a teacher approaches art".

This approach rippled through the participant sample as they referenced that the artistic process had no right or wrong way. Artist C expressed how visual art it can easily slip into the course of right and wrong like other subjects in school but “there is no right way or wrong way, I always try to just give advice to encourage them rather than saying that’s wrong, I think that’s the worst thing you can say to anyone making art” (Artist C, 2020).

From the point of view of the artists when entering the process of making art, it is a learning process for both educator and student. It is a collaboration between two creatives. It is consistent with Freer (2007) view of eliminating the distinction between artist and student to enable a student, an authentic creative process of art creating.

When artists were asked to rank themselves in relation to the term teaching artist it further supported this placement as a co-learner within the education system. The majority viewed themselves side by side the students in the classroom. Artist A, although rating themselves a nine in relation to the title teaching artist, expressed sentiments of unease with the term teaching.

I'm not sure I'm happy with the word teaching. I'm certainly happy with the word sharing, it is a sharing rather than a teaching role you are sharing your experiences while you are also learning it's a two-way street. It's more of a sharing and learning environment and experience for whomever. (Artist A, 2020)

This reveals again the collaborative nature of the artists’ process and how it is not collaborative process if the artist decides the outcome. As noted earlier the most surprising response to the term teaching artist came from Artist L (2020) who is also a substitute primary school teacher. They found the term artist teacher “hard to digest”,

I don't feel like an artist teacher because I feel I'm more an artist extractor I like to extract the art out of people (...) it is more of an unfolding than teaching in the sense of direction it's less directive. (Artist L, 2020)

When the artist heard teaching, they zoned in on the word teacher, although the title was 'teaching artist'. The dominant profession conveyed in this term is artist (Booth, 2003). One could interpret this response of the title as being two-fold. Artist is the focus on the process of creativity and teaching implies the role of teacher, which is direction steps technique product. But is there not still teaching and direction when guiding someone in a creative process? The word teaching in the title teaching artist seems to evoke a less collaborative nature to these artists but holding a connotation with steps, direction, format and technique.

Partnership. The Artists in Schools Scheme is conveyed as a partnership between the artist and the school (ACI, 2006). It should be a meeting of minds among student's teacher and artist. Ten out of the twelve artist all experienced no collaboration with teachers when implementing their project, for the more experienced artists this was a very common circumstance. Collaboration with the teacher was neither a frequent nor regular element.

While Artist E (2020) expressed: "the success of a project in my experience over the years with all the different projects really depended on the school, how much they embraced us". It is important to note the sample reiterated, they could only speak from their experience, that it always depends on the school and you can't generalise teachers. The participants expressed wonderful collaborations with teachers but the commonality among the findings was the inconsistency of collaboration. As Artist F stated that the partnerships with a teacher is, "getting better but it's never a certainty" (Artist F, 2020).

An interesting aspect which emerged was Artists J and K had, on average had more enthusiastic collaborations with the teacher during their projects. The artists' explained how they often allowed the teacher to choose the media or strands for the class to engage with during their time in the school. This contradicts the aspect of the Artists in Schools Scheme which is to contemporise the curriculum and expose pupils to new processes of contemporary art. Of course, it is extremely important to help the teacher with aspects of the visual art curriculum. However, if the artist is used only to help inform and complete the neglected curriculum strands then an opportunity is lost for the inclusion of contemporary art experience in the classroom. Artist J and Artist K are the only two artists which do not hold a bachelor's degree in art and Design within the sample.

None of the artist participated in any formal evaluation process regarding the success or shortcomings of the facilitation, the process of the scheme and the fruition of the art project. But as Artist F, who is also a Creative Associate remarked, "it depends how engaged the teacher had been. If you have a teacher that hasn't been engaged with the project or the process, it is very difficult for them to evaluate if they're not really engaged with it." (Artist F, 2020).

These findings contradict one of the core principles of the Artists in Schools Scheme.

The working relationships between artists and teachers' artists and pupils, pupils and teachers should be characterized by a spirit of collaboration (. . .) such partnership will be established by negotiation in advance and sustained by good communication throughout. (ACI, 2006, p.12)

The guidelines outline how evaluation is a vital ingredient of the practice and for the initiative to be effective, all partners must play their roles actively (ACI, 2006). This provides a format for to

create a legacy or footprint of the partnership. To build a reference on quality experiences and become more active agents in the pursuit of excellence in arts education.

A challenge that the more experienced artists encountered at least once was the lack of respect for their approach or perspective on the creative process. The most common occurrence was school staff contradicting the artists ethos of no wrong in creative of expression, by correcting pupils to colour inside the lines.

It was challenging when the principal would come in and say no or that's not right you know so that was a little challenging for me, (. . .) I can only talk about my experience but definitely for me the they're not really in tuned into the creative process. I suppose for them they're going back to their educational training there is a right way or a wrong way to do something and that's what I felt I battled. (Artist A, 2020)

The use of the word 'battle' was referenced by more than one artist when it came to discussing contrasting methods of artistic practice. When artists remarked on the challenges they faced in the partnership, they would refer to themselves as a 'visitor' in the school. Over half of the sample expressed, how they felt more like a guest rather than a member of a partnership with the school.

But what was evident from the collective experiences of the artists was that the teacher's role was unclear in the duration of the scheme from everyone's perspective. The lack of formal evaluation for reflection and discussion of each part of the scheme seems to lead to repeat scenarios and frustrations. These findings consolidate Chemi (2017) research on the effect of uncertainty in artist and school partnerships. It impacts each collaborators role and success of the project.

Artists’ Perspectives on the Learning Environment

Table 6

Priori Lenses adapted from Seidel et al. (2009) Four Lenses of Quality in Art Education: Emerging Categories from the Learning Environment

Priori Lenses			
Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment
			Emerging Categories
			Functionality
			Aesthetic surroundings
			Dedicated Art Space

Exploring through Seidel et al. (2009) final lens which aims to help direct quality in arts education is concerned with the environment. From my analysis of the participants interviews three primary elements of quality surrounding the topic of environment emerged. These were the limitations of the classroom for the process of art both physically and aesthetically, and the potential of an additional space in the school dedicated to art making as seen in **Table 6**.

Classroom Functionality & Aesthetics. Each one of the artists reflected and mentioned the environment or space in the school they worked in during their period of facilitation, whether it was inadvertently or advertently.

There were two elements related to classroom environment which dominated the conversations, the first was the actual physical space and functionality of the environment while the other was how the aesthetic of the space contributed to creativity and encouraged artistic inspiration for the process of art making. There were phrases and words recorded such as, ‘they don’t have space’,

'clutter', 'nowhere to move', 'rigid' and 'very little space' which were mentioned repeatedly among the twelve interviews. Artist H and Artist C both painters and both new to the experience of the Artists in Schools Scheme, worked in medium sized schools and found the lack of physical space impeded the process of creating and teaching. Artist C described how it restricted their options for creative exercises planned, "it was just packed, even trying to get in between the tables was difficult so there was no hope of rolling out a sheet and drawing on the floor" (Artist C, 2020). When Artist H was asked about what factors needed to be considered for quality in art education, space was immediate in their response,

first thing that comes to mind is jumping over desks and trying to get over school chairs, tables and bags and you know there was so little space. I don't know how the teacher manages all the time; the room was just full of clutter with such little room to move about. (Artist H, 2020)

Artist H continued to express how this is an example of where the artist's perspective can be so useful and important for the functionality and design of a space in schools. This visual artist has a background in design so understands the effect of how the physical surroundings and its functionality can inform the artistic process. Artist H believes it could be beneficial to consult artists more often and allow them to be part of the process in the design of educational environments.

Over half of the participants described taking their students out of the classroom environment to the outdoors to enhance and ensure a creative process. Artist D a mixed media artist, a participant which holds the most experience specifically in the Artists in Schools Scheme with over sixteen projects under their belt, emphasised how valuable space can be.

The space is a really important thing, you know I would quite often if possible, do an outdoor experience. So, when its possible some of the projects or as many of the projects we can, we will do outside. So that means if we are working with sticks or different media, they can use bigger materials they've got more space, they've got more freedom.

(Artist D, 2020)

This artist linked the environment directly with the artistic process and how one effects the other. They work in tandem to one another, freedom in a space allows movement and play with materials and this will encourage inhibition and creativity in the artwork. This finding along with the elements co-learning supports Csikzentmihalyi, (2014) research on the environment playing a role on creativity. There was heighten eagerness to remove the pupils from the classroom if at all and as often as possible. Which leads to examine the importance of a multi-functional classroom or space in a school which permits movement and playfulness. Artist D conveyed how the process of taking a group outside helped counter act the lack of facilities especially within a smaller school. But logistics such as weather doesn't always allow for this and with growing class sizes and health and safety regulations it is becoming less and less of a possibility.

The second category which emerged in the data was to consider how the aesthetic of the workspace plays a part in encouraging creativity and artistic inspiration for art education. Half of the artists highlighted how they believe the environment which surrounds the students effects their approach to artmaking. This was a consensus across all art disciplines and among both the newcomers and the most experienced facilitators with the Artist in Schools framework. This also contributed to the choice of removing the pupils from the classroom to the outside or changing the environment whenever possible.

In order to be able to operate in that little space everything has to be so rigidly organised within a certain structure and actually art isn't about that, it's about being able to break the rules a little rather than being restricted (Artist H, 2020).

One artist observed the creative aesthetic of the classroom working space, noting all the images around the room conveyed very little individuality as they all appeared so uniform.

The classroom environment I'm not sure if its conducive to freedom of expression because they sit for a certain amount of time then you stand for a certain amount of time, just kind of strict guidelines and regulations and the children are almost institutionalised. The art displayed was so uniform with little individuality in the classroom, so when it comes to freedom of expression, I'm not sure they actually know how at times, because they are quite confined and restricted. (Artist A, 2020)

It is interesting how the artists discussing their first time working in a school partnership; Artists A, H and C, found functionality and aesthetics of the learning space a dominating feature in how it affected their experience and the learning process they wished to provide for the learners.

While for the other participants who are more experienced in this particular scheme were more at ease with these limitations. Artists D, F, E and K reflected on how you have to respect the limitations of a school, "I tend to respect the limitations of the school, as far as what they have, the space, you're going in as a guest. And you'll always have to make adjustments" (Artist F, 2020). Tricky spaces and lack of facilities were not an unusual occurrence when working with schools for these artists. The artists recalled working in classrooms of every size, varying conditions of quality, new schools, rural schools and classroom with specific rules. This emphasised that each school is different with its own unique facilities.

Artist K outlined how you can creatively “do a lot with a little bit of space” but when you are governed to certain limitations or rules of a space, this is what can hinder the creative process and the quality of art provision in school. Artist E, a very experienced ceramist facilitator shared this viewpoint, which is surprising as working with a very demanding medium like clay involves varying resources.

The space is not the most... most important thing and you can do a lot in a small space.

It's whether you're being restricted to what you can do in the space. You can work in any space that you have if you are *allowed* [emphasis added] to (Artist E, 2020).

The difference between the newcomers to the Artist in School programme and the experienced artists in confronting the restrictive elements of the educational environment was, the more experienced artists appeared to navigate through these elements with their creative nature and were more dominant in their style of facilitation. The choice of artists words in describing their experience, ‘guest’ and ‘allowed’ are not in unison with the concept of a partnership in education. None of the artists talked about a perfect creative physical working environment, but it is interesting how both groups of artists could sense the regimentality of the classroom environment from the its aesthetics and functionality in relation to art making.

Dedicated Art Space. Artist L and Artist B expressed the importance of creating a space that is allowed and encourages expression. They discussed how it plays a huge role in quality visual art provision when facilitating, as they described trying to recreate an artist like studio space and presence for students. The artist studio was referenced in a third of the interviews, commenting on the difference between a classroom and studio space. The artists’ expressed the idea of emulating a studio space in conjunction with having the liberty to remove tables, use the

walls as a workspace and engaging the classroom environment in a different way. This was particularly prevalent with artists who worked in clay construction or painting.

When the arts occupied a specific location in the school the artists' highlighted the difference it made. In the case of this sample ten out of twelve artists were given their own space or room in the school and expressed how the practice of creating art was made easier and helped empower the creative process.

As mentioned in chapter two, Graham (2009) believes that an artist can transform the mode that learners interact with the learning environment by the way they create conditions for learning. These emerging categories illustrate Graham's (2009) perception of an artist's transformative quality from the way in which the artists' moved their learning experience outside and how an emphasis on the aesthetics and functionality of the learning environment play a role in the creative process for the student. These findings show that the artist share the same view as the teachers from the Primary Curriculum Review report by the NCCA (2005) and the DES (2005) report which highlighted challenges faced with the learning environment both physically and collaboratively. These findings reveal that from the perspective of the artists', the environment can affect the level of quality in an art experience.

Additional Lens of Quality

Table 7

Priori Lenses adapted from Seidel et al. (2009) Four Lenses of Quality in Art Education: Emerging Categories from Time

Priori Lenses				Additional Lens
Student Learning	Pedagogy	Community Dynamics	Environment	Time
Emerging Categories				
				Immersion
				Connection to creativity

Seidel et al. (2009) had referenced the element of time under the lens of environment, suggesting considering enough time for authentic artistic work. The concept of time emerged through the analysis, as it is knitted into each emerging lens. Like most endeavours in life, we always wish for, want more or need more time. But more time isn’t necessarily conducive to quality.

Immersion. Proposing time as an additional lens of quality for consideration it is not portrayed in the conventional sense of time. Each artist mentioned the aspect of time in each project with a consensus that time is always an issue. “You want to give the best experience to the person you’re working with, to give the most authentic experience so that includes doing it properly you know which needs time” (Artist K, 2020). It is important to note the use of the words, time and authentic in this comment. This marries up all the elements previously discussed, autonomy, student agency, freedom for imagination and collaboration. The findings

revealed how each artist influenced time in their art sessions to almost a pause in creativity and valued the present moment. Not rushing or forcing a time capacity to an exercise, sometimes artwork was not finished, and this was not viewed as a failure.

Some of the sample had to reimagine their relationship with time, jumping from different classes and groups. They did not measure time in empty units which need to be filled. But moments in facilitating creativity, as a pause, a moment frozen in a realm of inspiration or a rollercoaster of thought. There is no set path in experimentation and playful creativity, it holds many tangents. From the perspective of the artists' building time for self-expression and the creative process is just as valuable if not more than focusing the afternoon with the aim of producing a completed project. Layering time, integrating the practice of art or being creative in some form regardless of length of time as regularly as possible.

"I think the most important thing is you need to give time to the kids" (Artist B, 2020). Observing artists discussions of their approaches and ethos of practice when working, there was no concern of their being a lack of time to be creative, the concept of time was not fenced by completing a product, technique or image. Their perspective of time was a focus for immersion.

With regard to the Artists in Schools Scheme, the overriding consensus among the sample group was that the format of time didn't allow for an authentic immersion in a contemporary art experience for the students. The majority expressed that the time was too condensed into one period and it would be more beneficial for it to be spanned out over the year in shorter periods to ensure a repeated quality experience.

Connection to creativity. The concept of time is not just important for the students to play creatively and to exercise their creative sensibilities but also for the educators. Artist I, (2020) who has a background in research on nurturing creativity for psychotherapeutic change,

pointed out the importance of the facilitators personal relationship with creativity which was also echoed by the more experienced facilitators of the group, “there should be an emphasis on who’s delivering the art lesson as well and their relationship to art, do they have some kind of relationship to their own creativity?”(Artist I, 2020).

It emerged from the data that artists observed the difference in the process of a project when the educator had a relationship to their creativity. This aligns with previous literature regarding teacher’s low self-efficacy (Chapman, 2005; Ní Bhroin, 2012). The participant sample expressed by providing time to nurture your own relationship to creativity, it will elevate your approach to teaching visual art: “it makes such a difference when the teacher is in tune with their creativity” (Artist D, 2020). From the perspectives of the artists’ it will help in all areas of providing a rich authentic art experience in schools

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Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the artists' perspective on visual art in primary school education. From the examination of contemporary artists' experience in the Artists in Schools Scheme, it is now possible to say the study evidenced similarity of viewpoints in their process of achieving quality in visual art provision.

The Perspective of the Artist

This study has shown that from the artists' perspective, ensuring elements of quality for student learning in visual art provision meant creating a culture of inquiry and creativity to promote student agency and independent learning. The artists provided activities that were meaningful and purposeful which offered a space for student's self-expression. While utilising the process of regularly implementing the authentic exhibition of artwork to build student self-efficacy, a critical eye and to become familiar with the practice of curation.

In the area of pedagogy, not so surprisingly, the artists' attitude on approaching visual art in the classroom was to advocate more freedom in each area of the subject. The artists' perspective on quality visual art provision in respect to creative pedagogy, focuses on the factors of freedom, an authentic creative process and flexibility. Freedom for experimentation and discovery were aimed to instil genuine artistic habits, conveying that creative energy can be more prosperous than creative control. The ethos of an artist's pedagogy emphasised that producing artwork must not be confused with being creative. This ethos highlights the critical difference in replicating or creating artwork. Template work and producing an art piece is necessary when learning specific techniques but must not overshadow the essence of artmaking. Which is a process of fulfilling and nurturing creativity, working from your initiative, an opportunity for

experimentation and expression, from the point of view of an artist. The aspects of ambiguity and flexibility are necessary elements of creativity not to be feared but embraced for to foster quality.

The evidence from the study indicates that the artists' ethos on quality visual art provision concerning the learning community focused on trust and co-learning in the classroom. One of the strongest themes to emerge from the findings were the artists' outlook of positioning themselves as co-learners in the creative process. When aiming to achieve quality in art provision, trust and understanding must be in place between an educator and a pupil. Expressing a belief, respect and trust in the capabilities of learners and equally in the creative process will realise excellence from the perspective of an artist.

The findings of the study suggest that when artists facilitate, they interpret the environment as an extension of the creative process. Every school is different, holding its own unique facilities. However, the functionality or rather willingness, to allow the environment to be engaged with differently, was a factor which could help maintain quality provision in visual art from the perspective of the artist and overcome limited facilities. When artists were given a designated space or multipurpose room to work from within the school, there was a noticeable difference in terms of creative possibility, immersion and productivity.

The concept of time is presented as an additional lens of quality to focus on and nurture your relationship to creativity. Advocating more time for art, this isn't anything new. This lens is not about the advocacy of more hours for visual art. Rather to re-evaluate the relationship with time in conjunction with visual art in the classroom and time to foster a connection to creativity. Creating a connection to creativity is embedded in the emerging themes previously mentioned, such as freedom, process versus product and trust. From the artists' perspectives, a certain length of time doesn't guarantee creativity or a quality experience. The artists' main intention was the

engagement of pupils and ensuring the muscles of creativity were being exercised, which didn't always result in an exhibition or the production of an artwork. This perhaps was one of the distinguishing features of the contemporary art process in the primary school classroom. From the evaluation of the process of the artist in educational settings, it is not just about having enough time to achieve a completed artwork. It is about taking a closer look into how you are embracing any length of time for a period of authentic immersion into the creative process.

The findings revealed the importance for the facilitator to have a relationship and connection with their own creativity when trying to pursue quality and authenticity in visual art provision. Educators were encouraged to invite creativity into their lives outside the classroom. When educators are in tune with their own creative instincts, it's not about being a commander of creativity but to command one's own creativity to help better guide ingenuity in the classroom.

Artists in Schools Scheme

The lack of consistent and concise evaluation between the artist and the school establishment in the Artists in Schools Scheme appeared to be a missed opportunity. A chance lost to gather the perspectives of all the participants involved in the creative process and implementation of such a partnership. The lack of reflection and partnership between artists and teachers created uncertainty of everyone's role and insecurity of their position in the school culture. As the school is so central to the implementation and success of the artistic collaboration, it needs to be prepared, engaged and ready to embrace the partnership to gain all the benefits it has to offer. In hindsight, the more inexperienced artists would have requested to be more involved in the preparation process with the school and teacher before the period of work began, to learn about the operation of the classroom and the mindset of the teacher. These conclusions provide additional evidence of the importance of Kenny & Morrisey's (2016) research, which

explored the Teacher-Artist Partnership as a Model of CPD for Supporting & Enhancing Arts Education in Ireland.

The study found that although there are flaws to the structure of the scheme, it is still a vital provision to develop and enrich arts education. The artists' who return to facilitate the programme, return because it extends the artworld to the classroom and it provides a role for the artist in education to expose contemporary art practice and to share a set of skills, a way of working, and a perspective that otherwise might not be explored.

Future Research

Arising from the findings of the study and considering its limitations, natural extensions to this research would be to expand the research pool and conduct further interviews with more artists of varying disciplines facilitating in different localities throughout cities and rural areas. Future research might be concentrated in the area of secondary art education to explore if these categories of quality are relevant in this sector. Further investigation into the strands of clay and construction is needed to develop an understanding of why they are still regularly avoided in the visual art curriculum.

Recommendations

The findings of this study offer six key recommendations for future practice. Firstly, to consider a designated art room for artmaking and facilitation in the educational setting. Or the possibility of a multifunctional space for the arts in the school establishment. These findings suggest that the environment is a crucial element in the process of developing artistic skills and a classroom can be difficult to adapt when exploring different media in art. The use of a designated art room or the concept of a multipurpose space for the arts to occupy in a school environment, has the potential to elevate the learning and teaching experience of visual art in education.

Secondly, another practical recommendation of regularly implementing the process of exhibiting and curation of student's artwork. Devoting time to curation and employing the process of exhibiting, not exclusively as a means of assessment. Allowing students engage and exercise significant artistic habits of mind, such as critical thinking, reflective intelligence and to develop aesthetic awareness.

Thirdly, a recommendation for educators to reflect on their own relationship to creativity. The artists' perspectives advised educators to reevaluate their approach and relationship with how they cultivate their creativity, both inside and outside the classroom. Encouraging educators to foster their own connection to their creative instincts in order to support the artistic pursuits in the classroom.

A key policy priority should be that when applying to the Artists in Schools Scheme or any artistic partnership, artists and educators must attend the Teacher, Artist Partnership CPD course. Efficiently preparing for such a collaboration is essential for the success and quality of an art programme. Participating in this course provides an environment free from constraints to learn and understand the difference in training artists and teachers receive. While offering an opportunity for artists and teachers to be introduced to different mindsets towards visual art and to build strong structures for the bridging of two worlds.

These findings suggest several courses of action for the Artists in Schools Scheme. Recommending for an expansion of existing structures so every school can avail of an artist working with in their school each year. The findings revealed a suggestion for the programme to run over the course of the school year in shorter bursts rather than an intense short-term period in order to maximise the benefits of the programme. There is a definite need to review the policy for the Artists in Schools Scheme, considering the role of each participant and their functionality.

It is highly recommended to create a structured consistent evaluation process to record, document and analyse the partnership in order to build and sustain a quality experience for each contributor.

Lastly, an important recommendation is to advise contemporary artists who have experience in facilitating in the primary school, to review and submit their perspectives on the 'Draft Primary Curriculum Framework' (2020). The results of this research display the possibilities different perspectives can provide, so any opportunity to retrieve and utilise multiple insights can enhance and benefit the pursuit of quality.

The overriding sense from all the interviews was one of passion for the visual arts and generosity to share information. As each artist spoke about the projects they created and their experience of collaboration with students, teachers and schools, there was an excitement and passion throughout the discussion. During the interview process, there was thoughtfulness and consideration to the artists' responses, for example, they did not rush to answer, and all in the sample demonstrated an appreciation for the opportunity to share their opinion. There was a united expression of admiration for teachers and an eagerness to work with them more closely in the future. My findings are based on the artists' experiences of the Artists in Schools Scheme and they are intended to illuminate the outlook and approach of quality visual art from the perspective of the artist working in an educational setting.

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Appendix A

Research Information Letter



Dear Artist,

My name is Caroline Keane and I am a practicing artist and art facilitator. I am currently embarking on a research project as part of a master's program for visual art in education at Marino Institute of Education. Through my research I hope to understand better the dynamics of the relationship between the artist and art education. The aim of my research project involves learning more about the contemporary artist's perspective and experience in their own words, of visual arts in the Artists in Schools Scheme in primary school. I hope that the findings of the study will inform future art education partnerships.

As part of this study I am seeking contributions from artists who have experienced the Artist in Schools Scheme initiatives. I would love the opportunity to do a short interview with you at a time of your convenience. This would be a semi-structured interview to gain your insights. I hope that you will be willing to participate because your perspective is an important part of this area of study.

Your participation will remain confidential throughout the entire process. There are no risks to partaking in the research. Your name will not appear on any research findings. Interviews will be recorded, and data will be securely held under Marino Institute of Education research ethic guidelines. Participation is voluntary and you are welcome to withdraw your interview responses up to one month after the interview date without giving a reason.

Should you wish to participate, you will be asked to sign this a consent form indicating agreement to participate in this research study. Your participation in this study is most sincerely appreciated. Should you have any questions regarding the research process or your participation, please contact me.

Researcher: Caroline - **Mobile:** 0860609898 **Email:** ckeanemva18@mommail.mie.ie

This study has been considered from an ethical perspective by the Marino ethics in research committee. Should you have any questions or concerns about the ethical approval or conduct of this study please contact MERC@mie.ie. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline Keane

Appendix B

Research Consent Form



Statement of consent: Please read these questions below and indicate whether you would be willing to participate in the study as described.

- I agree to voluntarily take part in this research and I have read the participant Information Letter.
 - **Yes** **No**

- I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered satisfactorily.
 - **Yes** **No**

- I give consent to analyse my interview response for the purposes mentioned above.
 - **Yes** **No**

- I understand and give consent that I will be recorded and that recordings will be transcribed by the researcher
 - **Yes** **No**

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my interview responses up to one month after the interview date without giving a reason.
 - **Yes** **No**

- I understand that the response of my interview (including any audio recording) will be stored in a secure location, privacy of data will be maintained, and it will be destroyed by May 2022.
 - **Yes** **No**

- I understand that my name will not be used, and I will not be identifiable within the finished in the research report or in any other publication relating to this study
 - **Yes** **No**

Signed: _____

Date: _____