

Reforming Looking and Responding Practice

The Opportunities of an Irish Primary School to Utilise a Per Cent for Art, Contemporary Artwork in Reforming Looking and Responding Practice

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 completed under the guidance of Andrew Whelan and Laura Ní Fhlaibhín 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

The Primary School Visual Art Curriculum asserts that providing equal opportunities to facilitate looking and responding to art and making art, is vital to the implementation of a balanced visual art education (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999b). Research indicates that this balance does not exist within classroom practice, to the point that Looking and Responding [LAR] is ineffectively implemented. My study investigates: the opportunities of an Irish primary school to utilise a contemporary artwork in reforming LAR practice; the factors contributing to current LAR practice; the influence such practice has on children's experiences and perceptions of art; and factors that influence LAR reformation.

Although considered to be centrally positioned within Irish education, visual art education has been transposed due to literacy and numeracy governance (Granville, 2012). Arts-in-education initiatives serve to realign visual art within children's education and lives as a whole; however, it is apparent that a disparity exists between policy aspirations and classroom reality (Bamford, 2012). Current curricular reform in which critical skills development is paramount (NCCA, 2020) coincides with attempts to bridge the dichotomy between contemporary art practice and school art practice (Granville, 2012) with the introduction of public art into educational settings.

Data was acquired from six children and six teachers during focus group interviews, while my reflexive journal provided insight into my role as teacher-researcher. Descriptive thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. Findings suggest that low teacher self-efficacy, and a curriculum structure focusing on literacy and numeracy has influenced teachers' LAR practice. Significantly, the *Critical Thinking and Art Talk* framework- developed as part of the research intervention- acts as a significant linchpin from which teachers can facilitate child-centred discussions, leading to social constructivist meaning making and critical thinking skills development.

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List of Abbreviations

CAP	Contemporary Art Practice
CTBT	Critical Thinking and Book Talk
DAHG	Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
DAST	Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
FTC	Form, Theme and Context
GUI	Growing up in Ireland study
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
LAR	Looking and Responding
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
PCfA	Per Cent for Art
PSVAC	Primary School Visual Art Curriculum
RLARF	Reformed Looking and Responding Framework
VTS	Visual Thinking Strategies
SOW	The title of the Per Cent for Art artwork within St. Mary's

Chapter One: Introduction

My research aims to gain an understanding as to how primary school teachers approach the Looking and Responding (LAR) strand unit of the Visual Art Curriculum, in order to reform LAR practice through utilising contemporary art. The motivation for undertaking this research is discussed hereafter. For clarity, throughout this thesis, the term, ‘arts’ refers collectively to visual art, music and drama while the term, ‘art’ refers solely to visual art.

Background to the Research

I believe in child-centred education that supports the development of critical thinking skills, through a social-constructivist pedagogy, while fostering democratic and relational practice. My values align with the vision of the Primary School Curriculum (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1999c), whereby the “uniqueness of the child” and their ability to be an “active agent in his or her learning” are recognised while “collaborative” and language-centred learning is endorsed (pp.8-9). Despite my educational values, I came to realise they were not aligned with my educational practice, and thus, I began to recognise myself as a “living contradiction” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p.46). I was also aware that within my school LAR practice was not being fully embraced; the value of learning opportunities offered by LAR were not recognised by teachers nor afforded to children. Through initiating this action-research study, I had the opportunity to begin to live by my values while influencing the practice of others.

The value of art education. A complex narrative has unfolded related to the “inherent” or “instrumental” value of art education in contemporary educational policy and practice (Reid, 2020, p.8). 21st-century educational policy recognises the significance of developing a skill set for 21st-century learners, which fosters critical and “divergent thinking”, encourages “risk-taking” while recognising failure as a learning opportunity (Granville, 2012, p.3). Barnard (2010) outlines a

major issue within the Irish education system whereby employability takes precedence over learning, resulting in a lack of emphasis on developing critical thinking skills; culminating in the need to refocus “how” we teach rather than “what” we teach (p.28).

The Primary School Visual Art Curriculum [PSVAC] claims to recognise “the centrality of visual arts education” and asserts that “art is a unique way of knowing and understanding the world” (NCCA, 1999b, p.2). Research suggests education plays a contributory role in influencing individuals lifelong involvement in the arts (Bamford, 2017b; Smyth, 2016). LAR practice has been recognised as a channel through which thinking dispositions and critical thinking skills can be fostered (Eisner, 2002; Housen, 1999; Perkins, 1994). However, the arts are not “valued in their own right” within our educational settings (Hoffman, 2008, p.46). Visual art education is often considered based on its perceived academic worth and subsequently disregarded (Granville, 2012) due to the perceived disconnect between art and academic progress (Reid, 2020). The treatment of LAR is of particular concern (Ní Bhroin, 2015) and is considered a “non-priority curriculum component” (Flannery, 2012, p.82). LAR practice within classrooms occurs less frequently than art creation (Flannery, 2012; Jump, 2019) to the point that it is often evaded (Ching, 2015). Further, artwork addressed in teacher’s LAR practice, is drawn from a restricted repertoire that limits exposure to three-dimensional artwork (Eckhoff, 2007) and contemporary artwork (Ching, 2015; Fitzpatrick, 2015).

‘In school’ and ‘out of school’ arts-in-education initiatives are commonplace throughout Ireland, which aim to place arts centrally within our education system while assisting children in gaining “life-enhancing pleasure” borne out of “high arts experiences” (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht [DAHG] & Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2013, p.11). Such initiatives have contributed to the commission of SOW, a contemporary public artwork

within my school. I argue that the provision of this public artwork alone, was not sufficient in facilitating a ‘high-art experience’ for the school community, whereupon this research is envisioned as a means of addressing this disconnect.

Bridging the dichotomy between the contemporary art world and school art practice.

Contemporary art practice (CAP) is regarded as an essential aspect of 21st-century education (Ching, 2015), but has not been embraced within Irish primary schools (Adams, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2015; Granville, 2012). My research explores factors that have contributed to this phenomenon, including low teacher self-efficacy, which is due in part to the perceived complex ideas that inform its practice (Charman & Ross, 2006; IMMA, 2009) resulting in teachers’ reliance on a narrow catalogue of “traditionally accepted” artwork and artists (Hardy, 2006, p.13). In exploring the gulf between contemporary art practice and classroom art practice, attention is drawn to the need, to reconsider ‘how’ as opposed to ‘what’ we teach (Barnard, 2010; Wiggins, 2015). The prevalence of ‘school art’ (Efland, 1976), and a reliance on art integration (Flannery, 2012) are presenting children with learning experiences that are often void of critical thought or risk-taking, which are considered to be fundamental features of art practice (Granville, 2012).

The distance between the contemporary art world and my school, St. Mary’s, was drawn into focus when a public artwork, entitled SOW, was commissioned through the *Per Cent for Art* (PCfA) scheme. The scheme granted the school access to interact with and respond to contemporary public art, which was created by a highly-acclaimed contemporary artist. However, once SOW was launched in 2019, little engagement with it ensued. My research aims to establish and overcome the obstacles that have impeded engagement with SOW, and thus activate the public engagement and responsiveness that SOW requires to survive (Mac Giolla Léith 2004).

A changing school culture. Changes in my school's educational practices provided a scaffold for the implementation of my action-research study. The use of Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CTBT) (Roche, 2015) to develop critical thinking skills was introduced, while simultaneously a growth mindset (Dweck, 2019) learning approach was adopted. Critical thinking skills development is promoted by several theorists as being pertinent to educational practice (Fisher, 2006; Freire, 2005 Perkins, 1994), and a vital aspect of endorsing "active citizenry and a well-functioning democracy" (Roche, 2015, p.14). Furthermore, critical thinking is a significant feature of the "key competencies" outlined in the reformed *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, which aim to develop children's learning capacities while equipping them for their futures (NCCA, 2020, p.8).

My personal experiences as a primary teacher not living according to my values, combined with key themes derived from the literature review, led me to consider if Looking and Responding practice in my school could be reformed through the use of a Reformed LAR Framework [RLARF] based on the school's Per Cent for Art artwork. The main research question developed from the following sub-questions:

- (i) What factors have contributed to the underuse of SOW as a LAR resource?
- (ii) To what extent has LAR practice influenced children's experiences and perceptions of art ?
- (iii) What factors may contribute to reforming LAR practice within the school?

From the data collected, it is apparent that low teacher self-efficacy is a major contributing factor influencing teachers' LAR practice and subsequent lack of engagement with SOW. Further, teacher planning and practice is primarily governed by literacy and numeracy, which inhibits the delivery of high-quality visual art education (Ní Bhroin, 2012). Subsequently, children are

exposed to a limited repertoire of art, from which opportunities to critically respond to ‘real-life’ contemporary artwork are exempt.

The data suggests that the formation of the child-centred and social-constructivist RLARF was influential in reforming LAR practice. A pivotal element of the RLARF, is the creation of the novel approach to looking and responding to art, entitled, *Critical Thinking and Art Talk* [CTAT], which was informed by key methodological frameworks: Visual Thinking Strategies (Housen & Yenawine, 2018), Form, Theme, and Context (Sandell, 2006), and Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CTBT) (Roche, 2015).

Outline of the Study

The literature review in Chapter Two involves an extensive analysis of seminal and current literature pertaining to visual art education. Key themes are identified and explored, namely: the Value of Art Education; Barriers to Accessing High-Quality Looking and Responding Experiences; and Creating a Reformed Looking and Responding Framework (RLARF). Fundamental questions become apparent which validate the rationale for conducting this study and inform many features of the research design framework.

Chapter Three explores the critical theoretic paradigm that informs my research and the choice of a qualitative research design will be rationalised. The use of action research will be explicated as the most appropriate methodology to use and my researcher positionality will be addressed. The sampling procedure and research participants are introduced while an overview is given of the data tools employed. Data collection from six teachers and six child participants through semi-structured focus group interviews will be discussed, while my reflexive journal will be referenced as a valuable tool in navigating the role of teacher-researcher. Validity, reliability

and research limitations will be addressed. Data analysis procedures will be introduced before outlining the ethical procedures employed.

Chapter Four includes a critical discussion of the thematic findings generated from the data: Teacher Self-efficacy; Evolving Perceptions of Art; Curriculum Structure; and LAR Reform through Critical Thinking and Art Talk. To answer the research question these themes are discussed in connection with relevant literature.

Chapter Five outlines the conclusions based on the findings, and asserts recommendations for future practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My research aims to explore: the opportunities of an Irish primary school to utilise a Per Cent for Art artwork in reforming Looking and Responding [LAR] practice; the factors contributing to current LAR practice; the influence such practice may have on children's experiences with art; and factors that may influence LAR reform. Accordingly, the literature review focuses on four areas: the Value of Art Education; the Significance of Looking And Responding [LAR]; the Barriers to High-quality LAR Experiences; and the Construction of a Reformed LAR Framework [RLARF].

The Value of Art Education

“Arts education and possibilities for creative expression are fundamental human rights” (Encountering The Arts Ireland, 2018, p.5). Bamford (2006a) refers to the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, which declares children's entitlement to “extensive and high-quality arts and cultural education” (para. 2). Involvement in and exposure to the arts assist in developing children's emotional and cognitive development (Bamford, 2006a; Smyth, 2016), including, “artistic appreciation, imaginative exploration, experimental initiative and empathic awareness”, which are instrumental to children's overall development (Roycroft, 2018, p.75). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation posits, “the encouragement of creativity from an early age is one of the best guarantees of growth in a healthy environment of self-esteem and mutual respect” (Keong, 2008, p.8). Bamford (2017b) asserts that children's arts involvement influences their engagement in the arts as adults, suggesting consideration should be given to the quality of children's arts education provision.

High-quality visual art education. Dewey (1934) emphasises the significance of supporting children to appreciate their artistic values when he said, “works of art are the most intimate and energetic means of aiding individuals to share in the art of living” (p.336). Gaining an understanding of the value that art holds is of great importance to education systems and society as a whole (Barnes, 2002).

A wealth of learning opportunities may be derived from visual art (Eckhoff, 2007). Burton (2012) posits that visual art should be recognised as a language through which learning and construction of meaning can be channelled. Sandell (2006) recognises art as a “qualitative language” (p.33) that permits people to “meaningfully create and respond to images” (Sandell, 2012, para.1). Parallels are drawn in her recognition of high-quality visual art education, which she describes as a “balanced” and connected process of “creative expression and critical response”, which assists children in negotiating a complex visual world (Sandell, 2012, para.2).

The Primary School Visual Art Curriculum (PSVAC) centres around six media-based strands, with corresponding and interrelated strand units: “making art and looking and responding to art” (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA] 1999b, p.14). The LAR strand unit has been designed to enable children to appreciate the visual form of their artistic manifestations as well as the work of other artists (Irish National Teachers’ Organisation [INTO], 2010). The PSVAC suggests children should be granted opportunities to look and respond to a wealth of art styles from various eras and cultures through the LAR strand unit (DES,1999a). Furthermore, original artworks and visits to art galleries and studios should be regularly afforded (NCCA, 1999a) to stimulate children’s interest in the arts (NCCA, 1999b). The PSVAC aims to offer children “creative and aesthetic experiences” through fostering “sensitivity towards the enjoyment and appreciation of visual arts” while providing occasions for the child to draw

connections between work of other artists with their own work (NCCA, 1999a, p.9). Emphasis is placed on offering children “purposeful visual arts activities” that offer equal opportunities to make art and to look and respond to art, and equal opportunities to experience both two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork (NCCA, 1999b, p.2).

Disregard for arts education. Critical treatment of the arts within education has been long since discussed in Irish educational settings; the Richards Report of 1976 and the Benson Report of 1979 outlined the serious disregard for the arts in Irish education (Long, 2015). Despite the arts’ mandatory status -as a response to the aforementioned reports- primary school art education has long since been disregarded (Council of Europe, 2010). Despite PSVAC’s intentions, Bamford (2006 b) reflects on the gap that exists between the “lip service” assigned to arts education and the actual provisions afforded to children (p.11), aligning with Hislop (2018) who emphasises that the “lived reality” differs greatly from aspirational curricular statements (p.17). Visual art education is often considered based on its perceived academic worth and subsequently disregarded due to its perceived disconnect with academic progress (Reid, 2020) with LAR being considered as a “non-priority curriculum component” (Flannery, 2012, p.82). Bamford (2006a) asserts that in about a quarter of cases low-quality arts education harmfully influences children’s creative and imaginative dispositions and their future arts engagement. My research aims to attest that opportunities for high-quality art education, including equal opportunities to look and respond to art-particularly contemporary art -are not being afforded to children in Irish primary schools, thus children are being denied the opportunities that are aspired to in the PSVAC.

Arts-in-education to support art education. As a means of supporting the PSVAC in obtaining its objectives, the Arts Council acts as a primary agent of practice and policy in the arts-in-education (Long, 2015). Arts-in-education refers to the involvement and guidance of professional artists working alongside or within a school to help utilise the school's artistic potential (DAHG & DES, 2013). Figure 1 outlines the aims of key arts-in-education supports for arts education development.

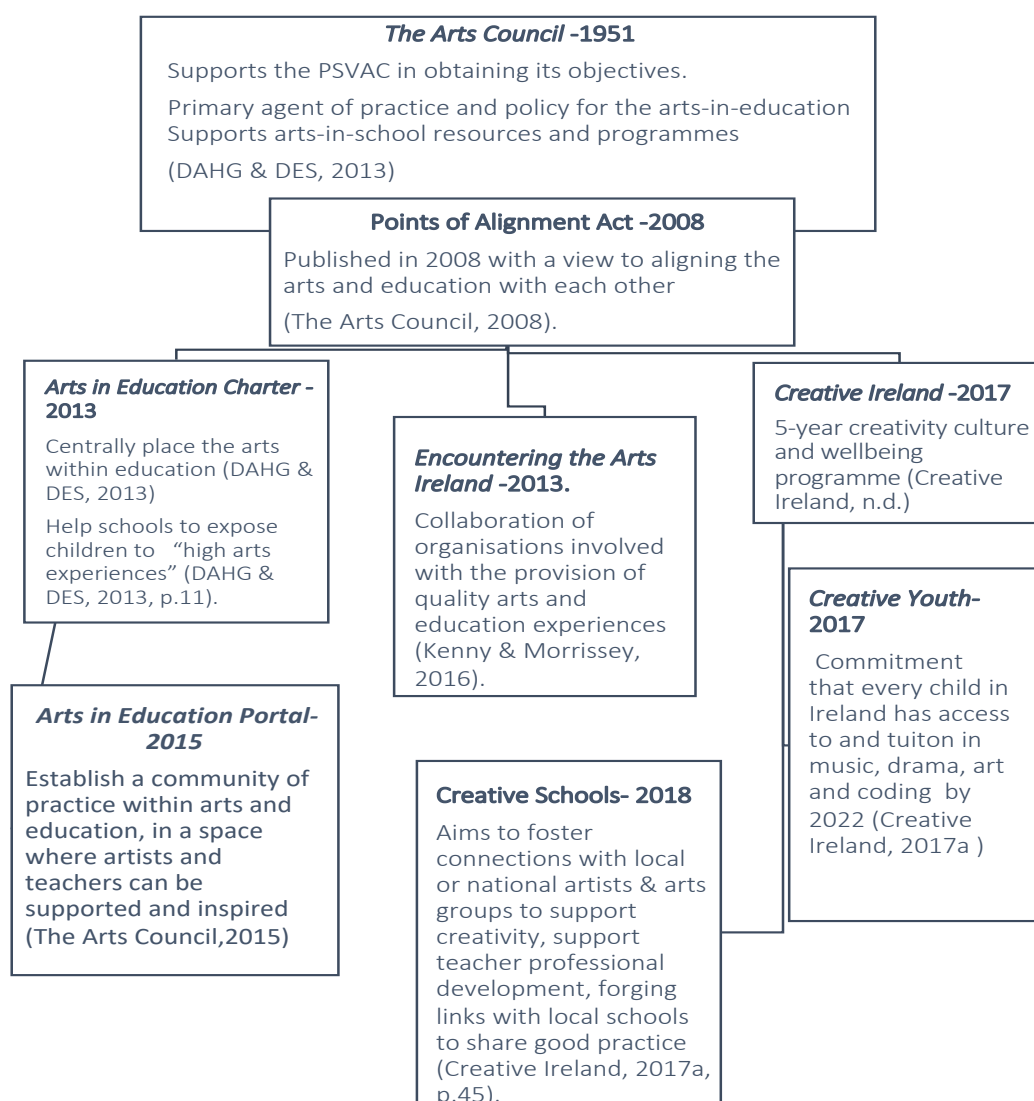


Figure 1. Aims of arts-in-education to support arts education.

It is apparent from Figure 1 that plentiful arts-in-education initiatives have been implemented to support and promote art engagement and education in children's lives. They shall now be considered from the context of St. Mary's, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Arts-in-education Initiatives in St. Mary's School, 2012-2019

Initiative	Date	Description of initiative
Mobile Art School (The Artist Visits)	May- June 2012	Artist-led workshops with nine artists including sound, performance art, sculpture, drawing, photography and painting workshops. (Mobile Art School, 2015)
Mobile Art School (The Artist Stays)	April 2013- May 2014	Artist residency. Shared studio space created between artist and children. Work was produced through the studio and within a temporary outdoor sculpture garden. (Mobile Art School, 2015)
Mobile Monuments	2016	1916 Commemoration performance art.
Per Cent for Art Scheme	2019	Site-specific artwork, entitled, SOW.

Per Cent for Art. This scheme was established by the Irish government in 1978, the primary aim of which is to allocate funds for public artwork linked to capital development (DES, 2006). The scheme provides the public with opportunities to experience a breadth of art including contemporary art, in their everyday lives while providing artists with opportunities to create work for public engagement (Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism [DAST], 2004). Examples of artwork funded by the scheme include *Perpetual Motion* by Remco de Fouw and Rachel Joynt on the M7 motorway, and *Magnus Modus* by Joseph Walsh at the National Gallery

of Ireland (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht [DCHG], 2019, para.2). The scheme provided St. Mary's funding to acquire a site-specific, contemporary artwork. "The best public art is informed by a knowledge of the needs and expectations of all those involved, from the body initiating the project to the community that project is designed to address" (Mac Giolla Léith, 2004, p.9). Accordingly, the principal, teachers, parent and child representatives, and art curator, collaboratively created the project brief (see Appendix A). The chosen artwork, SOW, is a sculptural and sound installation consisting of an external sensor tower and internal sound-and-light-producing sculptures, which was created by a contemporary Irish artist (see Figure 2).

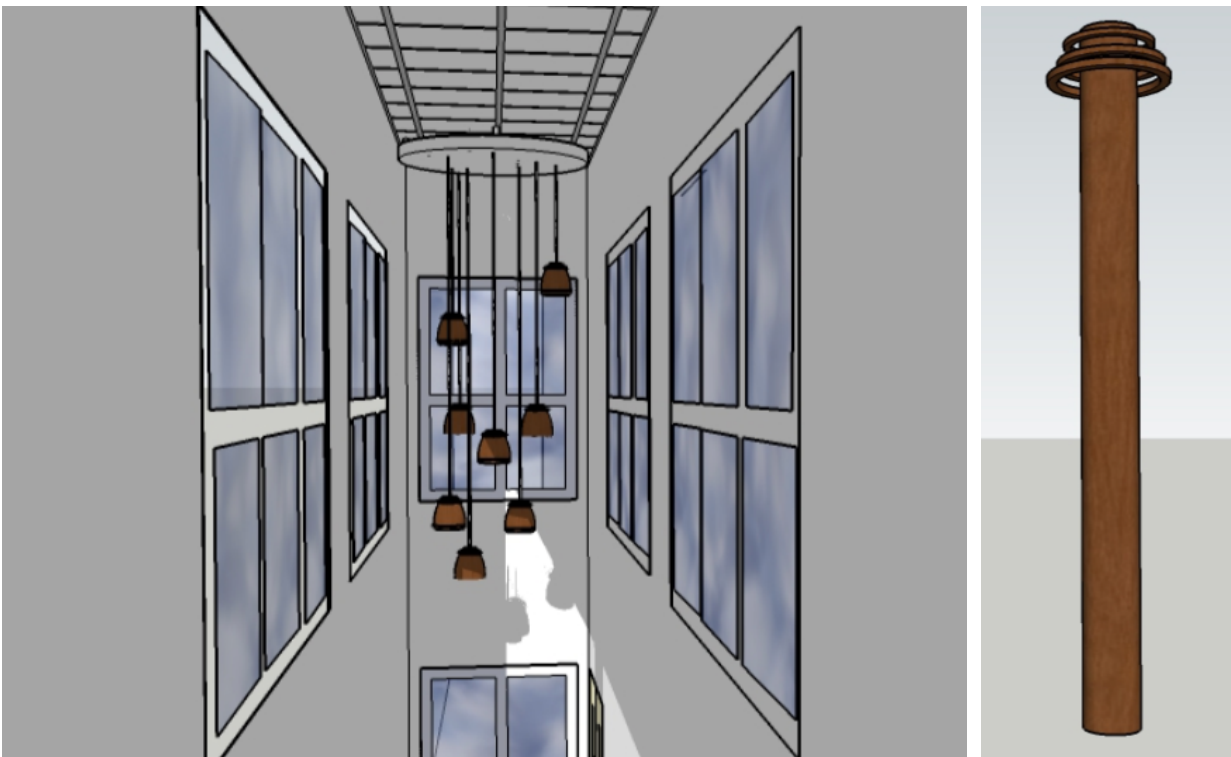


Figure 2. Concept drawings of SOW (Commissioned Artist, 2017).

Since SOW's installation, there was little engagement with it, particularly as a LAR resource. Consequently, children could not avail of the learning opportunities that it afforded.

Because “public art cannot exist without an engaged and responsive public” (Mac Giolla Léith, 2004, p.10), my research aims to bridge this gap by creating a RLARF which stimulates engagement with SOW while activating its inherent learning potential.

Bamford (2006a) suggests arts-in-education initiatives can lack appropriate funding and are ineffectively implemented for long-term use. She decries the lack of cohesion between policymakers and those at the forefront of arts education delivery, which she posits, leads to incompatible aims and derisory execution (Bamford, 2006b). While arts play a major part in the lives of Irish children, it is apparent that the intentions and aspirations of the PSVAC and arts-in-education initiatives are not being realised, perhaps contributing to the view that the arts have been neglected over many years (Council of Europe, 2010; Long, 2015).

Curricular reform. Understanding of children’s learning and development has changed considerably since the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum in 1999, with more emphasis being placed on “cross-disciplinary competences, skills, dispositions, attitudes, and values” (Walsh, 2018, p.17). The Primary School Curriculum is being redeveloped to formulate a high-standard curriculum that centres around “seven inextricably linked key competencies” (NCCA, 2020, p.13), which connect with Aistear and the Framework for Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2020), echoing Walsh’s (2018) recommendation that alignment should exist between primary, early childhood and junior cycle education.



Figure 3. Key competencies of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2020, p.7).

The competencies are illustrated in Figure 3. The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework recognises visual art, alongside the other arts subjects, as sharing “common creative process” and “transferable skills” while retaining “its own knowledge, concepts, skills, and intrinsic value” (NCCA, 2020, p.13). The competencies and transferrable skills associated with visual art inform the design and implementation of the RLARF. Opportunities for their development are presented through the research intervention.

The Significance of Looking And Responding to Art

Perkins (1994) describes art as having a hidden quality that “awaits finding” (p.23). Looking at art provides viewers with a supportive context in which to develop “thinking dispositions” while evoking “reflective intelligence” due to the consideration required to unearth an artwork’s message (Perkins, 1994, pp.4-14). Taking sufficient time to look at art enhances the

viewer's experience and appreciation of art (Housen, 2001; Idema, 2014) but it is considered that contemporary culture has limited the opportunity for unhurried contemplation (Yenawine, 2013). Bamford (2006a) emphasises the disparity between the abundance of visual imagery in contemporary culture and the ability to critically engage with this visual world (Panteleo, 2017; Sandell, 2012), thus advocating for the development of visual literacy and critical skills, which can be enhanced by effective LAR practice (NCCA, 2016). Perkins (1994) posits that a "thoughtful approach to looking at art" significantly enhances the "experience of and understanding of art" (p.3) and requires the viewer to use a range of cognitive practices. Eisner (2002) asserts that looking at art can develop cognitive functions that provide opportunities to: notice our world in depth; activate our imagination "by liberating us from the literal" (p.10); accept "ambiguity" and promote subjectivity; and "discover our emotional selves" (p.11). Jump (2019) considers that by "viewing the purpose of art education through this lens" it's evident that "the opportunities for development transcend the practical activities and artwork subsequently created" (p.19).

Looking and Responding: Opportunities for child-centred, social-constructivist learning. Understanding how children observe and react to artworks is fundamental to create an educational experience that incorporates the artwork enquiry (Epstein & Trimis, 2002). Kim (2008) recommends children should engage in activities in which they are active contributors to their learning. The PSVAC outlines a robust vision of education in which children are recognised as active participants in their learning (McCoy, Smyth & Banks, 2012). Social-constructivist learning has developed from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, whereby knowledge is constructed by the learners through social interactions with others. LAR is recognised as an opportune constructivist activity in which knowledge is generated by the viewer as they interact with the artwork (Kai- Kee, 2011; Weier, 2004). Through dialogic interactions

with each other about artwork, children can co-create knowledge and understanding (Wiggins, 2015).

Communicating with artworks. Catterall (2005) compares art learning with a “conversation” (p.2) whereby children require opportunities to “reflect, discuss and reflect again” to achieve meaningful art learning experiences (p.3). Children’s experiences with artwork are enhanced by their innate spontaneity and lack of inhibitions (Weier, 2004; Idema, 2014) and are not restrained by a perceived lack of knowledge or understanding that adults may exude (Idema, 2014). Learning about art can be accommodated by the use of artworks provide opportunities for social interactions (Paris, 2002), suggesting that the choice of artwork to facilitate LAR has a significant impact on children’s “understanding and appreciation” of art (Eckhoff, 2007, p.464).

Charman and Ross (2006) regard artworks as “phenomena which are conceptualised in dialogue as well as in visual language”; to comprehend the relationships between artworks and their contexts “dialogue” is required (p.49). Art galleries are recognised by Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) as spaces of social interactions that accommodate experiential learning, wherein life is generated through the use of talk; thus, talking about artwork acts as a channel through which understanding is constructed and communicated. Galleries present themselves as spaces within which complex communication networks are created amongst “objects and people” (Henning, 2005, p11; Valtysson, 2012), whereby the viewer is required to participate in this valuable communication (Walhimer, 2009). The dialogue that arises is a result of a socially interactive exhibition forming the building blocks of the learning process (Black, 2005).

SOW is a three-dimensional, sculptural and sound installation that is duly recognisable as a ‘socially interactive’ artwork; however, the building blocks of the learning process have not yet

been cast due to the lack of reciprocal dialogue from the teachers and children of St. Mary's. My research aims to act as the catalyst in activating this necessary dialogue.

Looking and Responding to contemporary art. A growing interest in contemporary art is evident, through initiatives such as PCfA (DAST, 2004) and other public art initiatives (Irish Museum of Modern Art [IMMA], 2010b). Inclusion of Contemporary Art Practice (CAP) within the curriculum is recognised as a viable learning pathway (Downing, 2005; Hardy, 2006) and advances students' "motivation and enthusiasm", "creativity and thinking skills" while expanding students' "social and cultural knowledge" (Hardy, 2006, p.13). This aligns with Adam's (2010) assertion that engagement with CAP offers "an expanded horizon of cultural experience" leading to a wider variety of "creative production" (p.685).

Despite the assertion that ideas and theoretical frameworks informing CAP can be complex and difficult to access (Charman & Ross, 2006; IMMA, 2009), Gude (2013) recognises the opportunity for teachers to formulate practices that equip children to "understand and participate in contemporary cultural conversations" (p.8). Because CAP is often ideas-driven, the development of essential, interpretative critical thinking skills is required to engage with these ideas (Charman & Ross, 2006, p.29). Opportunities for children to explore artwork that doesn't make "immediate sense" provides them with opportunities to construct meaning by building from their subjective realities (Eisner, 2002; Jump, 2019, p.20), and can be used to rouse the children's innate curiosity while imparting "an understanding of art as a whole" (Ching, 2015, p.95).

Children's classroom art experiences. The Growing Up In Ireland [GUI] study outlines primary school children's classroom experiences, framed by accounts given by their teachers (McCoy et al., 2012). Information from GUI indicates that children are more likely to engage in out-of-school cultural activities when they have exposure to arts and culture during the school day

(Smyth, 2016). Fielding (2001) posits that unless a child is exposed to large amounts of artwork, its culture cannot be absorbed. Positively, GUI asserts that as a result of arts engagement, children's emotional and cognitive development is fostered (Smyth, 2016). The quantity of visual art exposure during the school day is therefore influential in children's subsequent engagement with cultural activities, and emotional and cognitive development. Therefore, it appears incumbent upon teachers to consider not only the quality but the quantity of visual art to which the children are exposed.

The DES (2005) outlines that good LAR practice includes “the development of an appropriate visual vocabulary, emphasis on attentive and critical looking skills, and opportunities to appreciate and enjoy art” (p.40). However, Ní Bhroin (2012) identifies LAR practice as a considerable issue within Irish classrooms, contributing to the inadequate delivery of high-quality art education. The *Primary Curriculum Review Phase 1* of 2005 reports that LAR requires support; concerning planning, an insufficient reference to LAR was evident in more than half of classrooms (INTO, 2010; Ní Bhroin, 2012). In approximately one-third of classes, making art was overemphasised with “little or no emphasis” on “looking and responding to the work of artists” (INTO, 2010, p.44); findings which are common in art educational practice (Eckhoff, 2007; Jump, 2019; Savva & Trimis, 2005).

Lack of exposure to three-dimensional artwork. The *Teacher Guidelines* emphasise giving children equal opportunities to experience two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork (NCCA, 1999b, p.2). Literature suggests there is no alternative to witnessing artwork in its original form (Eckhoff, 2007; IMMA, 2010) in its intended size and scale (Barnes, 2002). In their study, Savva and Trimis (2005) illustrated children's preferences for three-dimensional artwork; 81% preferred exploring three-dimensional artwork over paintings. However, children have a

significant lack of engagement with three-dimensional artwork during visual art lessons (Eckhoff, 2007; INTO, 2010; NCCA, 2005; Ní Bhroin, 2012); thus limiting opportunities for developing novel thinking, visual-spatial development (Barnes, 2002; Harris, 2000) and inclusion of three-dimensional concepts when creating art (Savva & Trimis, 2005; Tickle, 1996). When LAR is facilitated, children are typically limited to viewing two-dimensional art reproductions rather than real-life examples (Epstein & Trimis, 2002; Flannery, 2014; Savva & Trimis, 2005), the use of which is particularly common in schools dealing with “budgetary, geographical or time constraints” (Flannery, 2014, p. 3). Children’s art viewing is often limited to viewing their own artwork (INTO, 2010) or reproductions within books (Al- Radaideh, 2012).

Reliance on ‘school art’. A stalwart of visual art educational research, Efland (1976) defines ‘school art’ as an art form unique to educational settings, which displays key features; the student has limited conceptual control over the production of the artwork; the artwork lacks meaningful individual variation; it’s aesthetically pleasing and encourages children to have fun, and the artwork has no direct influence from the outside art world. Following Efland’s assertions, the ineffective nature of school art continues to prevail (Freedman, 2011) and is acknowledged in contemporary art educational research (Gude, 2013).

Lack of exposure to contemporary art. Ching (2015) maintains contemporary art education is a fundamental aspect of 21st-century education. Contemporary art can be “driven by theory and ideas and is also characterised by a blurring of the distinction between art and other categories of cultural experience” (IMMA, 2009, p.5). A growing interest in contemporary art is evident, through initiatives such as PCfA (DAST, 2004). The theoretical frameworks that inform contemporary art are considered complex and difficult to access (Charman & Ross, 2006; Gude, 2013; IMMA, 2009). Hardy (2006) reflects on teachers’ tendencies “to play safe with exemplars

from a traditionally accepted canon of artists and artworks” (p.13), aligning with the assertion there’s a concerning lack of engagement between children and contemporary art in education (Adams, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2015). Granville (2017) describes the “dysfunctional relationship” and lack of “mutual respect” between visual art education in Ireland and contemporary art practice; he proposes that the disregard for “school art” by the art world is reflected in the public’s perceived cynicism about contemporary art practice (p.32). Resultantly perhaps, engagement with contemporary art is given little consideration as a central element of children’s visual art education (Charman & Ross, 2006).

Making contemporary art “accessible and engageable” may meet obstacles, due to how it’s communicated through “specialist vocabulary and historical reference” (Packer & Redmond, 2019 p.7; Paul & Elder, 2005). It may be the case that a perceived lack of knowledge surrounding theoretical concepts and specialist vocabulary related to CAP may be inhibiting teachers’ engagement with CAP in their classrooms, consequently limiting children’s opportunities for engagement with contemporary artwork. Wojtowicz-Jankowska (2016) suggests that contemporary art can be made more accessible through the use of unusual or unexpected locations for exhibitions, and thus has the potential to arouse new reactions from the viewers. SOW is located in the stairwell of St. Mary’s, which may be regarded as an unusual yet accessible location for contemporary artwork. My study aims to assist in arousing new reactions from the viewers of SOW.

Barriers to Accessing High-Quality Art Viewing Experiences

Factors that have influenced the positioning of visual art education -and more specifically LAR -to the peripheries of educational practice will firstly be explored in terms of the curriculum structure which imposes a focus on literacy and numeracy. Secondly, teachers' self-efficacy concerning LAR will be discussed.

Curriculum structure to support a knowledge economy. Internationally, art education has been overshadowed by educational benchmarks' narrow focus on attainment levels within the areas of literacy and numeracy (Perkins, 1994; Barnes, 2002; Oreck, 2004; Snook & Brown, 2018). In Ireland, it is apparent that visual art education has been disregarded due to a curricular structure that emphasises literacy and numeracy instruction (INTO, 2009) with a clear focus on standardised testing (Long, 2015). Granville (2011) asserts that this structure may be due to the "globalisation" of educational policy in which knowledge is recognised as a commodity, or a currency of "performativity", thus, education policy "can be subsumed into wider policy development for socio-economic and political purposes" (p.353). The *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* document is particularly illustrative of a curricular structure that advocates a "knowledge economy", placing literacy and numeracy centrally, while prioritising them as "the most important life skills that our schools teach" over the "desirable" yet "less important activities" (DES, 2011, pp.5-15). In Irish primary schools, visual art lessons are possibly decreasing in duration due to emphasis on the improvement of children's literacy and numeracy skills (INTO, 2009; Long, 2015). This effect has come into focus by the DES's recommendation for primary schools to spend more curricular time on literacy and numeracy development (O'Donnell, 2018) while proposing to reallocate time spent on remaining curricular subjects to facilitate this (Ní, Bhroin, 2012;

O'Donnell, 2018), thus highlighting the transposition of visual art education to the peripheries of the educational agenda.

Visual art integration. In meeting literacy and numeracy demands, Ní Bhroin (2012) refers to visual art integration, which is regarded from a policy perspective as a way of “rationalizing resources” (p.60). The PSVAC *Teacher Guidelines* outline the benefits of “an integrated approach” in the teaching and learning of visual art (NCCA, 1999b, p.35). However, planning should achieve a “balance of integrated and single-subject teaching” to guarantee the emphasis remains on the particular art objectives; the omission of which will result in an unsuccessful art lesson (NCCA, 1999b, p.35). Further, an integrated approach to visual art education is resulting in a narrowing of the range of artwork being addressed by teachers, whereby they are less likely to include a specific artwork in LAR practice unless it has perceived integrative potential (Flannery, 2012). It is therefore worth considering if teachers in St. Mary’s disregard contemporary art due to its perceived lack of integrative potential.

A DES (2005) report outlining that children were afforded opportunities “to experience visual arts through theme-based activities at least a few times a week” (p.97), was regarded by the inspectorate as evidentiary of teachers’ advancements with integration (Ní, Bhroin, 2012). However, teachers’ use and comprehension of curriculum integration emphasises content knowledge transfer across subjects, as opposed to skills transfer (NCCA, 2005). Further, Ní Bhroin (2012) cautions that visual art integration may inhibit the preservation of “the integrity of visual arts”, as well as the delivery of high-quality visual art education (p.60).

Time constraints. Irish primary teachers perceive the curriculum as being overloaded (Flannery; 2012; INTO, 2010; McCoy et al, 2012) resulting in perceived time constraints, which are associated with creating an “end product” rather than utilising time to look and respond to

artworks (Jump, 2019, p.19). The Cambridge Primary Review asserts that as teachers attempt to reach high standards in the fundamentals there is insufficient time for “thinking, reflecting, problem-solving or exploration”, while the time assigned to subjects including art is regularly reduced (NCCA, 2010, p.7). Such findings are supported by McCoy et al. (2012) in their assertion that teachers may alter their timetable to meet the students’ apparent literacy requirements and social development needs.

Teacher self-efficacy. Bamford (2012) stresses that teacher excellence lies “at the heart of all successful arts and culture education programmes” (p.84), suggesting that teachers hold significant influence over their students’ creative development (Gude, 2013). Contemporary research relating to Irish art educational specifies the existence of several challenges concerning teacher self-efficacy and children’s involvement with art (DES 2005; NCCA, 2005). Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual’s confidence in completing a task or achieving a goal based on perceived ability. Primary teachers’ low self-efficacy in teaching creative arts is regarded as one of the most significant obstacles for effective arts education (Alter et al., 2009; Wang, Tan, Li, Tan & Lim, 2017) and has contributed to the evasion of LAR from Irish primary classrooms (Flannery, 2012).

Literature suggests that teacher self-efficacy in arts teaching is influenced by their experiences from primary school to third-level (Alter, Hays & O’Hara, 2009; Ashton, 1999). Generalist teachers are perceived to lack the required knowledge, experience, and training to effectively teach arts subjects (Alter et al., 2009; Ní Bhroin, 2012). According to Bamford (2006b), consistent reports of a lack of confidence, competence, and support in teaching results in a dismal outlook for visual art education. Pre-service primary teachers find that their visual art experiences are influential to their self-assurance in the subsequent teaching of it (Welch, 1995; Pavlou, 2015),

a concerning assertion when Russell-Bowie (2010) reports that only 16% of pre-service primary school teachers stated they had a good foundation in visual arts education. The self-confidence levels of teachers in St. Mary's in their approach to art education, therefore warrants further exploration.

Self-efficacy and choice of artwork. Emery (2006) asserts that teachers choose artists based on individual interests, the availability of resources related to the artist, or the potential of the artist's work to assist in children's artmaking skills, resulting in, albeit unintentional, a significant form of art censorship. Teachers show "preference" and "comfort" in choosing art that is "painterly in appearance" and contains a clear "visual narrative" (Flannery, 2012, p.79), thus limiting the repertoire of artworks from which to choose. Concerning contemporary art, teachers may avoid artwork that's considered "ambiguous" (Flannery, 2012, p.81), opting instead to use what they perceive as "more age-appropriate" material based on the misconception that contemporary art is beyond children's intellectual capacities (Ching, 2015, pp.95-96).

Regular art gallery visits are recommended by the PSVAC (NCCA, 1999b) and are considered an opportunity for knowledge and comprehension development (Barnes, 2002; Savva & Trimis, 2005; Tickle, 1996). Art gallery learning should not be recognised as a supplementary educational resource but as a "parallel educational system", which offers life-long learning opportunities (Al-Radaideh, 2012, p.510). Despite the educational benefits attributed to art gallery visits (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011) teachers may regard the gallery as a destination for the annual school tour (Knutson, Crowley, Russell & Steiner, 2011). The Department of Culture, Media, and the Arts (2010) report that intimidation caused by preconceptions of "intellectuals" "knowledgeable about art" (p.32) deter people from attending galleries. If teachers hold similar preconceptions about art galleries, my research is further justified; adult-held preconceptions may

be reformed by exposing teachers to contemporary art in an accessible manner, which will extend teachers' repertoire leading to greater learning opportunities for children.

Creating a Reformed Looking and Responding Framework [RLARF]

The RLARF has been designed to foster critical thinking skills through LAR practice. Micheletti (2010) refers to Freire's "banking" concept of education whereby information is deposited by teachers to children in an "oppressive" manner (para.1). Freire (2005) posits that "dialogue is indispensable to the act of cognition" (p.12), and encourages critical reflection and action in educational practice whereby children's and teachers roles become less structured, thus facilitating engagement in democratic "dialogic enrichment" from which knowledge can be mutually acquired (Micheletti, 2010, para. 6).

Fostering critical thinking. Critical thinking involves purposeful engagement with ideas to enable children to think critically about their world, make educated choices about what to believe and what to reject, and can offer an alternative to the "groupthink" phenomenon (Janis as cited in Roche, 2015, p.14), whereby people feel compelled to subscribe to group-agreement while discounting their own opinions. The *Draft Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2020) outlines seven key competencies that foster "deep learning", of which critical thinking is a significant feature (p.7), and inform the design of the RLARF, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 *Opportunities for Key Competency Development within the RLARF*

(Adapted from the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework NCCA, 2020, pp.7-10)

Name of competency	Aim of competency	Opportunity for competency development within the RLARF
Being a Digital Learner	Develop curious, competent and critical users of digital technology	SOW involves technology in its construction. Option to use technology to respond to the artwork(voice/video recording).
Being Mathematical	Develop and employ mathematical thinking	Spatial awareness development from looking at and engaging with the sculptural artwork
Communicating & Using Language	Develop children's understanding and enjoyment of interacting with others	CTAT approach fosters a collaborative, respectful and dialogic learning environment.
Fostering Wellbeing	Appreciation and demonstration of well being	Child-centred approach in which the voice of the child is respected.
Learning to be a Learner	Children develop as learners, individually and collaboratively	Development of critical thinking skills while fostering a growth mindset in a collaborative practice while showing respect.
Being an Active Citizen	Fostering knowledge, skills and dispositions to take positive actions for themselves and others	Critical thinking development. Respectful, collaborative practice
Being Creative	Participation in creative and cultural activities. Develop critical thinking and risk-taking	Children are encouraged to respond creatively to the artwork while taking risks.

To establish critical thinking skills development through the RLARF, the following will be considered: theoretical approaches; methodological approaches; and teacher development.

Child-centred, constructivist learning experiences. “The quality of our lives depends on the quality of our thinking and on our ability to communicate and discuss what we think with others” (Fisher, 2006, para.1). Our understanding of children has changed since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 (Corbett, n.d.). Recognition of children as capable

decision-makers (Nah & Lee, 2016) has replaced the view of them as adult-dependent individuals (James & Prout, 1997). Children's involvement in decision-making helps develop "democratic citizens", which improves their quality of life and the quality of life of community members (Nah & Lee, 2016, p.336).

Ireland is a forerunner in policy development supporting children's involvement in decision-making processes (Creative Ireland, 2017a). Hub na nÓg was established in 2017 to support organisations in providing children with a decision-making voice (Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DCYA], 2018). One of its key actions includes collaboration with the Arts Council to provide training to Creative Associates on centring the voice of the child throughout the Creative Schools initiative (DCYA, 2018). The provision of a safe space for children requires a child-centred forum in which opinions can be unreservedly communicated (Kennan et al, 2018). My research aims to provide a safe space for children's voices to be heard so I can better understand their experiences with and perceptions of art.

The viewing and learning space. Theorists, including Reggio Emilia, assert that children learn and develop creativity from their interactions with their environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Kushins, 2015). SOW is installed from the stairwell ceiling of the school, in keeping with the "fleeting and circumstantial" nature of public art; which contrasts to viewing gallery artwork where a choice has been made to "enter" the space (IMMA, 2010b, p.4). SOW has not been fully considered in terms of the space it occupies and thus far, viewers have not chosen to fully 'enter' the space. Artwork like SOW requires ample viewing time so sitting may be more suitable than standing as it allows groups to contemplate and talk about what they are viewing (Cranz & Rushton, 2020) in a social-constructivist manner (Vygotsky, 1978). International contemporary art

galleries are designed to accommodate contemplative experiences when viewing artwork; including the use of moveable seating and floor cushions (Cranz & Rushton, 2020).

The *Warwick Commission Report* asserts that educational systems should be creative learning landscapes, infused with “possibility spaces” (Burnard, Dragovic, Jasilek, Biddulph, Rolls & Fenyesi, 2018, p.246). Burnard et al. (2018) exemplify a primary school in which an installation was set up in a non-gallery space, which resulted in making art accessible to teachers and children while inspiring the creation of “physical and metaphorical ‘possibility spaces’ ” (pp.245-255). The potential exists to make SOW more accessible to students and teachers of St. Mary’s by creating a possibility space that facilitates contemplative viewing and begin the process of filling the “dialogic space of possibility” (Maine, 2015, p.20)

Developing a relational practice and encouraging a growth mindset. Roycroft (2018) asserts that successful arts education relies upon establishing solid relationships between teachers and children. A relational pedagogy challenges the “transmission of knowledge” in educational practice while promoting “communication and interactions” and reinforcing “social, cognitive” and “creative development” (French, 2013, p.20). The concept of a knowledge economy that influences curriculum structure and implementation (Granville, 2011), encourages a culture of “competitive thinking” whereby failure is discouraged and risk-taking is averted, thus stiling creative practice (Smith & Henricksen, 2016, p.6); this is indicative of a “fixed mindset” (Dweck, 2019, p.26). Through developing a “growth mindset” learners realise their mindset is malleable and view failure as an opportunity for learning (Dweck, 2019, p.26; Smith & Henricksen, 2016). Fostering a growth mindset is relevant to all participants when navigating a new and unfamiliar LAR approach whereby risk taking and failure are embraced as learning experiences (Muncaster & Clarke, 2016). Adopting a growth mindset will encourage risk-taking when critically engaging

with the ambiguous nature of SOW My research is informed by a relational pedagogical practice that fosters a growth mindset; how the LAR framework is designed and implemented considers the needs and relational interactions of teachers and children while encouraging risk-taking and learning from failure.

Development of the Teacher Pack. The Reformed LAR Framework consists primarily of a Teacher Pack (see Appendix B), which centres around facilitating Critical Thinking and Art Talk (CTAT). Three methodological frameworks inform the RLARF, Teacher Pack and CTAT: Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)(Housen & Yenawine; 2018); Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CTBT) (Roche, 2015); and Form, Theme and Context (FTC) (Sandell, 2006).

Critical Thinking and Book Talk. CTBT is an educational initiative implemented in St. Mary's since September 2019, which aims to create a "dialogic" environment, whereby "views are exchanged equitably" by children who are regarded as competent "meaning makers" (Roche, 2015, pp.9-24). CTBT encourages teachers to contribute to discussions, in which disagreement is accepted, as a facilitator, thus creating reciprocal meaning-making experiences while creating a dialogic environment that fosters the growth of learning and the production of knowledge (Roche, 2015). During CTBT sessions, children are circularly seated, a democratic practice that encourages children to foster "courteous social behaviour" including attentive listening and respectful response (Roche, 2015, p.131). Through CTBT, children are exposed to multimodal picture books, in which various aesthetic elements of the book, e.g. colour, shape, and framing are recognised as modes that are "socially and culturally shaped resources that signify something" (Hasset & Curwood, 2009, p.272). In the reading of such texts, meaning is created by readers depending on their interpretations of and connections with the textual modes, thus allowing for children to use their "social and cultural resources for making meaning" (Hasset & Curwood, 2009, p.271). To

effectively use CTBT, books should be carefully chosen so they reflect the cultural realities of the children while avoiding potential bias (Roche, 2015).

Visual Thinking Strategies. Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is an educational practice that support novice art viewers in developing thoughtful observational skills, aesthetic and language literacy, and critical thinking skills (Coman, n.d, para. 2). VTS is an internationally acclaimed framework (Housen & Yenawine, 2018), which has recently become a prominent feature of Irish arts-in-education initiatives, such as Wonder Club and Project 20/20, and has subsequently been introduced into Irish primary school settings (Coman, n.d). VTS involves the learner constructing meaning for themselves, establishing connections, and developing distinct habits of mind (Housen, 1999). Hubbard (2010) asserts that opportunities for inquiry develop naturally from viewers' responses and resulting dialogue, which should not be restricted by teachers' limited series of questions, which parallels with VTS practice (Housen, 2001).

VTS advocates the posing of three questions that encourage "extended, careful, and intricate observations: What is going on here?, What do you see that makes you say that?, and What more can you find?" (Housen, 2012,pp.100-101). These questions assist teachers in facilitating discussions that empower children while fostering the development of their interpretations of artwork (Kai-Kee, 2011). VTS encourages the use of collective discussion, which creates opportunities for children to construct understanding by unearthing "layers of possibility" while considering the findings of others (Yenawine & Housen, 2018, p.5). VTS advises teachers not to be the source of the information surrounding the artwork (Kai-Kee, 2011; Yenawine, 2013), to avoid the passive reception of fixed information, thus facilitating active inquiry-based, constructivist learning (Weier, 2004).

ART =	Form	+	Theme	+	Context
	<i>How the work “is”.</i> Consideration given to: art elements such as line, shape, colour, textures; design principles: balance, unity, variety, rhythm, pattern, contrast; the two-and three-dimensional qualities, the size and scale of the artwork; the artist’s choice of materials used to create the work.		<i>What the work is about or the ‘big idea’.</i> Consideration given to: what the artist is expressing or what the main idea of the artwork is.		<i>When, where, by/ for whom, and why the work was created and valued.</i> Consideration given to: contextual information surrounding the artwork so that its intention is understood; the interpretation of the artwork is enhanced by identifying personal, social, and other contexts that influence the creation and understanding of the work.

Figure 4. Form, Theme, and Context (Adapted from Sandell, 2006, p.34)

Form, Theme and Context (FTC). When teaching about an artwork, children need assistance with engaging in “inquiry and discovery of the artwork’s depth in order to accurately discern its meaning and value” (Sandell, 2006, p.34). The FTC framework is based on the work of Sandell (2006), who regards art as a decodable language. When using FTC to investigate artwork learners can create levels of meaning (Sandell, 2011) and become equipped to understand an artwork based on its ‘form’ or its structural elements; its ‘theme’ or the predominant idea behind the artwork; and its ‘context’ or the “intention and purpose of the artwork” as outlined in Figure 4 (Sandell, 2006, p.34). The main framework features and how they apply to the RLARF are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 *Methodological Frameworks Informing the RLARF*

Name of framework	Main features of the framework	Features applied to RLARF Teacher Pack
CTBT (Roche, 2015)	Collaborative and democratic practice between teachers and children. Reciprocal meaning-making process constructed through social interaction. Critical skills development emphasis.	Teachers and children are co-learners in the LAR process. Circular seating arrangement to encourage democratic practice when responding to SOW.
VTS (Housen & Yenawine, 2018)	Use of three, key open-ended questions with teacher as facilitator. Observe and talk about artwork. Evidence given to support ideas. Consider the opinions of others. Children's responses are paraphrased by the teacher. (Housen & Yenawine, 2018)	Open-ended questions. Teachers and children are the co-creators of understanding. Information about SOW is not transmitted to children. Others' opinions are respected and help build on meaning construction.
FTC (Sandell, 2006)	Artwork is explored in terms of its Form, Theme and Context. (Sandell, 2006, p.34)	Questioning framework based on FTC. Perceptions and understandings are elicited from the questions. Vocabulary development based on FTC to assist with vocabulary associated with SOW

Limitations of the frameworks. VTS requires substantial funding to provide specialised training for teachers (VTS, n.d.). González-Sanz, Feliu-Torruella and Cardona-Gómez (2017) refer to the responsibility that VTS requires of teachers; if discussion on the artwork is restricted by a “superficial description”, a perceived “interpretive deficiency” may result because the teacher is not obliged to take the discussion beyond where the children have left it (p.167). Similarly with CTBT, discussions can regularly breakdown (Roche, 2015). Grodoski (2016) critiques the narratives generated from VTS as “closed” because they are “based solely on the viewer’s interpretation without scaffolding questions toward exploration of the context of the work” (p.21).

VTS does not seek contextual information about the artwork (González-Sanz et al., 2017), while a contextual reference is significant to the FTC and CTBT approaches. When elements from each framework are collectively assembled to form the Questioning Framework they serve to complement each other. The questions are asked by the teacher, who acts as a facilitator in a democratic process that encourages knowledge co-creation, echoing the CTBT approach (Roche, 2015). In Figure 5, an FTC ‘context’ question is asked, ‘I wonder if the artist considered the location of SOW as an important feature of the artwork?’, and followed by VTS questions, ‘what can you see that makes you say that?’ and ‘what more can you find?’ to extend the creation of understanding (Yenawine, 2013).

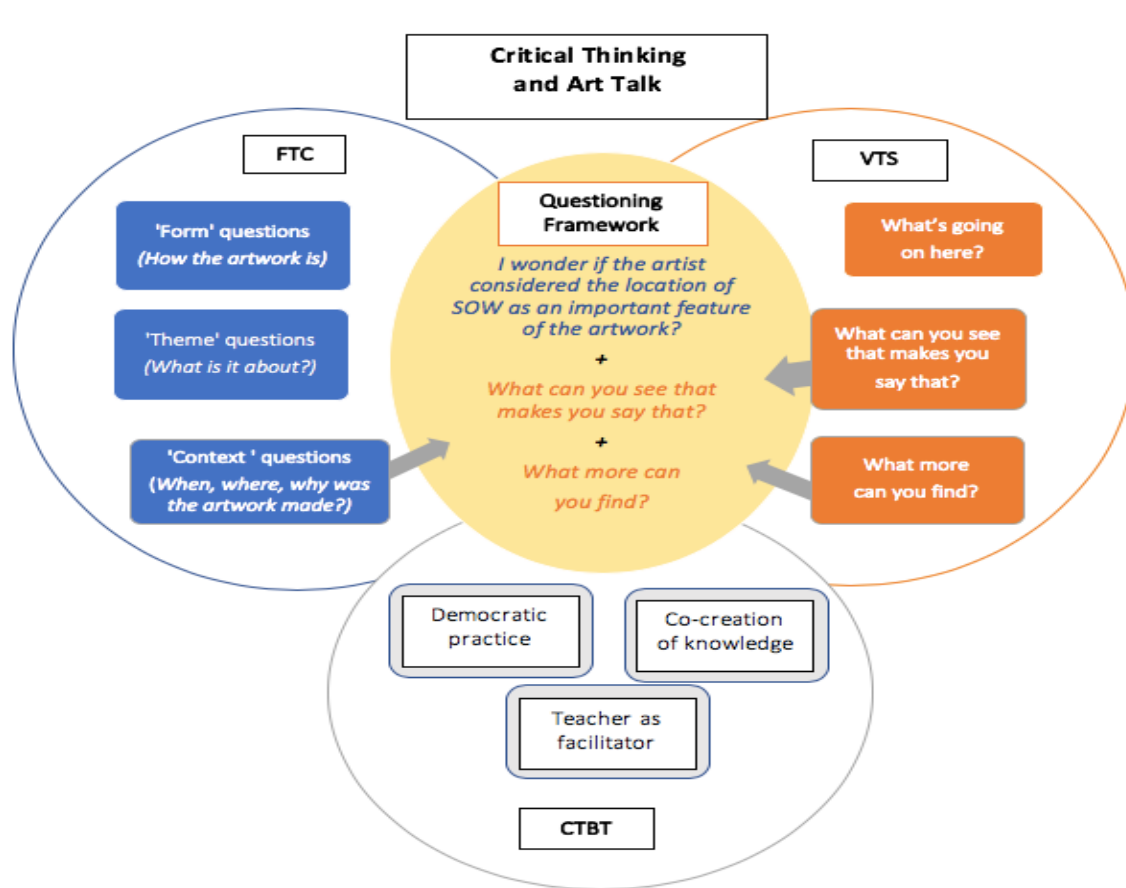


Figure 5. Critical Thinking and Art Talk facilitated by the questioning framework. (Adapted from Housen & Yenawine, 2018; Roche, 2015; Sandell, 2006)

Critical Thinking and Art Talk. French (2013) posits that effective questioning is a challenging but vital feature of educational practice. A questioning framework has been constructed to facilitate Critical Thinking and Art Talk and is a key feature of the Teacher Pack because “without the questions, there is no possibility of answers, and without the possibility of answers artworks are meaningless to pupils” (Charman & Ross, 2006, p.30). When viewing artwork, it is as significant to consider what questions to omit as it is to consider what questions to include (Perkins, 1994). A teacher’s use of open-ended questions or closed-question may either encourage or hinder conversation; open questions cater for a variety of answers and encourage the sharing of “theories and understandings, feelings and imaginings” while provoking thought (French, 2013, para.2). The RLARF, illustrated in Figure 6, is informed by related theoretical approaches including, social constructivism, child-centred learning, and growth mindset.

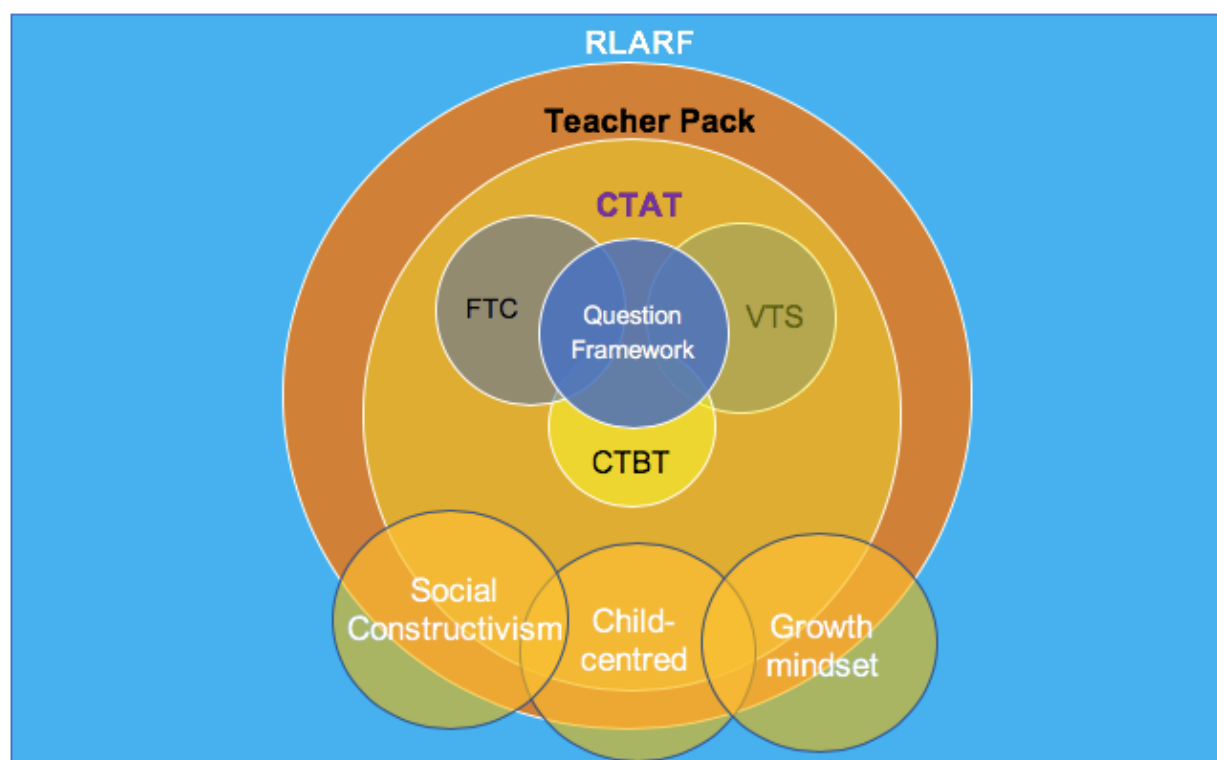


Figure 6. The RLARF includes a Teacher Pack; a central CTAT framework; and Question Framework

The Teacher Pack (See Appendix B) focuses on a central CTAT approach, which includes a Question Framework to initiate and facilitate dialogic inquiry of SOW (Yenawine, 2013). The Question Framework is informed by elements of VTS, FTC, and CTBT methodological approaches.

High-quality arts-in-education initiatives. To create a robust RLARF, consideration was given to current best-practice arts-in-education initiatives, which are supported and funded by a range of local, national and European stakeholders, including The Arts Council, University College Cork and Erasmus+. These initiatives used methodologies which inform the RLARF. The table of best practice is outlined in Appendix C. A summary of the key features of the best-practice initiatives as applied to my RLARF is outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Summary of Key Features Evident in Best Practice Arts-in-education Initiatives

Name of Initiative	Key features of initiatives as applied to my RLARF
▪ Ark 1x1 ▪ Art and Philosophy in the Classroom ▪ Art in Action ▪ Better Words ▪ Classroom Museum ▪ Early Years Arts Residencies and Training Programme ▪ Elemental ▪ Interesting and Weird at the Same Time ▪ Mobile Art School ▪ Wonder Club	▪ Children are exposed to and interact with contemporary artwork and contemporary art practices ▪ Focus on LAR ▪ Use of a child-centred approach ▪ Development of critical thinking skills ▪ Collaborative group organisation ▪ Use of open-ended questions to facilitate sociocultural learning (use of VTS) ▪ Development of vocabulary related to contemporary art practice ▪ Teacher professional development and support

Teacher Development: Strengthening teacher self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as an individual's confidence in completing a task or achieving a goal based on their perceived ability. He outlines four primary ways in which self-efficacy can be strengthened: mastery of learning experience; vicarious experiences; verbal persuasion; and physical and emotional states (Bandura, 1997). These modes informed the design of the Teacher Pack and the support offered during its implementation. The connection between teacher self-efficacy and children's learning outcomes is compelling (Stanton, Cawthon & Dawson, 2017). In terms of pedagogical reform, self-efficacy is considered in terms of how it may improve teachers' "implementation of a reform, as well as how a reform may impact teacher's self-efficacy" (Stanton et al., 2017, p.2).

The RLARF as a channel to professional development. A vast amount of teacher professional development does not successfully connect with teachers' daily classroom experiences, with little opportunity for teachers to enhance their practice or the practice of others (Harris & Jones, 2017). Harris and Jones (2017) reflect on "collaborative professional enquiry" (p.331) as an alternative measure to enhance both the practice of teachers and the learning outcomes of children (Campbell, Lieberman & Yashkina, 2016). Newberry, Sanchez & Clark (2018) assert that the success of the learning community may be dependent upon the relationships within such communities; those regarded as being emotionally supportive of members lead to the development of "productive professional relationships" (p.32). A community of learners has already been established in my school since the implementation of the CTBT and growth mindset approaches and therefore an opportunity exists to extend this via the implementation of the RLAFR and thus assist with the educational reform that my action research hopes to achieve.

Educational reform is dependent upon professional development that involves “systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 2002, p.381). Guskey (2002) asserts that for a professional development program to succeed, consideration needs to be given to the reasons why teachers undergo professional development, which is, to develop their knowledge skills base, and to obtain a range of practical and specific ideas that will lend themselves to the daily running of the classroom, while ultimately improving the children’s learning (Guskey, 2002). Guskey (2002) provides a model for teacher change that asserts “significant change in teachers’ attitudes and beliefs occurs primarily after they gain evidence of improvement in student learning” (p.383) (see Figure 7). My research aims to facilitate teacher change through the use of the RLARF while ensuring improvements in children’s learning are evident to teachers.

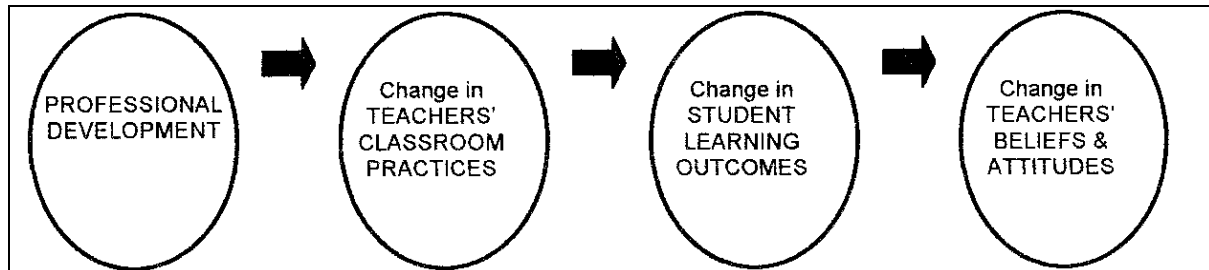


Figure 7. A model of teacher change (Guskey, 2002, p.383).

Conclusion

The combined efforts of arts education and arts-in-education initiatives aim to provide children with “high arts experiences” (DAHG, 2017), the provision of which is pertinent considering that arts involvement as a child improves the opportunities of being a practising consumer of arts in adulthood (Bamford, 2017b). It is apparent that visual art education has been disregarded due to a curricular structure that emphasises literacy and numeracy instruction (DES,

2011; INTO; 2009) and standardized testing (Long, 2015). Focusing on ‘what’ as opposed to ‘how’ we teach (Barnard, 2010) may be attributed to the “globalisation” of educational policy in which knowledge is recognised as a commodity or the currency of “performativity” (Granville, 2011, p.353).

Despite visual art’s compulsory position within the curriculum (NCCA, 1999a), it is not held centrally within the curriculum (Granville, 2011); which is a requirement of high-quality visual art education (Sandell, 2012; Burton, 2010). Visual art education and particularly LAR have been examined from a curricular standpoint, and from the viewpoint of teachers and children who engage with it in their educational settings. Facilitating opportunities for children to view art is regarded as being vitally significant in fostering an understanding of visual concepts that artists utilise (Perkins, 1994), while subsequently affording children opportunities to begin to employ these concepts in their own work (Eisner, 2002; NCCA, 1999a). More specifically, viewing and responding to original artwork provides children with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and dispositions (Eisner, 2002; Housen, 2001; Perkins, 1994;) in a social constructivist manner (Welsh, 2003). It is apparent that low teacher self-efficacy is a major factor contributing to the underutilisation of LAR (Flannery, 2012), particularly with contemporary artwork in Irish classrooms (Fitzpatrick, 2015).

The Research Question

Current curriculum reform is underway and highlights the need for a curriculum which considers the development of “central competencies” (NCCA, 2020, p.7). The utilisation of a PCfA contemporary artwork during LAR practice has illustrated potential in developing critical thinking skills and competencies in a dialogic and child-centred environment. This finding is reinforced by the assertion that teachers have the power from within their classrooms to assert

change (Elliot, 2015; Barnard, 2010), which is further endorsed by the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020).

This small-scale action research study aims to delve further into teachers' regard for contemporary artwork and uncover influences that may have resulted in their omission of SOW from their LAR practice. My study will present my school with an opportunity to increase teacher self-efficacy concerning LAR through the utilisation of a PCfA artwork while providing children with opportunities to engage in collaborative discussion and critical thinking about contemporary artwork. The literature review has generated the following sub-questions, which lead to my main research question:

- (i) What factors have contributed to the underuse of a contemporary artwork when attending to LAR in this school?
- (ii) To what extent has teachers' LAR practice influenced children's experiences and perceptions of art?
- (iii) What factors may contribute to reforming LAR practice?

The main research question therefore, entails: 'To what extent can LAR practice within my school be reformed through the use of a Reformed LAR Framework based on an in situ, contemporary, Per Cent for Art artwork?'.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My study aimed to “explore and gain a deeper understanding” of a central issue (Creswell, 2007, p.53), namely the extent to which LAR practice within my school could be reformed through the use of a Reformed LAR Framework [RLARF] based on a, contemporary, Per Cent for Art artwork. Further, my study aimed to gain an understanding of the children’s and teachers’ perspectives and experiences with LAR before, during and after the implementation of the Reformed LAR Framework [RLARF].

This chapter considers the theoretical framework underpinning my study. Subsequently, the qualitative research design will be discussed and justified. The use of action research will be defended as the most appropriate methodology to use and my researcher positionality will be addressed. The sample and participants will be discussed as well as an overview of the data tools employed. Validity and reliability issues will be addressed followed by a discussion on the research limitations. Data analysis will be introduced before outlining the ethical procedures employed throughout the research.

Theoretical Rationale

The way we view the world influences the way we research the world (Crotty, 1998). A paradigm “reflects our underpinning assumptions about the nature of knowledge [epistemology] and the best ways of understanding the world around us [ontology]” (Mukherji & Albon, 2018, p.63). The paradigm underpinning my research informed the construction of the research question (Mukherji & Albon, 2018) and is reflected in the choice of research methodology and methods (Scotland, 2012).

Positivism is a theoretical perspective that recognises the researcher as an “observer of social reality” (Cohen et al., 2008, p.10) while interpretivism recognises the researcher as a seeker

of multiple interpretations (Crotty,1998; Cohen et al, 2007). My research is framed within a “critical educational theory” paradigm, which considers the aforementioned paradigms as presenting “incomplete accounts of social behaviour by their neglect of the political and ideological contexts of much educational research” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.26).

The critical theory approach serves to critique existing social research that generally “accepts rather than questions” the status quo while not attempting to “transform it” (Cohen et al, 2007, p.27; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Critical theoretic research accepts: the significance of understanding a position as a means of altering it; people are capable creators, de-constructors and recreators of social situations; and situations need to viewed from how they have come into existence (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). I aim to gain an understanding of my school’s LAR practice from the viewpoint of teachers and children, as a means of altering it; I regard the teachers, children and myself as creators, de-constructors and recreators of our social situation; and the present phenomenon needs to be viewed from the perspective of how it has come to be.

Ontology. Ontology is the “study of being” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p.23) and is concerned with the researcher’s views about the nature of reality in relation to others (Killam, 2013; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Cohen et al. (2007) relate ontological assumptions to “the essence of the social phenomena being investigated”, and consider if social reality is “external to individuals” or a creation of “individual consciousness” (p.7). My study assumes a relational ontological approach in which I, as researcher, recognise myself in relation with others (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The relationships between people or things are central to how they are understood (Slife, 2004) and the “experience of connection” holds more significance than “an abstract understanding of a set of elements” (Buchanan, Stocker & Palmer, 2006, p.25).

My ontological assumptions are clearly demonstrated through the use of an action research methodology. Action research is underpinned by the following ontological assumptions; it is value-laden; ethically bound; and aims to develop “relational and inclusional” methodologies (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p.24). My ontological assumptions also inform my teaching practices; my research aims to establish a relational pedagogy that challenges educational practice that facilitate knowledge transmission, opting rather to place relations and communication at its centre (French, 2013). Ontological assumptions are intertwined with epistemological assumptions, which consequently influence methodological issues, in turn, affecting the choice of data collection tools (Cohen et al., 2007).

Epistemology. Epistemology is concerned with understanding how knowledge is formed, acquired and transmitted (Cohen et al., 2008; Scotland, 2012). My research holds a constructionist stance, whereby it is assumed that knowledge is dependent upon human interactions with their world, and is fostered and communicated within a social context; meaning is constructed as opposed to being discovered (Crotty, 1998). My epistemological stance is demonstrated through the use of action research, which has emerged with the understanding that knowledge is socially constructed and relies on a “collective orientation” as opposed to the “individualist” approach, and is thus regarded by Gergen and Gergen (2008) as being in “full harmony with the constructivist account of knowledge formation” (p.166). In action research the researcher becomes part of the research world thus contesting the impartial perspective inherent to the positivist approach (Franco, 2005). My epistemological assumptions also inform my pedagogical practice; my study aims to create a dialogic environment (Roche, 2015), whereby knowledge is constructed by the child (Blair, 2010) who is regarded as a “valid knower” and “teacher” (Glenn, 2020, p.84).

Methodological Approach

The research methodology justifies the philosophies that support the use of specific data-collection methods in the research (Crotty, 1998; Mukherji & Albon, 2018; Scotland, 2012). Quantitative research considers phenomena in terms of quantifiability, while qualitative methodology research endeavours to describe the diverse experiences and viewpoints that people attribute to the phenomena (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Qualitative research. Qualitative educational research developed as an alternative to the traditional quantitative approach; rather than participants situated within a contrived context, this approach recognises the significance of participants' expressing their understandings of educational matters from their natural settings (Creswell, 2008, p.50). Qualitative research concentrates on problems that necessitate a "detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2008, p.51) from a small sample within a natural setting (Cohen et al., 2007). A qualitative research design was relevant to my research, which involved obtaining a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (how we approach LAR), involving a small sample (six primary school teachers and six primary school children) within a natural setting (the school in which they work and attend). My research aimed to consider the views and experiences of participants to better understand the phenomena, therefore warranting a qualitative approach.

Creswell (2008) identifies three features of qualitative research: participant voices need to be considered throughout the research; data collection should occur in the participants' natural environments and through the use of open questions; and the research may play a part in improving the situations of individuals (p.51).

Creswell's assertions have been applied to my qualitative research design, as outlined in Table 5.

Table 5

Features of Qualitative Design as Applied to my Research (Adapted from Creswell, 2008)

Features of qualitative design	How these features applied to my study
Consideration to the voice of participants throughout the process	• Voices of all participants were considered, during: the invite to participate in the research; the initial focus group interviews; throughout the intervention; and in the final focus group interviews. • The voices of children were channelled through focus group discussions and through image generation.
Data collection to occur in natural environments and through the use of open questions	• Data was collected from child participants during school time in a room with which they were familiar. • Data collection from teachers occurred outside of school hours at a time designated by them, within the school environment. • Semi-structured interviews for both sets of participants included open-ended questions.
Research may play a part in improving the situations of individual involved in the research.	• The potential for improving the situation of the individual was communicated in the information sheets provided at the initial stages of the research, and throughout the research process.

Action research. Action research has emerged from critical theory and moved beyond (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). While critical theory seeks to gain understanding to change a situation, action research initiates action to identify how a situation can be transformed (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Action research is defined by the assumptions which underpin it, locating the researcher centrally within the enquiry, guided by personal values (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). My study assumed a living theory approach to action research whereby the researcher adopts a

form of relational thinking; as researcher, I assumed responsibility for my learning, and my influence in the learning of others (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Action research develops from real-life problems that need to be addressed (Creswell, 2008; Mukherji & Albon, 2018). In the case of my research, the issue arising related to the lack of effective LAR instruction, and subsequent lack of educational attainment from engaging with SOW. Munford and Sanders (2003) assert that the fundamental purpose of action research is not to solely create knowledge but to generate social change within the contexts of which it is used. In the case of my research, one of the aims of the project was to create ‘social change’ in terms of how to facilitate teachers in addressing the lack of LAR practice with high-quality artwork in the school, and subsequent missed-opportunities for the children. Because action research is an enquiry method that enables practitioners to evaluate their work, while creating new knowledge as a means of improving their learning and influencing the learning of others (Creswell, 2008; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006), it seemed the most appropriate method to use in understanding and improving my learning and the learning of my peers.

Practical action research. A small-scale research study undertaken by individual teachers, which aims to explore a specific, local concern, while looking to improve practice, is categorised as “practical action research” (Creswell, 2008, p.600). This approach offers teachers the potential to investigate their own theories and practices concerning learning, with an opportunity to explore the influence of such approaches with the wider school community (Creswell, 2007). It was the intention of this research study to share the research findings with all teaching staff once the research had been concluded.

Teacher-researcher. McNiff (2017) asserts that when undertaking self-reflective practice, as researcher, I need to be conscious of the values that direct my life and work. Brookfield (2019)

determines that when engaging as teacher-researcher, I am better equipped to be guided by my educational values through the inclement winds of educational uncertainty. Further, through action research, teachers are capable of instigating change instead of authorising “policy makers” with the responsibility (Elliot, 2015, p.19). Despite the aspirations of art education and arts-in-education policies, sufficient high-quality LAR practice is not being afforded to primary school children (Flannery, 2014; INTO, 2010; Ní Bhroin, 2012). Handscomb and MacBeath (2009) assert that teachers who engage in researching within their school’s context, “question, explore and develop their practice”, and recognise it as “an integral part of continuing professional development” (p.2). McNiff and Whitehead (2006) refer to action researchers as “living contradictions” who may not be living by their own range of values (p.46). This assertion applied to my situation; I have a love for art and I am aware of the educational and developmental benefits afforded from it, yet my pedagogical approach rarely included opportunities for my students to engage with ‘real-life’ contemporary art.

Cohen et al. (2007) assert that action research can be classified into two identifiable phases: a “diagnostic” phase in which the issues are examined and theories postulated; and a “therapeutic” phase in which the “intervention”, derived from the diagnostic phase takes place (p.304). Appendix D illustrates the diagnostic and therapeutic phases as they applied to my research

The action research cycles. Action research occurs in an “action-reflection cycle” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p.9). Figure 8 outlines the cycles of action research that occurred during the intervention stage of my research during a two-week period in February 2020. Each of the two cycles included continuous periods of reflection (Cohen et al., 2007). To facilitate this, I regularly used my Reflexive Journal (RJ) while teacher participants used reflection templates to assist them with reflecting on LAR experiences (see Appendix E).

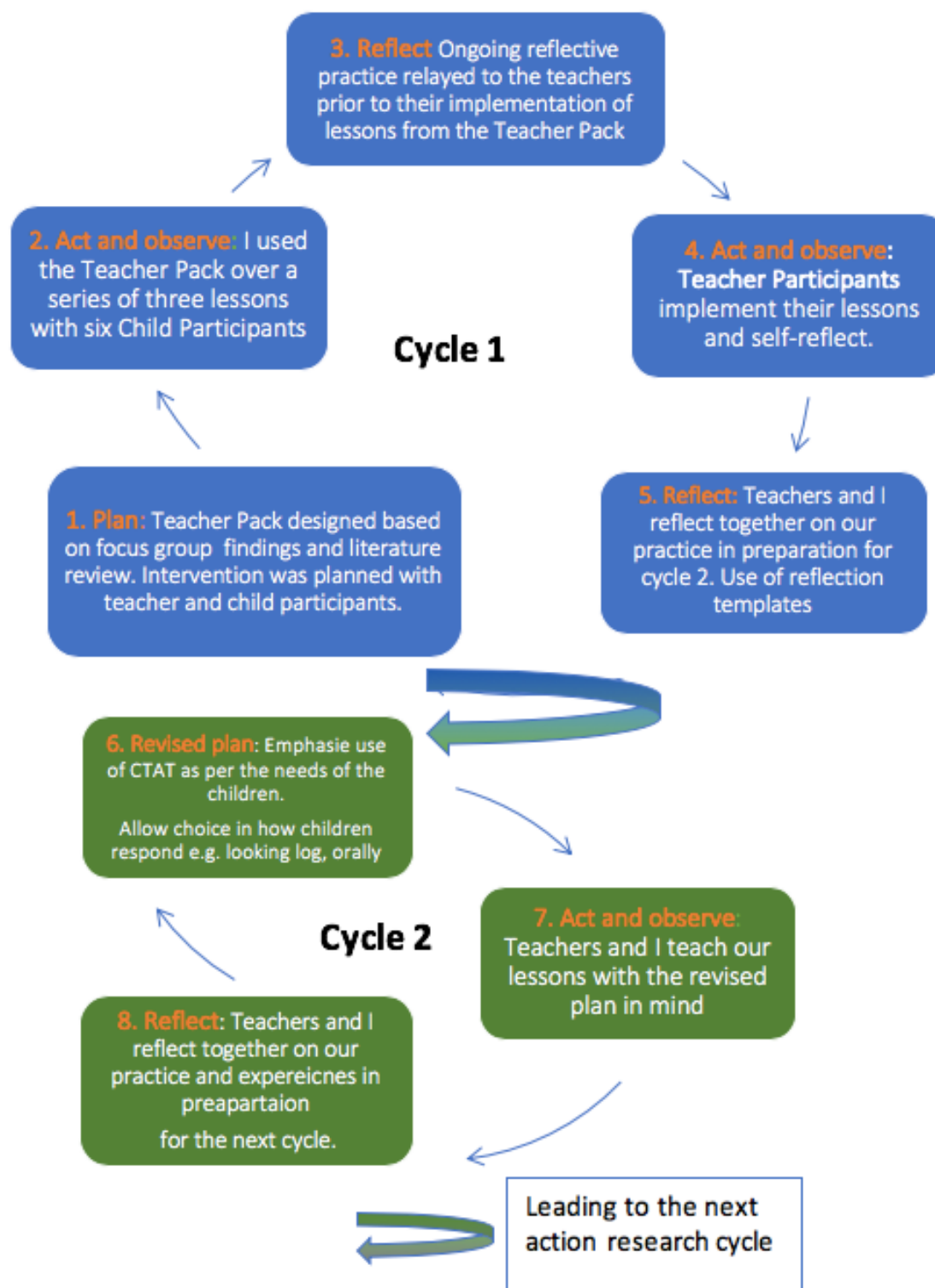


Figure 8. The action research cycles within my study.

(Adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Focus groups. My research aimed to gain an understanding of the research question by considering perspectives of teachers and children. A focus group is a small group of people with common characteristics, assembled by a facilitator who gleans information about an issue based on the group's interactions (Williams & Katz, 2001) in an open forum where understandings are discussed and shared (Kruger & Casey, 2000). Williams and Katz (2001) assert that focus groups are useful for establishing the needs and the efficacy of particular curricular areas, which was suitable to my research as it involved implementing and reflecting upon a curricular intervention. Group interviewing is advantageous when interviewing children as it fosters interactions between them and is considered less intimidating than an individual interview (Cohen et al., 2007). During focus group discussions child participants appeared comfortable in disputing each other's opinions while using language that they were familiar with (Cohen et al., 2007).

Data Collection

Sample and participants. The sampling procedure was determined by the assertion that qualitative research does not seek to generalise findings to the wide research population, but to gain an understanding of a smaller group (Cohen et al., 2007; Dawson, 2019). Qualitative research aims to “develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon” and requires purposeful selection of participants and sites to learn about the said phenomenon while granting a voice to those not readily heard (Creswell, 2008, p.213). Further, it is common to study a few individuals because the opportunity to create a comprehensive depiction reduces with the inclusion of each additional participant (Creswell, 2008). The sample size for child and teacher participants was also determined from the use of focus group interviews as a means of data collection, which typically involves four to six participants (Creswell, 2008). The effectiveness of a focus group relies heavily on sampling; each participant should share “homogeneity of background” specific to the research

subject (Cohen et al., 2007), which contributes to participants engaging in, “free-flowing, open and sincere discussion” (Dilshad & Latif, 2013, p.194), thus increasing the opportunity to generate useful data (Krueger, 1994).

All teachers within the school were briefed informally about my research project at a staff meeting, followed by an informative email to all fifteen main-stream class teachers outlining the research, as a means of generating interest. Six teachers responded and declared their interest in participating. When considering how many child participants to include, I was guided by the recommendation that four to six participants is optimal when carrying out focus group interviews (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2008). When considering which children to include, I decided to seek children with whom I had already established a teaching relationship (Cohen et al., 2007). Table 6 outlines the teacher participants’ pseudonyms and characteristics.

Table 6

Teacher Participant Pseudonyms and Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Class level
Mick	M	6th
Emer	F	5th/6th
Yvonne	F	2nd
Tom	M	4th
Anne	F	3rd
Aisling	F	2nd

Semi-structured interviews. To determine the most appropriate data collection methods to use, I returned to the research questions to consider how best to answer them. Semi-structured interviews allow levels of detail to be collected and create opportunities to probe the interviewee further about particular responses (Gillham, 2000; Mukherji & Albon, 2018). An outline of key discussion topics is required by the interviewer, while the interview is performed in an adaptable manner with regards to the sequence that such topics are introduced (Denscombe, 2007). Semi-structured interviews lent themselves to my research; as interviewer, I guided the interview while being provided with a certain flexibility to delve further into topics that were deemed important (Denscombe, 2007).

Interview schedule. The interview schedules for child participants (Appendix F) and teacher participants (Appendix G) were informed by Janesick's (2010) framework for interview question design. Questions were open-ended so participants could speak openly about their experiences and create responses that tended to "reflect the richness and complexity of the views" they held (Denscombe, 2007 p.166). Key themes that emerged from the literature review informed the questions, while further "subquestions" or "probes" were used to elaborate and clarify information provided by participants (Creswell, 2008, p.229).

Reflexive journaling. Reflexivity is a significant aspect of qualitative research and is regarded as "a continuing mode of self-analysis" (Callaway, 1992, p.33). Reflexive practice is encouraged by Lincoln and Guba (2005), who posit that during the research process the individual self of the researcher is in a state of fluidity as opposed to being in a fixed state; a process which offers both opportunities and limitations (Bourke, 2014). Reflexivity is pivotal to action research due to the researcher's dual role as researcher and participant; researchers engaging in reflective practice must accept and reveal, "their own selves in the research" to gain an understanding of

“their part in, or influence on, the research” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.171). Mukherji and Albon (2018) assert that the use of a reflexive journal may accommodate the implications that reflexive practice may have on data collection and analysis. A journal is a document that is retained as a medium for reflection and learning (Moon, 2006) and may be used by the researcher to assist with the research as well as a research method (Mukherji and Albon, 2018). Throughout my research, I used a reflexive journal that included written notes and reflection templates, which were used at the end of each intervention lesson, as illustrated in Figure 9.

Activity Reflection
Please tick the elements used in the lesson

Lesson: 1 2 3

Vocabulary ☐	Viewing from multiple perspectives ☒	Response through movement ☒	Responding to sensor tower ☒
CTAT ☒	FTC questions ☒	Response with audio ☐	Children write their own questions ☒
Listening to the art work ☐	Use of video ☐	Info about artist/ artwork ☐	Looking log ☒
			Other: ☐

How well do you feel the lesson went on a scale of 1-10 _____

Did any elements work well?:

"Art has a message - treat languages with respect."

The Theme based questions generated more questions from the children - "I wonder does it have a rechargeable battery?"

After showing them the photos of the artwork they considered the use of 'drone footage'

They independently used their log before discussion in CTAT.

Did any elements not work well?:

Weather cut short viewing the external tower.

Not enough time given to viewing the photos of the artwork - it was rushed.

More time for looking should have been given - they appeared tired.

Figure 9. An example of a reflection template used after a LAR lesson.

Children's drawings. Merriman and Guerin (2006) describe the use of drawings within research as child-centred and is recognised as a safe and customary activity for children (Binfet, 2016; Kisovar-Ivanda, 2014), through which they can express their understanding of issues that are meaningful to them (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). The drawings created were the children's responses to the question, 'What do you think art is?', which was posed at the beginning of both focus group interviews- before, and after the intervention. Bagnoli (2009) contends that incorporating drawing methods to support an interview may generate a creative interviewing technique that encourages participants' interpretations and responses to questions, based on personal inferences and connections. Research validity is heightened by the use of visual methods by unearthing new levels of meaning and knowledge generation (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017, p.1). Table 7 outlines the details of the data set.

Table 7*Details of the Data Set*

Data collection tool	Number & sex of participants	Duration Word count	Format
Pre-focus group with teachers	Four female, two male	37 minutes 5084 words	Semi-structured interview Digitally audio recorded
Pre-focus group with children including drawings	Five female, one male	35 minutes Words: 5400 6 drawings	Draw and talk session Semi-structured interview Digitally audio recorded
Post-focus group with children including drawings	Five female, one male	18 minutes Words: 3030 6 drawings	Draw and talk session Semi-structured interview Digitally audio recorded
Post-focus group with teachers	Four female, One male.	39 minutes 6066 words	Semi-structured interview Digitally audio recorded
Reflexive journal	One female (researcher)	3080 words	Word document Reflective templates

My Positionality

Positionality effects not only the researcher and participants but also has the potential to influence the research itself (Bourke, 2014; Mukherji and Albon, 2018). My positionality has influenced my research in many ways. I am a primary school teacher who holds a particular interest in visual art. As a member of the PCfA committee in 2017, I gained valuable insight into the curatorial process involved in deciding upon a suitable artwork for my school. I meet and spoke with the artist, while gaining an understanding of his practice and his artwork, SOW. This knowledge equipped me to better appreciate and respond to SOW as both a teacher and as a viewer of contemporary art. However, since its installation in 2019, I noticed that I, along with teachers and children were not engaging with SOW to its full potential; thus, teachers and children were missing out on opportunities to engage with contemporary artwork located within the heart of the school.

Insider positionality. An insider is defined as a researcher who works within the research setting (Mukheji & Albon, 2018). I was regarded as an insider, as I was researching in the school where I have worked for the past five years, with teachers and children who are familiar to me. Since 2019, a senior staff member supported the implementation of Critical Thinking and Book Talk [CTBT] (Roche, 2015) as a means of addressing the literacy needs of the children, while also adopting a Growth Mindset [GM] approach (Dweck, 2019). These child-centred and collaborative approaches to developing critical thinking skills became recognisable as a blueprint from which features could be adapted and used to address the school's need to reform LAR practice.

Validity and Reliability

While the onus is on educational researchers to generate “robust” knowledge that is capable of being scrutinised, it is essential that such research is “honest and reliable” (Blair, 2010, p.355). Within qualitative research, reliability is deemed to be dependent upon validity (Creswell, 2008; Golafshani, 2003). While validity and reliability can never completely be free from “threats”, it is possible to decrease the implications of such threats by drawing attention to validity and reliability as the research progresses (Cohen et al., 2007, p.133).

Validity is regarded as the barometer for all varieties of educational research (Cohen et al., 2007). In qualitative research, “validity is a matter of being able to offer as sound a representation of the field of study as the research methods allow” (Edwards, 2010, p.162), which may be dealt with through “the honesty, depth, richness and scope” of the accumulated data, the participants involved, researcher impartiality and the use of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133). The term reliability within qualitative research is often challenged, due in part to the non-replicable nature of qualitative research (Carcary, 2009; Cohen et al., 2007); reliability is therefore referred to in terms of “trustworthiness” (Golafshani, 2003, p.601; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). To maximise the validity and trustworthiness of my study, triangulation and piloting were used.

Triangulation. In my study, triangulation involved the use of “multiple sources of information” (interview transcripts, visual texts and my reflective journal), “individuals” (teachers and children) and “processes” (focus group interviews, drawing and journaling) (Creswell, 2008, p.266). The validity of research was strengthened by the use of visual methods (child-created drawings) along with child focus group interviews, by unearthing new levels of meaning (Glaw, Inder, Kable & Hazelton, 2017, p.1). Using both sources allowed triangulation of data whereby

verbal data and visual data were triangulated as “an independent source of information” (Flick, 2004, p.179).

Piloting. The pilot focus group interviews allowed me to maximise the validity and reliability of the data collection tools, by determining if the interview questions could elicit the information that I was expecting (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). In the child participants pilot focus group interview, I recognised that insufficient prompt questions were used resulting in insufficient information being obtained. I reviewed and adapted the questioning framework accordingly.

Research Limitations

Numerous limitations are attributed to qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2007). I will focus on limitations relevant to my study: action research limitations and the use of drawings as a data collection tool. The “democratic and collaborative” characteristics of action research can create difficulties, in terms of generating interest in an area, particularly if the research is regarded by the participant as being as additional work (Gaffney, 2008; Mukherji & Albon, 2018, p.210). In my study, teacher participants were unwilling to partake in the planned lesson modelling session, opting instead to “figure it out themselves” (RJ, p.2). This may have arisen due to my “insider” positionality, whereby teachers may have found it easier to say ‘no’ to me rather than to an ‘outside’ researcher (Mukherji & Albon, 2018, p.210). This caused initial frustration but I came to realise that this was indicative of the role I held within the action research process.

Gaffney (2008) postulates that the role of the researcher involves striving to encourage participants while avoiding imposition; the difficulty lies in “establishing a groundswell of support for action that is interpreted as changing practices for the better rather than disrupting participants’ current routines”(p.11). Gaffney’s assertions informed my practice. Teachers were encouraged to

be agentic concerning the frequency and duration of lessons; the number of children participants in their lessons; and the use of methodologies from the Teacher Pack to meet their students' needs.

Drawings are regarded as a difficult means of gathering data due to potential misinterpretations (Binfet, 2016; Mukherji & Albon, 2018). I used "drawing-talking" sessions as a means of alleviating potential misinterpretation (Mitchell et al., 2011, p.20) while allowing the voice of the child to be heard (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Data Analysis Procedures

My data analysis approach was dependent upon the paradigm underpinning the research and the purpose of the analysis; whether it required an "exploratory" or a "confirmatory" approach (Guest, McQueen & Namey, 2012, p.7). In my research, data was analysed in an "iterative and dynamic" manner echoing the process of action research (Creswell, 2008, p.615). Qualitative data should be analysed as soon as data are collected (Silverman, 2013) and as the research evolves, allowing for modifications to be made as findings are derived (Dawson, 2019).

Thematic analysis. Thematic data analysis involved identifying patterns in the data that subsequently developed into themes (Creswell, 2008; Roberts, Dowell & Nie, 2019). Thematic analysis acts as a "flexible and useful research tool that may provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78).

Table 8*Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).*

Phase & Objective	Activity
1. Familiarisation with data	Transcribing and rereading data. Generating and noting general ideas emerging from the data.
2. Initial coding	Systematic coding of data across the data set.
3. Generate themes	Collating codes into themes.
4. Review themes	Generate a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Define and name themes	Generate clear names for themes. Theme specifics are refined.
6. Creation of the report	Refer back to the research question and literature review to finalise the report (thesis) creation.

Qualitative data analysis is not a linear process but is rather an iterative one (Creswell, 2008) involving six main stages, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) in Table 8. Phase one involved familiarising myself with the data set, which included text data (interview transcripts and reflexive journal) and visual data (participant completed drawings). The transcription of the audio-recorded focus group interviews enabled me to become familiar with the data, which is considered as the first step of data analysis (Mukherji and Albon, 2018). the Transcripts were read through several times to obtain the main sense of the material (Creswell, 2008), and is regarded by Guest et al. (2012) as a vital part of text analysis. Memos were written in the margins of the transcripts and reflexive journal, while Post-its were used on the visual data to record initial ideas. The Kuhn model of data analysis informed the analysis of the children's drawings from the pre-intervention focus group discussion (Kisovar-Ivanda, 2014, p.60). Inclusion of drawing and discussion is seen as a way to diminish the disparity between how children and adults view the world (Kuhn, 2003).

The second phase involved “lean coding”, whereby labels were assigned to images and text (Creswell, 2008, p.252). Initial codes included: ‘art as fun’ and ‘creating art’. Approximately fourteen codes were generated and subsequently reduced when redundant codes were eliminated (Creswell, 2008). Phase three involved generating themes from the reduced list of codes (Creswell, 2008), for example, codes such as ‘art as a product’ and ‘LAR evasion’ aggregated to form the theme, ‘low teacher self-efficacy’.

In stage four, themes were reviewed to ensure coherency and a thematic map was created (see Figure 10) that outlined four main themes: Teacher self-efficacy; Evolving Perceptions of SOW; Curriculum structure; and LAR reform through *Critical Thinking and Art Talk*. Phase five involved relating the themes to the literature review and research question- in preparation for the final stage, during which the data analysis and findings were described in detail.

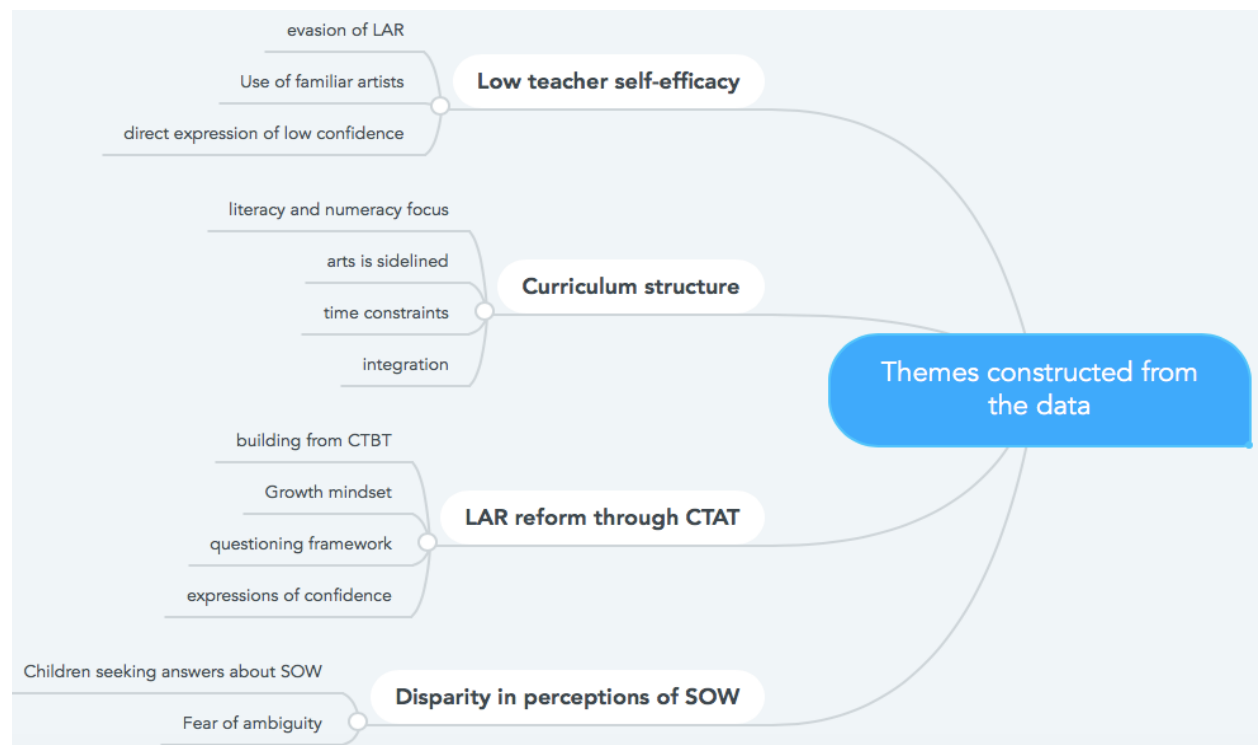


Figure 10. Themes constructed from the coded data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration was given to the “research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.51). Mukherji and Albon (2018) alerted me to the “ethical responsibility” I had when referring to the voices, views or actions of participants within the research (p.378) which is particularly relevant to this qualitative study. My relational ontological assumptions were reflected in my ethical stance, whereby I regarded the relationships between myself and participants as being central in enabling me to undertake ethical research.

Working with children. Child-centred research recognises children as actors in their own right (Kisovar-Ivanda, 2014; Merriman & Guerin, 2014), whereby “children are seen to act, take part in, change and become changed by the social and cultural world they live in” (Christensen and Prout, 2002, p.481). When involving children in research they should be viewed as both competent and vulnerable (Albert & Rosen, 2014; Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Throughout my research, children were considered ‘competent’ and thus were invited to become social actors within the research; because they were considered ‘vulnerable’, their needs were considered throughout the research process. While engaging as social actors, Christensen and Prout (2002) reference the “ethical dilemmas” that may emerge (p.478), therefore, as researcher I was responsible for entering “a dialogue that recognizes commonality but also honours difference” with the children (p.480). This dialogue was created by seeking children’s informed assent while valuing their opinions during the focus groups and LAR sessions.

Informed consent and assent. I was responsible for ensuring participants were given the necessary information and were “supported in developing an adequate understanding of the research” (DCYA, 2012, p.2). Informed consent was provided by all board of management members, including the principal (Appendix H) and all teacher participants (Appendix I). All child

participants gave informed assent (Appendix J) while their parents gave informed consent (Appendix K). Information sheets outlining the elements of the research relevant to each party were kept by said parties.

Anonymity. Digitally recorded data was securely stored on my password-protected laptop. Participants were informed that data will be destroyed twelve months after research completion. Hard copies of transcripts and drawings were securely stored throughout the research. Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, the school, and the artwork, to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants throughout the research stages (Creswell 2008).

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology undertaken to best answer my research question: To what extent can LAR practice within my school be reformed through the use of a Reformed LAR Framework based on a contemporary, Per Cent for Art artwork?

The philosophical assumptions underpinning my research were discussed concerning how they informed the research design, from the choice of data tools to the emphasis on fulfilling my ethical obligations as a researcher. Adopting a qualitative action research approach was defended as the most suitable way to answer my research questions. The sampling procedure was outlined and the limitations of the methodology were acknowledged. Ethical considerations were discussed and finally, the data analysis procedure was introduced.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter critically discusses the findings that developed from the data. The analysed data served to establish themes to answer the research questions while developing a detailed understanding of the main phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). The research question aimed to determine the opportunities that a Reformed Looking and Responding Framework [RLARF] based on SOW, a contemporary in-situ artwork, had on reforming my school's Looking and Responding (LAR) practice. The main research question developed from the following sub-questions:

- (i) What factors have contributed to the underuse of SOW when attending to Looking and Responding in this school?
- (ii) To what extent has LAR practice influenced children's experiences and perceptions of art ?
- (iii) What factors have contributed to reforming LAR practice within the school?

The findings will be presented and discussed in relation to these questions. For clarity, Table 9 outlines the acronyms used throughout this chapter.

Table 9

Acronyms Used in Chapter Four

Acronym	Description
TP	Teacher Participant
CP	Child Participant
TFG-A	Teachers' Focus Group Pre-intervention
TFG-B	Teachers' Focus Group Post-intervention
CFG-A	Children's Focus Group Pre-intervention
CFG-B	Children's Focus Group Post-intervention
RJ	Reflexive Journal

CFG-A and CFG-B involved analysis of text and visual data. Kuhn's (2003) model of analysis is based on observing and describing “the essential elements of analysis” (Kisovar-Ivanda, 2014, p.62). Kuhn’s (2003) analytic approach was adapted to interpret children's drawings focused on their perceptions of what art is, as outlined in Table 10.

Table 10

Analysis Procedure of the Drawings of a Child Participant During Focus Group Interview
(Adapted from Kuhn, 2003)

Step Description	CFG-A Draw and talk session	CFG-B Draw and talk session
Child was asked, ‘what do you think is art?’ during focus group session.		
Step 1 Identify drawing elements identified: personal, objective, text, symbolic.	Personal: child Objective: Easel, paint, sun Text: “fun” “relaxing” “drawing” Symbolic: emotion depicted through art	Personal: n/a Objective: sculpture, pattern Text: “art” Symbolic: abstract patterns
Step 2 Interpret meaning of location and activities	Locations: indoors Activities: painting, drawing, enjoyment	Locations: unknown Activities: sound moving
Step 3 Thematic evaluation	Thematic interpretation Drawing/ painting activity depicted that elicit enjoyment. Expressive nature art is depicted. Art is depicted as 2D.	Thematic interpretation Art is depicted in more abstract terms e.g. sound, patterns and sculpture Depiction of art in 2D & 3D form:

TFG-A and CFG-A were transcribed and thematically analysed as soon as possible to inform the development of the intervention and action plan, which comprised primarily of a Teacher Pack, as included in Appendix B. The data generated from the TFG-B, CFG-B and reflective journal were gathered. All data was then collated, coded and themes were reported. This process is outlined in Figure 11.

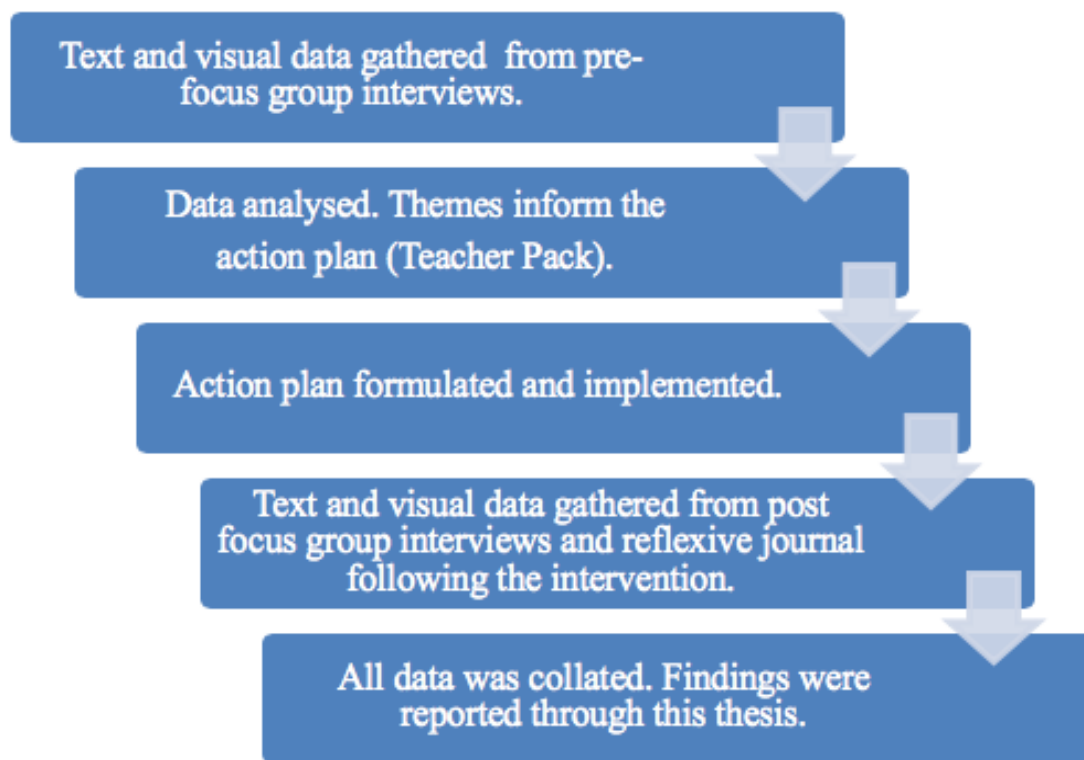


Figure 11. Steps involved in data generation and analysis.

Key Themes

Creswell (2008) argues that in qualitative research it is beneficial to write in detail about a few themes rather than giving general information about several themes. Four predominant thematic findings were constructed from the data: i) Teacher Self-efficacy; ii) Evolving Perceptions of Art; iii) Curriculum Structure; and iv) LAR Reform through *Critical Thinking and Art Talk*. To determine if my practice had improved, I referred to McNiff (2017) who posits that improvements are determined based on “whether or not you are living more fully” by “your values” (p.106). Therefore, I considered: the extent to which the intervention had influenced the pedagogical approach to LAR; if teachers were engaging more confidently with SOW; if children were availing of the opportunities for critical skills development that it offered; and if the RLARF had been implemented through child-centred and social constructivist practice.

Theme 1: Teacher Self-efficacy

Low teacher self-efficacy was a major factor that contributed to evasion of SOW from teacher’s LAR practice. This section outlines how teacher self-efficacy presented itself through the data, and explores how this theme influenced children’s art experiences. Further, the ways in which the intervention increased teacher self-efficacy are explored.

Evidence of low teacher self-efficacy presented itself in several ways: over-reliance on familiar artists and content (Hardy, 2006; Jump, 2019); provision of ‘age-appropriate’ artwork (Ching, 2015); and a prevalence to make art over LAR practice (Ching, 2015; Flannery, 2012). It is proposed that these behaviours influenced TP’s approach to LAR, ultimately leading to evasion of LAR practice with contemporary artwork, and specifically evasion of SOW. Emer was the only teacher to explicitly express she found “teaching visual art difficult”, remarking that she didn’t feel “particularly strong in that area” and wouldn’t consider it her “favourite subject to teach”

(TFG-A). Other TPs didn't explicitly express a sense of low self-efficacy, but it manifested through various aspects of their practice.

Over-reliance on artists or content. The propensity for teachers to “play safe with exemplars from a traditionally accepted canon of artists and artworks” is acknowledged by Hardy (2006, p.13) as an indicator of low self-efficacy. TPs demonstrated the tendency to ‘play safe’ in referencing established artists and art-styles, such as Picasso, Dali, Pointillism, Impressionism, Renaissance and “Picasso-esque” art when choosing artwork as a stimulus (TFG-A). Yvonne expressed a need “to really like...the artists” that she was “comfortable with” and she felt the need to be “enthusiastic” about “certain pictures that she didn't really like” (TFG-A). TPs' use of traditionally, well-known artwork and artists was reflected in the children's discussions about their classroom art experiences: “looking at [Michelangelo's] work first, and doing the painting after...helped me to draw” (Child 4, CFG-A).

Jump (2019) acknowledges the temptation for teachers to choose “well-known or realistic pictures” in art classes, but questions what children miss out on from not viewing artwork “from the imagination of another” (p.19). TPs exclusion of certain artists and artwork from their LAR practice is regarded by Emery (2006) as a form of censorship in art education. Generation of social change through action research (Munford & Sanders, 2003) was considered here; my research aimed to expose children to ‘the imagination of another’ through advocating for the inclusion of less familiar contemporary artwork, through a framework that advocated critical thinking.

When reflecting on the potential that SOW offered as an LAR resource, Mick felt that he couldn't “keep branching out” with it “every year”, while Aisling agreed that it was “limited as to what you could do with it” (TFG-A). Gude (2013) posits that the conceptual nature of contemporary art may be problematic for teachers to base their pedagogical practices on, which

may account for teachers' dependence on familiar artists, thus aligning with the assertion that a lack of engagement between children and contemporary art is prevalent during their education (Adams, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2015). My intervention aimed to support TPs to draw from an extended catalogue of artists and artwork, which now included the work of a contemporary Irish artist.

Provision of 'age-appropriate' artwork. TPs referred to sourcing artwork because of their "doable" and "simplistic" nature (TFG-A). Mick chose lessons because he perceived them to be "doable", remarking that "kids love that" because the drawings were "pretty simplistic... it wasn't rocket science" (TFG-A). Tom used lessons that presented a "step-by-step" approach to avoid "the challenge" and "intimidation" caused by "not being good at art" (TFG-A). Ching (2015) posits that in circumstances whereby teachers lack confidence in their LAR approach, they decide to teach what they perceive as being "more age appropriate material" or they may evade teaching it altogether (p.96). Ching's (2015) contention is reflected in Emer's assumption that children's interpretation of SOW as being "difficult" resulted in their lack of engagement with the artwork (TFG-A). It appeared that TPs perceived SOW as not being 'age-appropriate' for children, thus resulting in it being excluded from their teaching repertoire.

Art creation and LAR evasion. All TPs referred to positive art lessons as those that involved creating art and making a finished product (TFG-A). Aisling justified "having a finished art piece... to make sure you have something to put up on the wall", which consequently resulted in her feeling the need to put LAR on "the back burner" (TFG-A). Aisling relayed that she tended to "skip over" LAR in favour of art-making activities (TFG-A). Child 1 echoed this when she referred to her favourite LAR experience: "we got to draw these little people...colour them in and then it went in the hall" (CFG-A). Emer reflected that "a lot of the time" she's "doing the process...towards the finished product" (TFG-A).

TPs perceptions correlate with CPs perceptions of art, whereby art was primarily concerned with art creation (as illustrated in Figure 12), echoing Gude's (2013) assertion that teacher influence can restrict children's creativity and meaningful exploration of content (p.7). Efland (2002) posits that teachers are more capable of focusing on producing art instead of focusing on the cognitive-driven processes, which may explain why TP's have demonstrated this behaviour. However, "if the arts are reduced to demonstrations of 'skills' alone, they lose their importance and influence" (Gregory, 2019, para.3). Jump (2019) asserts that teachers may consider art as a 'product' due to confidence issues with LAR, time constraints or "pressure from above" (p.19), all issues which have been addressed by TP's.

Child 6's perception of art (CFG-A)	Child 4's perception of art (CFG-A).
 The drawing shows various art supplies: a paint can, a palette, a paintbrush, and a person painting. Text includes 'Art is fun', 'Art', 'Paint', 'crayons', 'pens', 'markers', and 'pencils'.	 The drawing shows two people painting. One person is holding a paintbrush and a palette, and the other is painting a wall. Text includes 'painting'.
"I think it's having fun and being happy because you're being creative... and you can make things".	"So I drew people painting. She was painting and doing lots of colourful stuff because she was happy".

Figure 12. Children's drawings and discussion illustrating their perceptions of art in CFG-A

TPs generally referred to LAR in terms of being a “practical starting point” for art creation (NCCA, 1999b, p.29) rather than as a “learning experience in its own right” (Flannery, 2012, p.78). Mick relayed an example when he showed “four pictures from one painter” and the children used it “as inspiration” to create “a painting based on it” by taking “bits from all four”. Emer mentioned looking at an artwork, having “a bit of discussion about it” and creating their own work around that. TP’s perception that “replication” is the primary art creation response to LAR is regarded as a “misconception” by Flannery (2012, p.77), who argues that the PSVAC’s intention is rather for LAR to “expand [children’s] production repertoire”; an aspiration that Ní Bhroin (2012) argues is difficult to achieve.

Following the intervention, teachers recognition of art was transformed; they began to recognise LAR as a learning experience in its own right (Flannery, 2012). Aisling reflected that children in her class would typically expect to “get paint out and mix the colours” when “doing art”. Following the intervention, she recognised how “interested the children actually would be in [LAR]”. She admitted that “from seeing how interested the kids were” in “responding to the piece”, she considered that “they’d love to do...standalone, looking and responding lessons” (TFG-B). Yvonne also reflected that she could “see the value” of LAR in terms of “what the children can get from it ” (TFG-B).

Teacher efficacy has been declared as being greatly influential in shaping educational success or failure (Stanton et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017), and particularly visual art education (Alter et al, 2009). Low levels of teacher confidence is continually inhibiting the provision of “innovative art education projects within the school curriculum” (Granville, 2011, p.358). It is apparent that low self-efficacy has resulted in teachers presenting a narrow canon of artwork to children that is considered age-appropriate, sometimes resulting in LAR evasion, and particularly

contemporary artwork evasion- perhaps due to the misconception that it is beyond children's cognitive abilities (Ching 2015).

Teachers' limited approaches to sourcing and presenting artwork. Emery (2006) asserts that teachers choose artists based on their own individual interests, the availability of resources related to the particular artist or the potential of the artist's work to assist in the students' artmaking skills. Table 11 outlines the data that correlates with Emery's (2006) assertion regarding teachers' choice of artists.

Table 11

Teachers' Choice of Artists Based on Data Evidence (Adapted from Emery, 2006)

Choice of artists	Evidence from data
Individual interests	"I feel that I have to really like... the artists myself. I have my favourites that I am comfortable with"(Yvonne, TFG-A). "It's almost like what you're interested in...as in the likes of Picasso" (Mick, TFG-A)
Availability of resources related to the particular artist	"I end up kind of Googling lesson ideas ...and then if they recommend a lesson in conjunction with a particular artist, that's how I find them"(Emer, TFG-A).
Assist in the students' subsequent artmaking skills	"We look at an artist or a piece of work, do a bit of discussion about it and then kind of do our own work around that as inspiration... sometimes it could be our own version of it ...look at that and do something similar" (TFG-A). "Teacher showed us a picture of a man...and it helped us with what to draw" (Child 4, CFG-A).

Data suggested that art gallery visits were infrequent amongst TPs and CPs. Art gallery visits create opportunities for children to view contemporary artwork (IMMA, 2010a) but in St. Mary's visits appear to be "a fourth class thing" (TFG-A). TPs reported that when sourcing artwork for LAR lessons they largely relied on online sources including: Instagram, Twinkl, YouTube or "sometimes [they] end up Googling lesson ideas" (Emer, TFG-A). Justification for this included access to "step-by-step" lessons; work that was "doable"; and work that was of perceived interest to the children (TFG-A). The children referenced their experiences with formulaic art: "I think it was Valentine's Day or Mother's day...we [drew] cards for people and the teacher gave us an example" (Child 1, CFG-A).

Lack of exposure to three-dimensional art. TPs acknowledged that they primarily relied on presenting two-dimensional artwork to children. Emer tended to "use 2D... 99% of the time" (TFG-A). Subsequently, the children appeared to have gained insufficient time viewing and experiencing three-dimensional artwork, which was explicitly reflected in the views of Child 4 who wished to visit an art gallery "to experience more [sculptural] art...because [he] never really [does] it" (CFG-A). Much of the literature supports the finding that children have a lack of exposure to viewing three-dimensional artwork during visual art lessons (Eckhoff, 2007; INTO, 2010; NCCA; 2005; Ní Bhroin, 2012); thus limiting their opportunities for developing novel thinking and visual-spatial development (Barnes, 2002; Harris, 2000). Teachers "preference" and "comfort" in utilising artworks that are "painterly in appearance" (Flannery, 2012, p.79) was illustrated from the data, as it was the most frequently referenced artwork mentioned by all TPs.

When three-dimensional artwork was used to by TPs, it was typically presented in two-dimensional form (TFG-A). Anne expressed a positive experience she had on a "sculpture in context" course. She "took photographs of some of the sculptures there" and when she returned

to school she “showed them to [the children]”. During her discussion with Aisling, they came to realise “that the children had actually seen the sculptures “in 2D”. Anne then admitted that she “didn't even think of that until now” (TFG-A). Some TPs expressed awareness of how they presented three-dimensional artwork, acknowledging that, children “don’t get to see or feel [it]” or consider it’s scale” (Mick, TFG-A) and “probably think art is flat” (Aisling, TFG-A) when artwork is presented in two-dimensional form. This supports Eckhoff’s (2007) contention that the manner in which artwork is introduced to children when facilitating LAR impacts significantly on their comprehension and appreciation of visual art.

A reliance on sourcing lesson ideas online may account for TPs mainly presenting artwork in two-dimensional form. After the intervention, while acknowledging having “real” artwork would be more beneficial, teachers considered the use of virtual galleries as a means of showcasing three-dimensional artwork in class, if accessing a gallery continued being a difficulty; “The thing is that if we can't get there, we can also at least try the virtual options” (Aisling, TFG-B). This attitude may also be reflective of Aisling adopting a growth mindset (Muncaster & Clarke, 2016).

The prevalence of ‘school art’. A stalwart of visual art educational research, Efland (1976) defines school art as a form of art unique to educational settings, which shares a number of identifiable features; the student has limited conceptual control over the production of the artwork and is governed by teacher-established rules; the artwork lacks meaningful individual variation; the artwork is aesthetically pleasing; and the art work has no direct influence from the art world. Efland (1976), decries school art as a failure to act as “a pedagogical tool for teaching children about art in the world beyond the school” (p.38-39), yet art education continues to be taught the way it has been for decades (Freedman, 2011). Gude (2013) posits that in the decades

following Efland's assertions, the ineffectiveness of 'school art' continues to be acknowledged in art educational research. My research served to deviate from 'school art' practice and decrease the distance between the contemporary art world and school art practice. 'School art' features (Efland, 1976) were analysed and triangulated (Creswell, 2008) in relation to the data provided from the CP's and TP's and are outlined in Table 12.

Table 12 *Features of 'School Art' Evident in the Data.* (Adapted from Efland, 1976)

'School Art' features	Evidence from the data
The student has limited conceptual control over the production of the artwork and it's governed by teacher established rules.	Art production generally resulted from artwork that was deemed accessible to both teachers and students: "it wasn't rocket science" (Mick, TFG-A) Teachers often sought lessons that were formulaic and used a 'step-by-step' approach (Tom, TFG-A)
The artwork lacks meaningful individual variation.	"The teacher gave us the example. Like, you can do hearts or you can do like teddies or stuff like that" (Child 1, CFG-A) "We got to draw these little people and then we can get to colour it in and then it went in the hall" (Child 3, CFG-A)
The artwork is aesthetically pleasing. It encourages children to have fun.	Most children described art as being fun and in terms of colours: "sometimes you get to do it, like you got to use nice fun colours" (Child 5, CFG-A) "I suppose it's the fun aspect that is really the key hold of art." (Mick, TFG-A).
Art work has no direct influence from outside art	Artwork is sourced regularly from social media platforms and follows a "step-by-step" approach (Tom, TFG-A).

Use of the Teacher Pack to increase self-efficacy. To strengthen low self-efficacy, the teacher pack was designed to facilitate teachers experiencing a sense of accomplishment (Bandura, 1997) when carrying out LAR. Teacher Pack elements, which aimed to alleviate low self-efficacy included: access to specific art-related knowledge and vocabulary; and a questioning framework based on FTC (Sandell, 2006) and VTS (Housen, 1999); if teachers feel they have a better understanding of specific subject matter- making them feel more competent in delivering effective teaching- their mastery experiences may be reinforced and self-efficacy may be increased (Palmer, 2011; Wang et al., 2017; Wyatt, 2014).

Access to art-related knowledge. There was a consensus amongst the teachers that insufficient information was available about where and how to access art for use in the classroom (TFG-A). A desire for greater knowledge surrounding artists and their artwork was expressed by Emer when she remarked that “delving into the background of the artist” and “knowing their mindset” helps the children “to understand” and “helps [the] teacher understand it as well”, which allows for “better discussion” (TFG-A). Such thinking aligns with the assertion that pre-service teachers have a perceived lack of subject knowledge in relation to LAR (Pavlou, 2015), specifically related to “LAR questioning and methodologies” and the acquisition of “contextual information” (Flannery, 2012, p.75). Charman and Ross (2006) postulate that the fast-paced, evolving nature of the contemporary art world suggests a potential difficulty for teachers in keeping pace with related knowledge. To alleviate this, the Teacher Pack included access to key information about the artist and his artwork, to be used at the teachers’ discretion.

The Teacher Pack also included a vocabulary section, specific to the artwork (see Appendix B), the inclusion of which was highlighted by Yvonne as an element that “kind of explained it very well”. She said she “felt more comfortable...with the art vocabulary that [she] wasn't familiar with

before”, while Aisling also recognised its worth in assisting the children to respond to the artwork by “using the correct language” (TFG-B). These findings correlate with Epstein and Trimis’s (2002) recommendation for the provision of related vocabulary when introducing art viewing activities to children.

Anne mentioned she would feel comfortable approaching contemporary art in the future on the proviso that she could “get the information about [the art] first” (TFG-B). Anne’s reflection brings to mind Holt’s (1997) assertion; while acknowledging the requirement for primary teachers to extend and deepen their knowledge of art, a high level of teacher knowledge does not equate to a high-quality art teaching. To that end, the Teacher Pack did not simply serve to ‘deliver’ knowledge to teachers, but rather, to assist teachers in facilitating discussions that empower children, while fostering the development of their own interpretations of art work (Kai-Kee, 2011), thus aiming to initiate social change that action research seeks to address (Munford & Sanders, 2003).

Use of the questioning framework to build self-efficacy. An expression of confidence in envisaging a child-centred approach to LAR was given by Aisling, while Yvonne suggested using questions to invite the conversation (TFG-A). Aisling considered adopting “child-led” looking and responding sessions, whereby children are given “a piece of work and say nothing about it”. She considered that “they might be slow at the start to get into the conversation, but after a couple of minutes” she suggested they might formulate “crazy ideas... about it”. Yvonne suggested the use of “questions to get them going”. While Aisling agreed, she really did advocate for having “a completely.. child led” LAR approach (TFG-A).

This interaction led me to consider the various ways conversations could be stimulated during LAR sessions to develop critical thinking. The Teacher Pack included a questioning

framework (see Appendix B), which included elements of FTC, as a way to decode the multifaceted language of art (Sandell, 2006, p.34); and elements of VTS (Housen, 1999) in which the passive reception of fixed information about the artwork is avoided (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011;Yenawine, 2013). Both frameworks align with my epistemological and ontological assumptions; from a constructionist stance, I assume knowledge is dependent upon human interactions with their social world (Crotty, 1998); and my relational ontological stance assumes that relationships between people or things are central to how they are understood (Slife, 2004). Following the intervention, Emer felt she had more confidence in using the questioning framework in her approach to LAR with other artworks. She felt it gave her “the confidence to... make-up questions as well, because art wouldn't have been the subject” she felt the “ most confident around”. She considered that the questions gave her “the confidence, maybe to go further with this or...choose questions for another piece” (Emer, TFG-B). Her confidence is also suggestive of the her adopting a growth mindset

Employing modes of self-efficacy to the RLARF. The intervention centred around the creation and use of a Teacher Pack (appendix B) which aimed to address teacher self-efficacy issues. Bandura (1997) outlines four primary modes through which self-efficacy can be strengthened: mastery of learning experience; vicarious experiences; verbal persuasion; and physical and emotional states (Wang et al., 2017). These modes were applied to my study, as outlined in Table 13.

Table 13

Modes of Strengthening Self-efficacy as Applied to my Study (Adapted from Bandura, 1997, p.195; Wang et al., 2017).

Mode	Description of Mode	Application of modes to my research in relation to use of the Teacher Pack.
Mastery of learning experience	Opportunities to have a sense of accomplishment provide the most influential source of efficacy information.	Teachers were provided with opportunities to teach LAR with contemporary artwork through the Teacher Pack framework, thus allowing them opportunities to experience success, contributing to the expectation of successful performance in the future.
Vicarious experience (role modelling)	Observing experiences and performances of competent peers with whom they can relate.	Some teacher participants observed me modelling lessons from the Teacher Pack. My experiences were shared with teachers through face-to-face informal discussions and text messages.
Verbal persuasion	Guidance may be provided by providing feedback and encouragement.	Guidance was given to teachers prior to lessons. Informal feedback was given to teachers following lessons.
Emotional arousal	Self-efficacy is fostered through positive interpretations of physical and emotional states.	Teachers' stress reactions were reduced; they were reminded that their participation was voluntary and reassured when/if they were unable to complete an aspect of the lesson.

The findings suggest that exposure to contemporary art within the school had begun to lay foundations for a viable pathway for learning (Downing, 2005; Hardy, 2006). The children's "motivation and enthusiasm" combined with their "creativity and thinking skills" was expanding their social and cultural knowledge" (Hardy, 2006, p.13).

Theme 2: Evolving Perceptions of Art

The data suggested a disparity between TPs and children's perceptions of SOW. Recognising the disparity between their perceptions of art is pertinent because teacher influence "can support as well as stifle individual creativity and meaningful exploration of content" (Gude, 2013, p.7).

Most TPs had not engaged with SOW prior to my study; those who did had done so with perceived limited success. Mick reported the children "had zero ideas [in response to SOW]" so he felt he had to "come up with [an] idea [himself]". Emer expressed disappointment at the absence of engagement with SOW and felt it "didn't ignite children's interest", and they "found it difficult" because they were "not sure what it [was]" (TFG-A). This parallels with the assertion that teachers regard ambiguity as a deterrent when choosing artwork (Flannery, 2012; Pavlou, 2015) and is suggestive of the misconception that contemporary art is beyond children's cognitive abilities (Ching 2015). Flannery (2012) asserts that teachers feel more comfortable in choosing artwork that contains a clear "visual narrative" (p. 49); a feature that is arguably absent from SOW. These findings suggested the absence of opportunities for children to explore artwork that didn't make "immediate sense", therefore limiting their opportunities to construct meaning by building from their subjective realities (Eisner, 2002; Jump, 2019, p.20).

CPs interpretations of art were illustrated in their drawings (see Appendix L). Figure 13 illustrates the perceptions of Child-4, preintervention and post intervention. Initially, Child-4 referred to art: as “fun”, “relaxing” and two dimensional. In CFG-B the drawing suggested a more abstract representation of art. He recognised that art can be: fun, sculptural, three-dimensional and include electricity. Catterall (2005) compares art learning to a “conversation”(p.2) and posits that children require opportunities to “reflect, discuss and reflect again” to achieve meaningful art learning experiences (p.3).

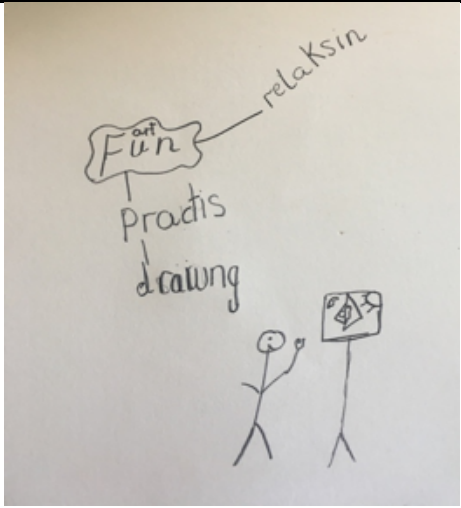
Draw and Talk session from CFG-A	Draw and Talk session from CFG-B
	
Child 4's description of the drawings	
“Art is relaxing. I practice drawing. Art is fun”.	“I think art is relaxing. It can be fun and art can be sculptures. Art can have electricty. Art can have different colours. My favourite art is patterns because they look cool. Some patterens look has 3D”

Figure 13. CP's perception of art in CFG-A and CFG-B

To alleviate this variance in perceptions, the Teacher Pack offered an expanded perspective on contemporary art via an accessible and engageable format that “empowers the idea that culture invites responses “on terms that can be made and re-made” for everyone (Packer & Redmond, p.7), while discrediting the illusion that contemporary art is beyond the intellectual capacity of children (Ching,2015). Following the intervention TPs reported greater confidence in approaching “unknown or unfamiliar” artwork (TFG-B). Yvonne said she felt “much more confident”, while Aisling reported that she “definitely” had more confidence because of “the range of ideas” that could be used (TFG-B).

Critically thinking about SOW. CPs perceptions of SOW seemed to contradict those of TPs. Child 5 expressed her perception of SOW: “because you don’t really know what it is saying, I feel like it has a message behind it” (CFG-A), suggesting that the child was thinking critically about the artwork prior to the intervention. This is reflective of the assertion that when responding to artwork, children’s spontaneity and lack of inhibitions enhance the experience (Weier, 2004; Idema, 2014) in contrast to the perceived lack of knowledge or understanding that adults may convey (Idema, 2014). Following the intervention Child 3’s perception of SOW showed evidence of critical thinking, as illustrated in Figure 14.

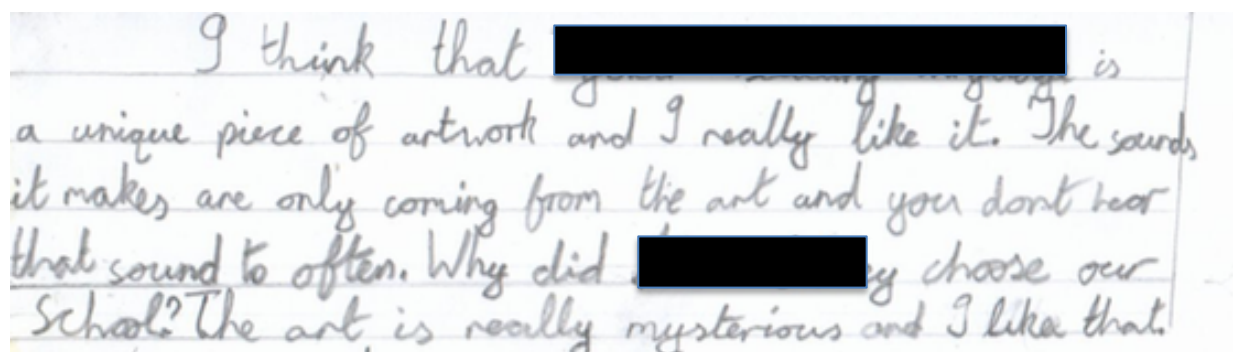
A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink. There are two black rectangular redaction marks. The first redaction mark is over the name of the child, which appears to be 'Yvonne'. The second redaction mark is over the name of the school, which appears to be 'St. Mary's'. The text reads: 'I think that [redacted] is a unique piece of artwork and I really like it. The sounds it makes are only coming from the art and you don't hear that sound to often. Why did [redacted] choose our School? The art is really mysterious and I like that.'

Figure 14. Child 5's opinion about SOW as illustrated in her draw and talk session (CFG-B).

Child 3 initially considered that SOW had been created because “people thought it was going to be nice for the school” (CFG-A). Following the intervention, she regarded SOW as “a unique piece of [art]” which she liked due to its “mysterious” nature (CFG- B). When asked a theme-based question from the Question Framework in the Teacher Pack she interpreted the message of the artwork as “to treat all languages the same... the languages we speak at home are all different” (RJ, p. 4). Child 5’s perceived understanding of SOW was “nature and art has its own language” because she felt “like it was talking” to her. These interpretations demonstrated the children making connections with their own lives and subsequently constructing meaning about SOW, thus demonstrating critical thinking skills (Pavlou, 2015). Hardy (2006) asserts that schools which integrate CAP witness advances in students’ “motivation and enthusiasm”, “creativity and thinking skills” and an expansion of students’ social and cultural knowledge” (p.13). This aligns with Adam’s (2010) assertion, that engagement with CAP offers “an expanded horizon of cultural experience” leading to a wider variety of “creative production” (p.685).

The dialogue and critical thinking that was evidenced in the data as a result of engagement with SOW, is reflective of the “possibilities that exist within this relatively young movement” of public art to “present unique opportunities to explore the multifold realities of the contemporary world” (Shaffrey, 2015, para.15).

Theme 3: Curriculum Structure

Literacy and numeracy focus. Teachers referred to curriculum overload or “the burden of the huge curriculum” (Anne, TFG-A) in influencing their LAR approach. Literacy and numeracy are the subjects that Emer felt she has “to focus on a lot”. Further, she remarked, that subjects like “art, music, drama, history geography [...] get pushed aside (TFG-A). This correlated directly with the NCCA’s (2010) assertion that as teachers attempt to reach high literacy and numeracy standards, insufficient time is available for “thinking, reflecting, problem-solving or exploration”, while the time assigned to subjects including art, is regularly reduced (p.7). During the intervention, TPs also expressed concerns about perceived curricular pressure and time limitations: Mick said he didn’t have sufficient time to complete all LAR sessions in Cycle 1 (RJ, P.6) and TPs expressed concerns about choosing only six students for LAR lessons because they couldn’t include such lessons in their Cúntas Míósúil (RJ, p.4).

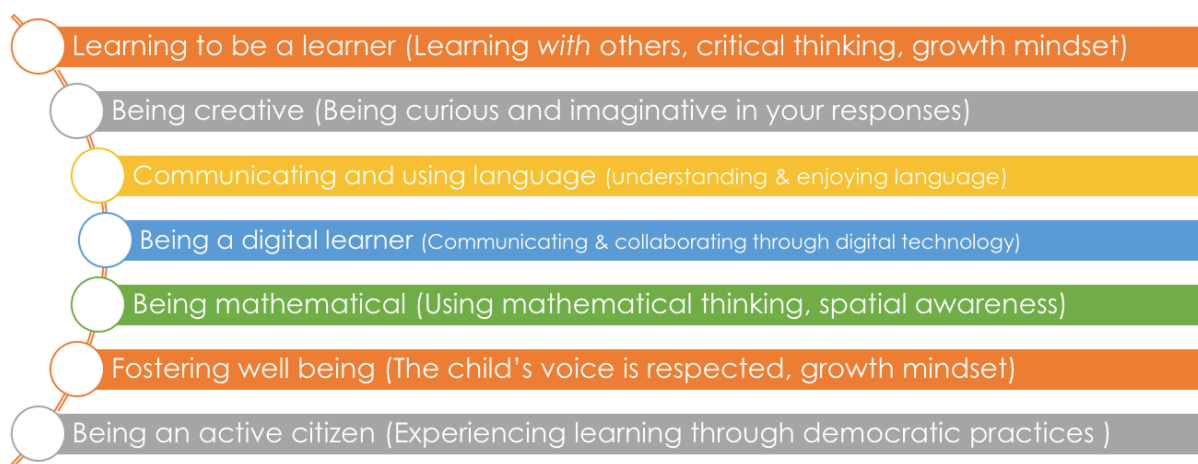
Time constraints are perceived as an obstacle to high quality LAR implementation (Flannery, 2012; Jump, 2019) as exemplified by Anne who expressed concerns about covering “all the strands”, which recently resulted in her not showing the artwork prior to a painting lesson because of her perceived lack of time (TFG-A). Significantly, teachers expressed that they were mindful of the time that is required, but not afforded, to carry out effective LAR. Tom recognised that LAR deserves “giving it the time it needs” in order to “get what you need from it” (TFG-A). This reflection invited agreement from Anne and Emer, who acknowledged that LAR shouldn’t be rushed (TFG-A). TPs perceptions that taking sufficient time to look at art corresponds with research, which suggests that allowing ample time to look at art greatly enhances the viewer’s experience and appreciation of art (Housen, 2001; Idema, 2014), thus accommodating the consideration that is required for an artwork’s message to be unearthed (Perkins, 1994, p.4).

Despite TPs acknowledgement that LAR should be afforded the time it requires, evidence of their LAR practice was on the contrary. TPs perceived the curriculum as being overloaded and literacy and numeracy focused, which appears to have contributed to the evasion or dilution of high-quality LAR practice.

Content integration to skills integration. It was evident that TPs used the PSVAC to inform their visual art planning and teaching, with several references made to “strands”, “skills”, “themes” or “integration” (TFG-A). Tom used a “thematic approach” depending on what he was doing “in other subject areas”, while Aisling approached her art lessons based on “Aistear themes” (TFG-A). CPs relayed their experiences of art integration with different subjects: Child 5 referred to when her “teacher made maths into art [with] symmetry”, while Child 2 referred to an art experience with maths when, “you colour half of a shape”.

An integrated approach to visual art teaching can result in narrowing the range of artwork addressed, whereby specific artwork is chosen based on its integrative potential (Flannery, 2012). Teachers’ use and comprehension of curriculum integration emphasises content knowledge transfer across subjects, as opposed to skills transfer (NCCA, 2005), which may inhibit the preservation of “the integrity of visual arts”, as well as the delivery of high-quality visual art education (Ní Bhroin, 2012, p.60). Consequently, my research offered a RLARF in which looking and responding to visual art was not subsumed by the dominant curricular areas of literacy and numeracy. Informed by the NCCA’s Draft Primary Curriculum (2020), skills acquired from engaging with RLARF were put to the fore of the teacher-pack (see Figure 15).

Skills and competencies



(NCCA, 2020, p.10)

Figure 15. Skills and competencies related to the RLARF as outlined in the Teacher Pack

Because contemporary art is often ideas-driven, the development of essential, interpretative critical thinking skills is required to engage with these ideas (Charman & Ross, 2006). Following the intervention, TPs recognised that engaging with SOW presented opportunities for skills-led integration. Aisling recalled a lesson whereby the children were “imagining what they were ...in a world with sounds from [SOW]”, which resulted in them “bringing drama into it”. She regarded this as “using the art as...the stimulus for the drama lesson”. Yvonne reflected that her group “were fascinated by the science about it all- that the language was coming from outside from the moisture in the ground”. Therefore, she considered that the art was “definitely leading to those questions and scientific thinking...about how it all works” (TFG-B). These examples suggest that engagement with SOW offered children opportunities to develop competencies related to “being creative”, “learning to be a learner” and communicating and using language” (NCCA, 2020, p.10).

Child-centred approach. Charman and Ross (2006, p.40) posit that teachers and children may fear “exposing oneself” in giving a “personal response to an art work through open discussion”. Pavlou (2015) suggests that “through opportunities offered for engaging in observational and reflective practises with artwork an initial groundwork is set that can challenge pre-service teachers’ preconceptions about art” (p.192). Looking logs were available for TPs and CPs as a way to respond to SOW in a contemplative way which would scaffold discussion. Following the intervention, children and teachers expressed appreciation for the opportunities given to children to be autonomous in how they responded to SOW. Child 4 conveyed that his favourite aspect of engaging with SOW was the choice he was given in how he could respond through the looking logs: “I agree with, [Child 1], because you could have drawn...what was in your mind and write about how art is joyful and nice” (CFG-B). From the teachers’ perspective, Aisling, also regarded the freedom afforded through the use of looking logs positively: “[children] took ownership [and had] the freedom to do whatever they wanted, to respond in any way. And they enjoyed that” (TFG-B). Facilitating children’s autonomy correlates with literature, which ascertains that viewers of artwork should be given more autonomy when constructing meaning (Housen,1999), leading to opportunities for inquiry organically forming from the child’s response and resulting dialogue (Hubard, 2010).

Activating a child-centred gallery space. When referring to an art gallery visit Child 3 had taken, she mentioned she wasn’t “allowed to touch [the art] because it’s...fragile” (CFG-A), which corresponds with Weier’s (2004) assertion that art gallery spaces may deter children’s natural explorative nature. Recognition that contemporary art can be made accessible to viewers due to its adaptable nature (Wojtowicz-Jankowska, 2016) was pivotal to the design of the Teacher Pack.

Figure 16 illustrates how CPs and TPs were encouraged to view the artwork from different perspectives, in a way that supported the children’s explorative nature (Weier, 2004). This environment helped assist CPs and TPs in taking the first step in connecting with an artwork- by looking at it (Yenawine, 2013).

Use of the Viewing Spaces

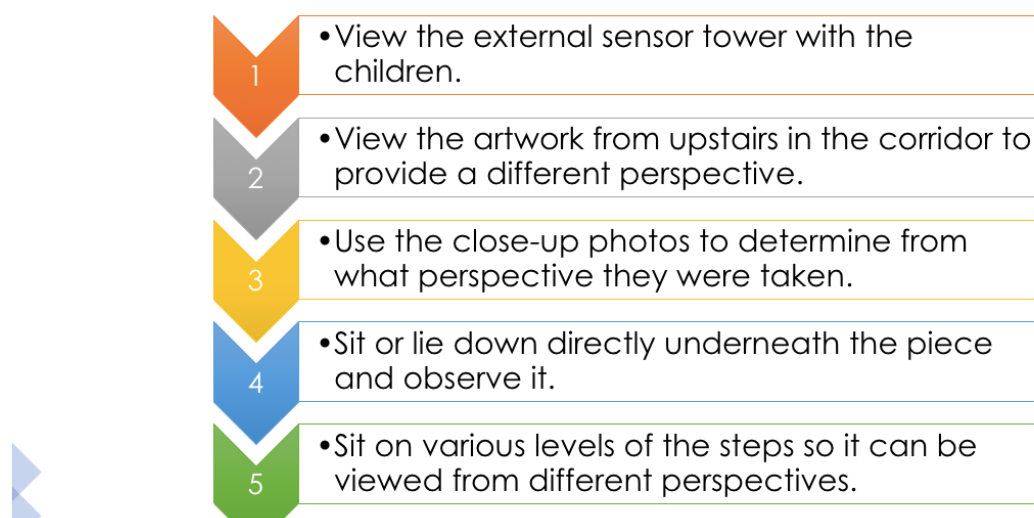


Figure 16. Suggested ways to use the viewing space as illustrated in the Teacher Pack

The use of the multiple viewing spaces encouraged viewers to construct meaning from interacting with the artwork, as illustrated by Emer, who recalled that “looking at the piece from different perspectives...really added to the experience for the children” (TFG-B). Child 4 reported her favourite LAR lesson was viewing SOW from “upside down” and Child 3 considered that “each time” she “went to a different place...it was a different perspective”(CFG-B). She deciphered that when lying down, SOW “looked like something jumping...and from the side it

looked like hot air balloons” (CFG-B). These opportunities allowed the children to draw personal connections with the SOW’s form.

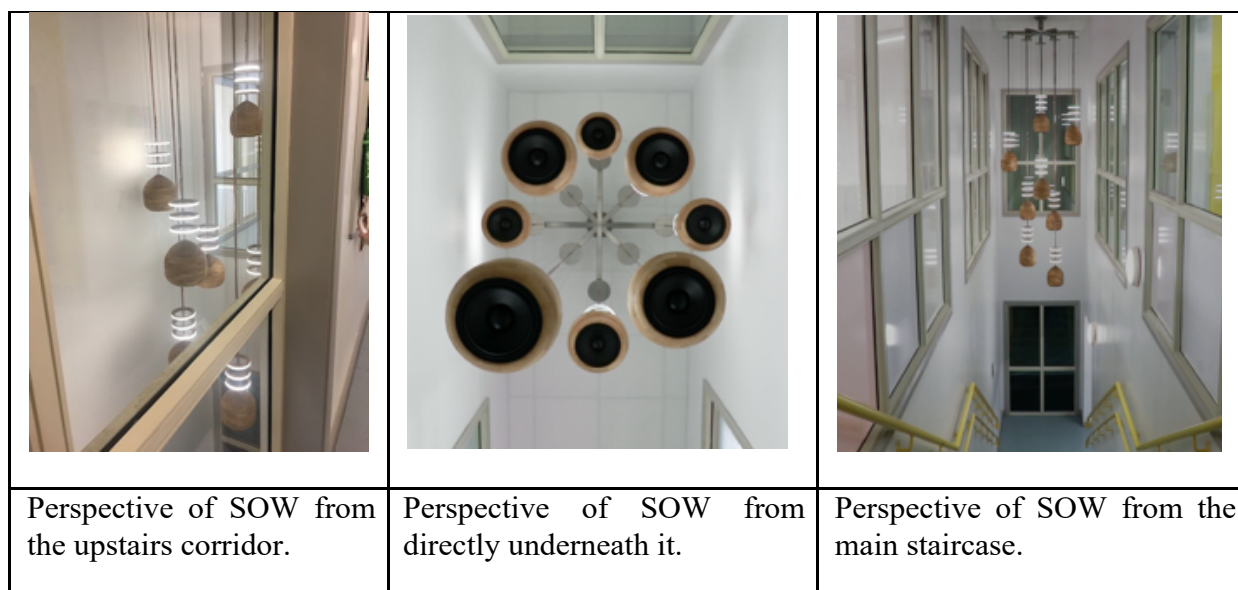


Figure 17. Viewing SOW from various perspectives as suggested in the Teacher Pack (Commissioned Artist, 2019)

Figure 17 illustrates some of the perspectives from which SOW could be viewed, as per the Teacher Pack suggestions. Similar to the reading of “multimodal” texts, meaning was created by each ‘reader’ depending on his/her interpretations of and connections with SOW, thus allowing the CPs to use their own “social and cultural resources for making meaning” (Hasset & Curwood, 2009, p.271). During CTAT sessions, I considered it important to seat children circularly on their cushions (RJ, p.5); an arrangement that echoed CTBT practice, whereby each person is given an opportunity to respectfully speak amongst peers who demonstrate considerate behaviour and attentive listening (Roche, 2015). SOW’s location in the school’s stairwell suggested transience; therefore, providing a comfortable seating arrangement encouraged teachers and children to contemplate and talk about SOW (Cranz & Rushton, 2020) in a social constructivist manner, leading to knowledge formation, knowledge sharing and critical thinking.

Theme 4: LAR Reform through Critical Thinking and Art Talk

Munford and Sanders (2003) emphasise that action research stimulates social change in the context within which it is created. My research followed a critical theoretic approach, which accepts the significance of understanding a position as a means of altering it (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006), therefore warranting an exploration of the contextual factors influencing the presenting phenomenon.

Developing a skills-led pedagogy: CTBT to CTAT. Critical thinking is necessary for making sense of our lives and our world (Roche 2015; Freire, 2005); without which we jeopardise becoming “mere receivers and consumers of others’ knowledge” (Roche, 2015, p.11). Prior to the intervention, teachers began to recognise the opportunities to adapt CTBT to looking and responding to art: “you can easily do your...critical thinking on a picture” (Mick, TFG-A). When probed to elicit what CTBT related skills could be transferred to Critical Thinking and Art Talk [CTAT], the following were mentioned in TFG-A: Anne thought the children were learning to “give their opinions”, respect others and use “higher order thinking skills to verbalise and interpret”. Emer reflected on the social-constructivist and child-centred nature of CTBT, whereby “one person's idea might spark something else in the next person, and the conversation builds, and develops...often without any teacher input”. Tom drew parallels in children’s approach to making personal connections with books, and the way “they see [art] and describe it differently...based on their life experiences”.

Critical Thinking and Art Talk (CTAT).

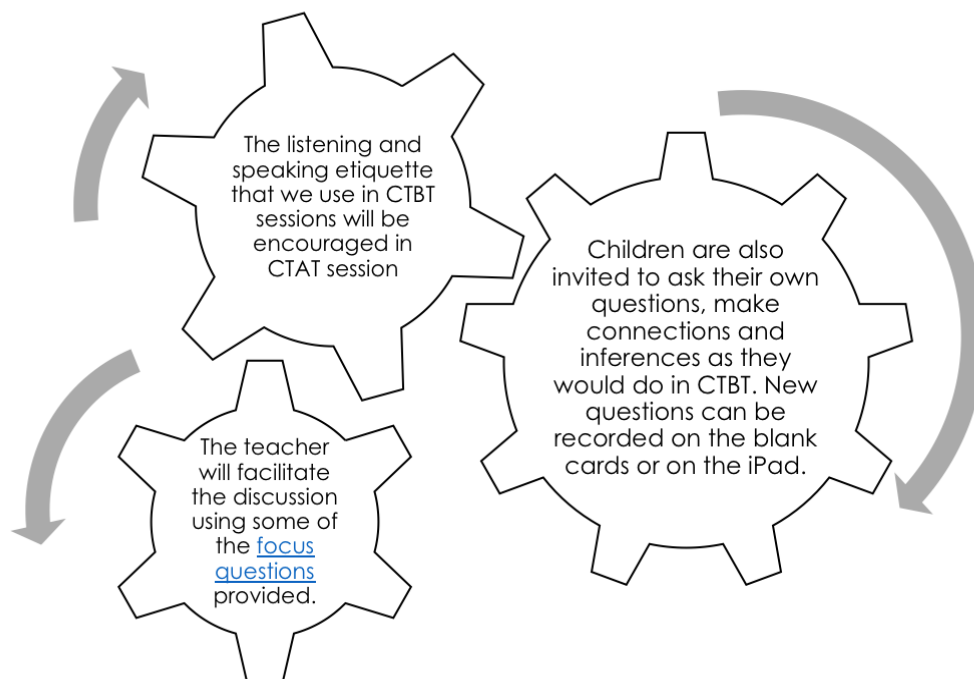


Figure 18. Critical Thinking and Art Talk guidelines as outlined in the Teacher Pack

Recognition that CTBT could be used in a CTAT format was encouraging to hear at the start of the research (RJ, p1). To support the transition from CTBT to CTAT, the Teacher Pack provided guidelines on how to facilitate this, as outlined in Figure 18.

Development of Critical Thinking and Art Talk. Both practices of CTBT and CTAT aim to diverge from the traditional, “monologic” models of education in which information is transmitted to children; opting rather for a dialogic learning experience (Charman & Ross, 2006; Roche, 2015, p.9). The CTAT approach used a triadic interaction model (Lye et al., 2017), as illustrated in Figure 19, in which children, teachers and the artwork interact with each other, resulting in meaning being constructed through social constructivism (Wright, 2003). These interactions play an influential role in determining “children’s attitudes and motivations to

respond to the artworks” (Lye et al., 2017, p.4). The use of this approach echoes the epistemological assumptions that I hold, whereby I consider that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner. In a previous excerpt, Anne mentioned that a colleague had “thought through very good questions to get [children] to think” (TFG-A). CTAT developed by adapting the CTBT approach to include a CTAT questioning framework based on FTC (Sandell, 2006) and VTS (Housen, 1999). TPs reported children demonstrating critical thinking through the use of the questioning framework, which “really guided them towards [critical thinking]” (Mick, TFG-B).

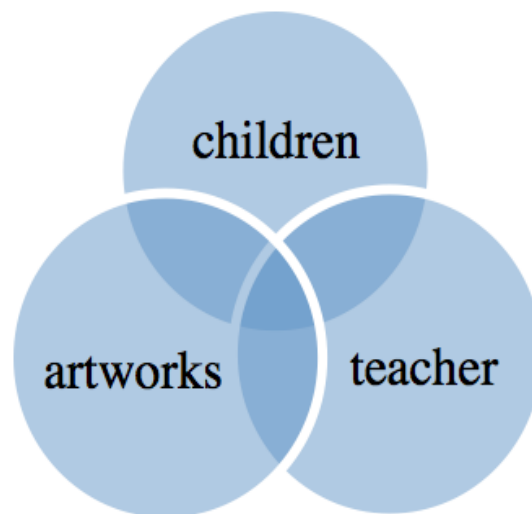


Figure 19. Triadic interaction model (Lye et al., 2017, p.4)

CTBT limitations. It was apparent that during the CFG-A, CPs “tended not to talk to each other but to me”, which I considered was “maybe as a result of the CTBT format in which each child takes their turn to talk” (RJ, p.2). They tended to raise their hands in response to questions as opposed to the expected flow of conversation that comes with focus group discussions (Creswell, 2008) so I had to consider if this format would continue in CTAT sessions- which made me more aware of encouraging CPs to voice their opinions in an open and respectful manner (RJ,

p.2). To alleviate this, I used paraphrasing -a feature of VTS- during CTAT sessions. Paraphrasing guides the flow of conversation and demonstrates to children that their contributions have been listened to and understood, thus reinforcing that they are respected and competent participants (Yenawine, 2013), which aligns with the relational and child-centred values that I hold, while also engendering a growth mindset.

Growth mindset and transformation. Successful adoption of a growth mindset within school culture requires teachers to lead by example (Muncaster & Clarke, 2016). Mick illustrated the concept of growth mindset, when he referred to a book about Jean-Paul Basqué: “He said all art is good art and I think that's brilliant”. He asserted that when “his class heard that...they actually loved that” (TFG-A). Some teachers displayed evidence of having a “fixed mindset” (Dweck, 2019, p.26) in terms of their perceived ability or the children’s perceived abilities with art. Mick considered that “if [art] is not every teacher’s forte, it’s not every child's forte either” (TFG-A). References were made about children who were regarded as being “weak” at art, and it was expressed that it was “hard” to encourage such students to “do a bit better” (TFG-A).

Yvonne relayed a positive experience following the intervention in growth mindset approach was evident. She reflected it was “lovely to see... kids improve in certain aspects and how delighted they are...when they realise they could do something better” (TFG-B). Growth mindset was relevant to me throughout the research. During a CTAT session in Cycle 1, “some CPs did not wish to respond to SOW through movement” (RJ, p.4). Rather than attributing their lack of contribution to a lack of ability, I recognised the situation as a challenge to be embraced (Muncaster & Clarke, 2016). A discussion about growth mindset ensued and I used this as an opportunity to seek feedback from CPs on my teaching, thus fostering the “culture of everyone as

a learner” (Muncaster & Clarke, 2016, p.9). Reflecting on this incident led to changes in Cycle 2 of the intervention, whereby children were given more autonomy in how to respond to SOW.

Social change through action research. “There has always been a tension in art education, between the tendency of schooling towards convergence, and that of art towards divergence” (Granville, 2011, p.358). My study initiated action by seeking how the situation in St. Mary’s could be transformed (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006) to rebalance the scales of visual art education, by granting teachers and children opportunities to recognise and utilise the benefits afforded from looking and responding to contemporary art.

Roche (2015) asserts pedagogical success is dependent upon the relationship between teachers and their students; teachers who are available to their students foster a unified and safe environment (Burton, 2012). Key features of the Teacher Pack enabled a child-centred and relational practice to develop during LAR sessions. These features included offering children choice on how to respond to SOW, and providing a Questioning Framework in which knowledge was co-created dialogically and democratically between children and teachers. Further, TPs, were offered autonomy in terms of how they used the Teacher Pack to meet their students’ needs. Anne mentioned her experience in using the looking logs with a student, who she regarded as being “severely dyslexic”. Anne transcribed the child’s thoughts on SOW into the looking log, and saw this as an opportunity for the child to illustrate “really interesting” and “very smart” ideas. She concluded that the child “had a lot more to say than you'd give her credit for ” (TFG-B).

Transforming professional development. Professional development is integral to educational reform and involves “systematic efforts to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students” (Guskey, 2002, p.381). My study may be recognised as a method of professional development that

assisted teachers in: developing their capacities in using contemporary artwork when facilitating LAR lessons; changing their attitudes and beliefs about LAR practice; and changing children's learning outcomes. Guskey (2002) asserts that in order for a professional development program to succeed, consideration needs to be given to the opportunities for teachers' to develop their skills base, and to obtain a range of practical ideas that will lend themselves to daily classroom life, while ultimately improving children's learning. Table 14 outlines the professional development process of Emer: by implementing changes in her LAR practice she garnered evidence in support of children's learning, which ultimately led to changes in her beliefs and attitudes about LAR (Guskey, 2002, p.383).

Table 14 *Changes in Classroom Practices, Learning Outcomes and Teachers' Beliefs & Attitudes* (Adapted from Guskey, 2002, p. 383).

Use of Teacher pack to reform LAR approaches	Use of: collaborative groups, CTAT	Children demonstrate critical thinking when looking and responding to the artwork.	Teachers demonstrate more self- efficacy in their approach to LAR with contemporary artwork.
Data evidence that correlates with each stage	"I think you get better feedback, obviously with the smaller group...in an art class that's quite unusual "	Children "talk about art in the same way as we do our literacy bookwork"	"the questions gave me confidence to go further with ...another piece...as well as helping the children, it helps me as a teacher"

Emer changed her classroom practice as per the Teacher Pack suggestions; use of collaborative groups, and use of CTAT. In determining if student learning outcomes had changed, she reported that children were talking about the artwork in a similar manner to how they had done in their CTBT sessions. She illustrated a change in her belief and attitude by reporting that elements of the teacher pack had given her more confidence to continue using the artwork in future LAR sessions and perhaps with other contemporary artwork.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter elucidated that prior to the intervention, TPs approach to LAR practice was primarily influenced by low self-efficacy and adopting pedagogical approaches informed by a literacy and numeracy focused curriculum. The data suggests that the intervention has positively influenced teacher practice, perceptions and ultimately children's learning outcomes in relation to LAR, through the use of a contemporary PCfA artwork and a supportive LAR Teacher Pack, which subsequently can be recognised as a channel to teacher professional development (Guskey, 2002). The influence of the intervention was reliant upon recent changes in the school culture; namely utilisation of a democratised and child-centred approach to literacy through CTBT, and the whole-school adoption of a growth mindset.

The relational ontology that underpins my research holds true for the relationships between children and teachers but also for the relationship between the artwork and its viewers. Irwin & O' Donoghue (2012) refer to relational art, whereby the artwork serves to act as a catalyst in creating opportunities for people to come together and relate to each other; thus, the relationship becomes an extension of the artwork. In the context of this research, the intervention served to ignite the catalytic nature of SOW, in bringing children and teachers together in a dialogic and democratic manner, to extend their knowledge formation and critical thinking skills.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

My action research study aimed to determine if Looking and Responding [LAR] practice within my school could be reformed by a Reformed LAR Framework [RLARF] based on a contemporary Per Cent for Art [PCfA] artwork. In answering the main research question the following sub-questions were addressed:

- (i) What factors contributed to the underuse of SOW when attending to Looking and Responding?
- (ii) To what extent did LAR practice influence children's experiences and perceptions of art ?
- (iii) What factors contributed to reforming LAR practice within the school?

Critical Discussion of Findings

Valuable data was collected via semi-structured focus group interviews with children and teachers, and from my reflexive journal. This triangulated data allowed me to ascertain the factors contributing to teachers' LAR practice and the influences such practices had on children's experiences and perceptions of art. Further, I was able to ascertain the factors that contributed and supported the implementation of the RLARF.

Factors contributing to the underuse of SOW in LAR practice. The data gathered cohesively correlated with findings from the literature review to indicate the factors that contributed to the phenomena presented within St. Mary's; despite the developmental and educational potential of LAR, classroom practice did not reflect this due to low teacher self-efficacy, and a curriculum structure that emphasises literacy and numeracy development.

The findings suggest low self-efficacy amongst teacher participants [TPs] was a major contributor to their LAR practice, which manifested in several ways: a reliance on familiar or traditionally accepted artwork; use of artwork that was deemed age-appropriate; and evasion of LAR in favour of creating art.

Art lessons predominantly focused on the creation of art in favour of LAR practice, most notably because TPs perceived a sense of pressure to have a finished product at the end of a lesson (Jump, 2019), while also sensing that children expected and preferred to create art rather than to engage in LAR. Infrequent LAR practice suggested that TPs did not fully recognise LAR as a viable learning experience (Flannery, 2012). Data suggested a prevalence of ‘school art’, whereby artwork was: governed by teacher-established rules; lacked meaningful individual variation; was aesthetically pleasing; and lacked influence from the art world (Efland, 1976).

LAR practice was also influenced by a curriculum structure that placed perceived pressure to focus on children’s literacy and numeracy skills development, while failing to promote the benefits attainable from LAR. As a means of meeting literacy and numeracy expectations (DES, 2011), TPs commonly integrated visual art with other curricular areas. Concerningly, evasion of LAR was common and was attributed to low teacher self-efficacy or perceived curricular pressure.

Children’s experiences and perceptions of art. TP’s LAR practice influenced children’s experiences and perceptions of art. Findings indicate children had infrequent experiences with LAR, limited to a repertoire of artwork from which ‘ambiguous’, three-dimensional, or contemporary artwork were exempt; thus limiting their opportunities for critical skills development. Children’s innate curiosity was illustrated in the pre-intervention data in their approach to CTBT. However, their lack of exposure to ambiguous contemporary artwork (Eisner, 2002; Flannery, 2012) suggests they were not afforded opportunities to develop interpretive critical thinking (Charman & Ross, 2006) to unearth the ideas it presented (Perkins, 1994). CPs classroom art experiences were limited to viewing two-dimensional representations of artwork, indicating an absence of exposure to three-dimensional art (INTO, 2010). The prevalence of ‘school art’ (Efland, 1976), and a reliance on thematic art integration (Flannery, 2012) presented children with

learning experiences that were often void of critical thought or risk-taking, which are considered to be fundamental features of art practice (Granville, 2012).

Data suggested commonality between the TPs and CPs perceptions of art as a product (Jump, 2019), with little recognition for LAR as a viable learning experience (Flannery, 2012). However, a disparity between TP's and CP's perceptions of SOW became apparent. TPs perceived that children demonstrated a lack of understanding of SOW, which contributed to their inhibitions (Idema, 2014) and ultimate evasion of SOW. However, CPs appeared to embrace the artwork without inhibitions (Weier, 2004; Idema, 2014). TPs thinking on this matter was reformed following the intervention due to attaining mastery experiences with LAR (Bandura, 1997) while witnessing children's learning progress (Guskey, 2003).

What factors have contributed to reforming LAR practice? The RLARF positively influenced and reformed LAR practice within my school while acting as a channel for successful professional development. A foundation for the implementation of a child-centred, relational and skills-based approach to LAR was created through the implementation of Critical Thinking and Book Talk (CTBT) (Roche, 2015) and the whole-school adoption of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2019).

The Teacher Pack was the influential framework through which the RLARF intervention was presented to TPs. The questioning framework within the Teacher Pack, was informed by CTBT (Roche, 2015); Visual Thinking Strategies [VTS] (Housen & Yenawine, 2018); and Form, Theme and Context [FTC] (Sandell, 2006). The findings highlight that the questioning framework which facilitated *Critical Thinking and Art Talk* [CTAT], acted as a linchpin through which teachers facilitated social-constructivist, child-centred discussions based on SOW, during which reciprocal meaning making took place. Through this dialogue, the roles of "the teacher-of-the-

students and the students-of-the-teacher” were transformed to “teacher-student with students-teachers” (Freire, 2000, p. 80).

The Teacher Pack design and implementation was informed by Bandura’s (1997) modes of developing teacher self-efficacy, through which TPs were afforded mastery experiences in relation to LAR practice. Overwhelmingly, TPs self- confidence was transformed with regards to their LAR approach; they came to regard the Teacher Pack as a “framework’ for the future (TFG-B). Furthermore, through CTAT, TPs appeared to recognise the latent interest that children had in unearthing the messages that SOW presented, which prior to the intervention, had not been recognised. This suggested to TPs that engagement with SOW through LAR practice could offer vital learning opportunities that fostered children’s critical thinking skills. TP’s recognition of a change in children’s learning was instrumental in transforming their beliefs and attitudes to approaching LAR with SOW (Guskey, 2002).

Recommendations for Future Practice

Through my research, I have proposed, implemented and reflected upon a Reformed Looking And Responding Framework based on my school’s PCfA artwork, while attending to the needs’ of the teachers and children. My research has established that the use of the RLARF has transformed teachers’ and children’s interactions with SOW, while concurrently facilitating critical thinking skills development.

A recent review by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht [DCHG] outlines that a significant funding increase will be available through the PCfA scheme (DCHG, 2019), suggesting that Irish schools will continue to be commissioned with high-quality, contemporary, public artwork. As the Per Cent for Art scheme acts as a bridge between the contemporary art world and the public, I recognise my RLARF as a further link between SOW

and its public, namely the school community of St. Mary's. I assert that my RLARF, which has been informed by seminal art educational research and practice, may be employed as a pedagogical tool by other primary schools to engage with and learn from the contemporary art afforded to them by the PCfA scheme. The RLARF tool will support teachers in fostering children's abilities "to understand, participate in, and contribute to contemporary cultural conversations" (Gude 2013, p.14), thus creating the "engaged and responsive public" that public art requires to flourish (Mac Giolla Léith 2004, p.10) while embracing the numerous directions that public art is now taking within Ireland (Shaffrey, 2015).

Bourke (2014) emphasises that research ceases to end once findings have been distributed. The action research cycles that were instrumental to the implementation of the RLARF, may continue to evolve with the remainder of the teaching staff into the future. Further discussions and reflections with teachers and children will allow the action research cycles to continue, thus providing opportunities to generate new knowledge and understanding. "For teachers' professional learning to have the impact required or expected, it needs to be modelled, reinforced, and supported by those in formal leadership positions" (Harris & Jones, 2017, p.331). Consequently, this RLARF requires modelling, reinforcement and support from the principal and senior management team within the school, to obtain the desired impact on teachers' professional learning. It is evident that my research has created new knowledge and skills for both teachers and children that will act as a reformed framework for LAR presently, and into the future.

Education is recognised as a pivotal structure within the economic, social and cultural framework of Irish society (DES, 2004). Contemporary educational practice has resulted in a lack of emphasis on developing critical thinking skills, thus asserting the need to refocus "how" rather than "what" we teach (Barnard, 2010, p.28; Wiggins, 20105); however, the qualitative

nature of art encourages us to ask ‘how’ rather than ‘what’ we teach (Sandell, 2012; Wiggins, 2015). Thus, through my research, visual art education and particularly Looking and Responding practice have has been reformed and presented in a manner that brings critical thinking to the fore of educational practice through the use of a contemporary, Per Cent for Art artwork.

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Appendices

Appendix A

St. Mary's Per Cent for Art Project Brief

PROJECT BRIEF

St. Mary's NS is inviting proposals from artists from a variety of disciplines, to add a permanent feature to their school. The artwork can be sited either inside, outside of the school, or somehow linking interior and exterior spaces. The primary audience for the artwork is the students, but the work is also for the school's staff, parents, and visitors, now and into the future. The following suggestions have been outlined by the school:

- The artwork might involve sonic and visual elements
- The artwork could highlight some of the unique exterior spaces surrounding the school
- The artwork could be interactive, allowing the students some form of participation
- The artwork should be able to last into the future, with an outlined plan for maintenance
- The artwork should make people think about their environment in different ways
- The artwork might link to different stories and narrative that explore the school on different levels
- The artwork should be accessible to all, standing out as a prominent element that invites sustained engagement

CONTEXT

St. Mary's is a co-educational school with children from over 40 different countries, many from Eastern Europe and Africa. Approximately 30% of our children are from countries other than Ireland and many of these start with us with little or no English.. We are very proud of our multi-cultural environment and feel that this is of tremendous benefit to the children in our school. St. Mary's recently had a new school built. This Per Cent for Art commission emerged from this project.

THE COMMISSIONER

St. Mary's National School is a school with a strong commitment to the Arts and Creativity. We very much believe that developing children's imaginative potential and creative capacity is every bit as essential as ensuring their growth in what have been termed the *core* curricular areas, perhaps even more important. We encourage teachers to look for creative approaches and opportunities in all areas and to allow scope in learning for children to take responsibility and to see and recognise the possible in the problems they encounter.

St. Mary's has been very much involved in ACAE's Creative Schools Award since its inception several years ago. We are committed to all art forms but our focus for the past couple of years has been on music. Currently, we are engaged with our local County Council and have an artist in residence who works with children and staff on choral singing. This has been very successful and our school choir has grown and improved significantly as the partnership has grown. We run a Ukulele Orchestra that comprises children, parents, grandparents and local people. The orchestra performs at local and school events. The musical highlight of our year is our annual Choral Festival which takes place each May and involves local schools and choirs.

In St. Mary's we believe that the learning environment should inspire the imagination of all who visit our school and very much want our Per Cent for Art project to be a project that inspires not only staff and children currently in the school but also anyone who will be part of our school well into the future.

- Principal, St. Mary's NS

Appendix B

Teacher Pack



Introduction

3

Dear teachers,

This Teacher Pack presents a variety of learning opportunities to use as a means of Looking and Responding to SOW using a *Critical Thinking and Art Talk* approach. The ideas can be used at your discretion.

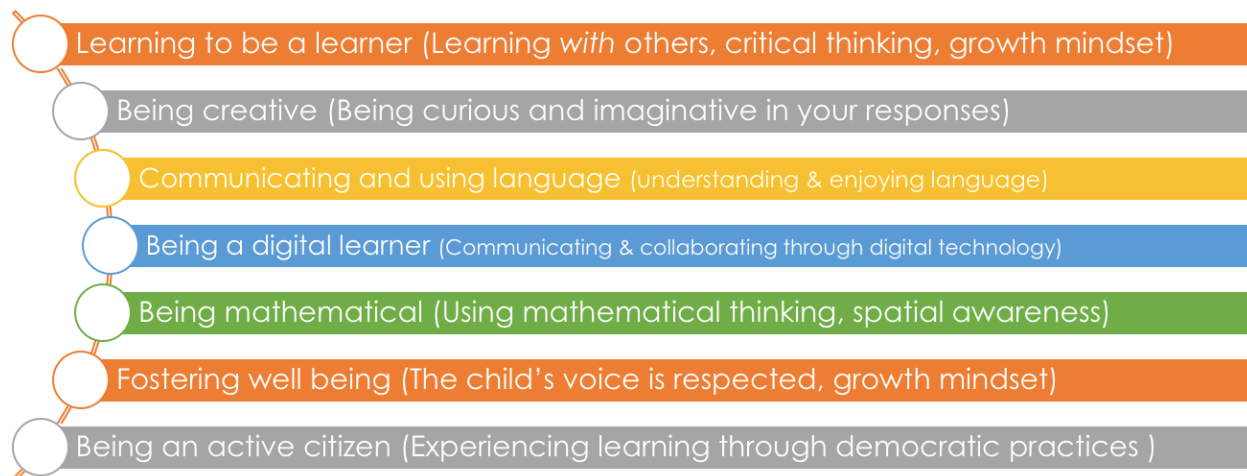
You are invited to use the lesson ideas to suit the needs of your class. Where possible, the children may be offered choice when responding to the artwork.

You or the children may produce some novel ideas or questions of your own during the course of this project. I hope you and the children enjoy it!

Many thanks, Dawn

Skills and competencies

4



(NCCA, 2020, p.10)



image source:
(Commissioned Artist, 2019)

About the artwork

5

SOW is comprised of two parts: a cluster of sound-and-light-producing sculptures in the school's entry stairwell, and a sensor tower outside of the school. The artwork uses environmental data that is commonly related to the growth of plants. The moisture of the soil, light and temperature outside of the school provides organic compositional parameters that manipulate a generative, eight-channel vocal composition. The artwork provides the school with a language of its own.

Critical Thinking and Art Talk (CTAT).

6

Where possible, children will sit in a circular manner and each takes his/her turn to respond to the artwork. The questioning framework includes questions to generate discussion.

Like CTBT, we will look and respond to SOW in a similar manner, called CTAT. Children are encouraged to discuss, question, make connections, draw inferences and think critically about SOW.

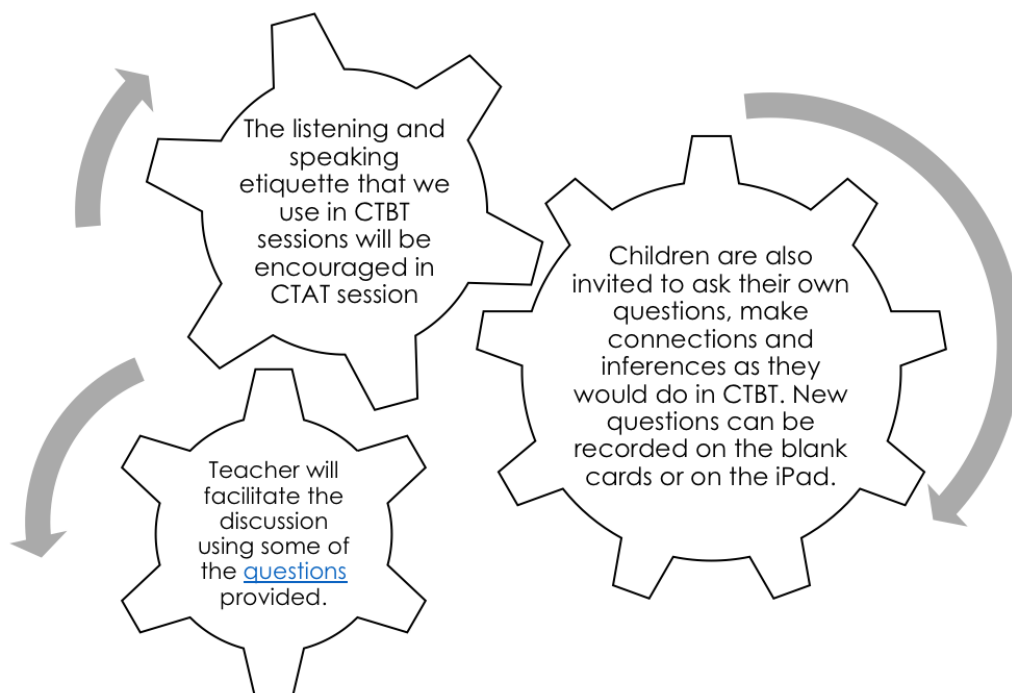
Ensure sufficient time to look at the artwork before engaging in questioning. Remember that looking from different perspectives is encouraged.

You and the children are invited to use the looking logs when responding- doodles or words can be recorded to help with discussion and ideas.



Critical Thinking and Art Talk (CTAT).

7



8



Use of the Viewing Spaces

While viewing SOW, feel free to make use of the cushions. These have been provided so that you and the children can take time while viewing, responding and interacting with the piece.

Furthermore, it allows the piece to be viewed from different perspectives. The next page outlines some possible ways to view the artwork.

Use of the Viewing Spaces

9

- 1 • View the external sensor tower with the children.
- 2 • View the artwork from upstairs in the corridor to provide a different perspective.
- 3 • Use the close-up photos to determine from what perspective they were taken.
- 4 • Sit or lie down directly underneath the piece and observe it.
- 5 • Sit on various levels of the steps so it can be viewed from different perspectives.

Vocabulary and Questions

10

- Vocabulary has been chosen so we can discuss SOW with more confidence.
- Questions have been formed around the **Form**, **Theme**, **Context** (FTC) framework and **Visual Thinking Strategies** (VTS).
- The questions and vocabulary have been colour-coded based on the FTC approach.
- Questions annotated with '(LL)' are particularly suited to use with the looking logs.

Vocabulary

11

1. Contemporary art
2. Medium /media
3. Sculpture
4. _____
5. _____
6. Installation



Questioning Framework

14

<u>Form Theme and Context (FTC)</u>	<u>Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)</u>
Form refers to how the work "is." Theme Theme or subject matter refers to what the work is about. Context refers to when, where, by and for whom, and why the art was created (Sandell, 2006, p.34.)	<i>What's going on here?</i> <i>What do you see that make's you say that?</i> <i>What more can you find?</i> (Housen, 2001)

Form, Theme & Context & **VTS** questions

15

Discussion can be started with: *What's going on here?*

Some of the **form** questions can be followed by,

What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?

so the child continues to investigate SOW and justifies their point of view.

- *What does this artwork remind you of?*
- *What makes this artwork different/ the same as a painting?*
- *If you could touch it, what would each of the elements feel like?*
- *I wonder why the artist included an internal and external element?*

Form, **Theme** & Context & VTS questions

16

Discussion can be started with: *What's going on here?*

Some of the **theme** questions can be followed by,

What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?

so the child continues to investigate SOW and justifies their point of view.

- *I wonder why the artist choose the title, SOW, for this piece?*
- *Does the artist have a hidden message?*
- *What is the artwork trying to communicate with us?*
- *If you had to give it a title, what would it be and why?*

Form, Theme & **Context** & VTS questions

17

Discussion can be started with: *What's going on here?*

Some of the **context** questions can be followed by,

What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find?

so the child continues to investigate SOW and justifies their point of view.

- *I wonder if the artist considered the location of SOW as an important feature of the artwork?*
- *If you could choose another area of the school to locate this installation, where would you pick and why?*
- *Would this artwork be effective in another building?*
- *If you could fold this artwork up and bring it anywhere, where would you bring it?*

Multisensory approach

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SOW invites us to not only look, but to listen, touch and communicate with it.

The children may be offered **choice** on how they would like to respond.

Invite the children to respond to the piece with their body through freeze-frame or movement, which can be recorded on the iPad.	The children can use the printed photos to actively locate elements of SOW. <i>From what perspective was this photo taken? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>
Multisensory	
Invite the children to lie directly underneath the piece, close their eyes and listen to it. They may 'talk back' to the art and record it on the iPad.	Invite the children to touch the sensor tower. They may respond to this in their <i>looking logs</i> through words or sketches.

Appendix C

*Table of Best Practice Outlining Aim of Current, Key Arts-in-Education Initiatives and
Application to my Research*

Title of initiative Parties involved	Description of the main features of the initiative	Features applied to my research project
Ark 1x1 The Arts Council, Cavan Arts, DES Jobst Graeve (curator)	Aims to effectively use the Ark's collection of visual art. Children to develop a deep knowledge of the works on an individual and collective basis while developing visual confidence and awareness. Children view an exhibition of thirteen paintings on a gradual basis throughout the academic year Classroom guide containing information relating to the artist prompt questions related to each painting and a glossary of art-based terminology. (Ark, n.d)	Teacher guide including information about the installation, press release and video. Key terms/vocabulary related to the piece explained. Themes: teacher self-efficacy, community of practice
Art and Philosophy in the Classroom Kathy Fitzpatrick Aislinn O' Donnell.	Interdisciplinary pedagogical approach to contemporary visual art. Combination of philosophy arts practice and gallery education practices (The Ark, 2014)	Use of contemporary art. Focus on LAR
Art in Action Uillinn West Cork Arts Centre, Municipal Art Centre, Poland	The project aims to enable the development of children's creativity, self-confidence, curiosity, communication and critical thinking skills. Interactive multimedia exhibition for children in which artists use images, objects and actions to communicate with their surrounding world. Children act as collaborative co-creators of the interactive artwork, which is displayed as part of the gallery exhibition (Arts-in-Education, n.d).	Potential to develop critical thinking skills through transfer of critical thinking skills being developed in CTBT (Roche, 2015). Interactive /multisensory nature of the piece will be explored (Hope, 2018) Child-centred approach.

Better Words EVA International, Limerick Art and Culture Office	Series of 5 weeks of workshops for children culminating in the publication of Better Words: A field Guide to Contemporary Art and Culture. The workshops he included: Use of Visual Thinking Strategies [VTS] Creation of collaborative installation with an artist Writing workshops Encouragement of deductive skills when looking at the work of artists (Mulrennan, 2019).	Questioning , dialogic practice (Roche, 2015) Development of critical thinking skills (Housen, 2001; Perkins, 1994; Roche, 2015) Development of critical thinking skills. Child-centred approach
Classroom Museum Glucksman Gallery, University College Cork	Short term loans of contemporary art to primary schools in rural areas. Collaborative activities between artists and children. Sustained initiative (Creative Ireland, n.d)	Curated artwork similar to SOW. Collaborative element is evident in that children are given opportunities to expand on the artist's theme by continuing the conversation with the installation.
Early Years Arts Residencies and Training Programme Dublin City Council	High quality arts (music and visual arts) experiences designed for very young children and early childhood educators (ECE) made available in local community settings. Continuous professional development training provided by the artists to educators. Parents and carers given opportunities to engage in high quality arts experiences alongside children. (Dublin City Arts Office, n.d.)	Professional development is offered through reflective practice of teachers undertaking the study. Use of reflective journal.
Elemental Super Projects	Invites children and adults to engage with contemporary art through sight, touch and movement. Established within public gallery spaces e.g. Visual, Carlow Use of contemporary 2D and 3D art (Super Projects, n.d).	Multisensory - children interact with sight, sound and touch (external element of SOW) Use of contemporary 3D art Public gallery space for the adults and children.

Interesting and Weird at the Same Time Office of Public Works, Department of Finance, LAB Gallery, Dublin City Council, VTS facilitator: Lynn McGrane	Exhibition offers opportunities to introduce public collections to new audiences. VTS used as a scaffold to support children's perspectives to emerge, rather than views being imposed on them (Dublin City Arts Office, n.d).	Use of VTS. Scaffolding Child-centred approach
Mobile Art School The Arts Council Curator: Jennie Guy	Develop children's confidence in creative thinking. Experimentation and process are valued rather than defined production outcomes. Expose and connects children to the richness of national and international contemporary art. Artist notebook utilised as a creative tool. Group participation and decision making. Children explore sculpture, installation and performance art. (Mobile Art School, n.d.)	Exposure to contemporary art. Sustained nature of SOW-it is a permanent feature of the school. School is seen as a site for artistic production and display. Group participation in CTAT. Artist notebook similar to Looking Logs. Creative thinking. Collaborative and participation and democratic participation
Wonder Club The Lab Gallery Dublin City Council, Hugh Lane Gallery Permission to Wonder	Employ VTS within art galleries in an effort to develop aesthetic and critical thinking skills of adults. (Hugh Lane Gallery, 2019)	Critical thinking skills. Aesthetic skills development. Use of VTS.

Appendix D

Action Research Cycles, Main Actions and Reflective Practice throughout the Research

Phase	Main Actions	Reflective Practice
Step 1 Diagnostic Phase Literature Review	Themes emerging from literature review inform the focus group questions (Cohen et al, 2008). Literature review suggests lack of confidence, time constraints are main inhibitor for teacher's lack of LAR	Themes from literature help with the data collection methods and design of the Teacher Pack.
Step 2 Diagnostic Phase Data Collection	(Teacher participants data collection) Data from teacher focus group further informs the interview schedule for children and production of the Teacher Pack (see Appendix B). Consideration given on how to implement the teacher pack. • Comfortable with use of ICT • Teacher pack is presented as a suggestive rather than prescriptive menu • Lack of access to information surrounding artists and their practice.	Data analysis of teachers' focus groups data informs the action plan in the form of the Teacher Pack: • Integration is significant to alleviate time constraints (Teacher pack should be clear, succinct, easy to use) • CTBT was mentioned by teachers as a link to LAR (A good starting point to the research has been identified)
Step 3 Diagnostic Phase	(Child participants data collection) Data informs production of the teacher pack. • Children assume art is 2D.	Data analysis from children's focus groups informs the teacher pack.

Data Collection	● Explicit vocab instruction (children were unable to describe some elements of art; installation, sculpture) ● Time to stop and look was not afforded to children	Inclusion of vocabulary section within Teacher Pack Allow and encourage looking and thinking time in LAR lessons
Step 4 Therapeutic phase Introduction to Teacher Pack	● Intervention was planned. Teaching elements were collated into a Teacher Pack. ● Modelling of lessons by researcher was given as option ● Information within the teacher pack was subject to change based on the lesson reflections e.g. inclusion of photos to illustrate particular aspects of the lessons. ● Elements of the teacher pack were given to use at teachers' discretion.	Some teachers didn't want to partake in modelling sessions. As an alternative, I gave feedback on how my lessons went via WhatsApp—what went well, what needed work. Teachers commented that the inclusion of the photos in the teacher pack were beneficial in illustrating the physical layout of the lesson.
Step 5 Therapeutic phase Cycle 1 of action research Use of Teacher Pack to inform LAR practice	The first cycle of action research was implemented. I used the teacher pack and implemented three lessons, each of 40-50 minutes duration. Reflection I used the Teacher Pack and offered feedback on those sessions. Reflection template used. Teachers taught their first lesson. Reflection template offered to teacher through teacher pack. Teacher pack amended to include reflection template and photos of lessons.	Some teachers independently sought support/ reassurance about their lessons- I questioned my relational stance with them-did I make them feel uncomfortable? My reflections were shared with teacher participants via informal chats. Upon reflection is was decided that I would send informal texts to teachers in preparation for their teaching sessions. I outlined what elements worked well and those that were more

	Reflection to inform next cycle Use of the reflection template by myself and all teachers after completing each lesson.	challenging based on my reflection template.
Step 6 Therapeutic phase Cycle 2 of action research	I used the teacher pack and implemented three lessons, each of 40-50 minutes duration. Teachers taught their second lesson. Cycle three was not implemented due to the unexpected school closure due to Covid-19	Poor weather interrupted a lesson in which we were to explore the external feature of the artwork. Connections were made between the internal and external piece in terms of materials used.
Step 7 Therapeutic phase Post data collection	Post focus group interview with children Children were asked to draw, talk and write about their interpretations of what art it.	Drawings were more abstract and included a greater range of art including sculpture, abstract art and sound art than in the pre-intervention drawings.
Step 8 Data collection	Post Focus group interview with teachers	The focus group ‘flow’ was somewhat interrupted by the online session- it soon dissipated through casual chat unrelated to the research.
Step 9 Data analysis	Data set collated to conduct thematic data analysis across the data set to establish codes, themes and present findings.	Themes from literature review were referred to in order to support or refute the findings.
Step 10 Presentation of Findings	Writing up of Findings, Discussion and Conclusions	

Appendix E

Reflection Template

Activity Reflection

Please tick the elements used in the lesson

Lesson: 1 2 3

Vocabulary	☐	Viewing from multiple perspectives	☐	Response through movement	☐	Responding to sensor tower	☐
CTAT	☐	FTC questions	☐	Response with audio	☐	Children write their own questions	☐
Listening to the art work	☐	Use of video	☐	Info about artist/ artwork	☐	Looking log	☐
						Other:	☐

How well do you feel the lesson went on a scale of 1-10 _____

Did any elements work well?:

Did any elements not work well?:

Appendix F

Interview Schedule for Children's Focus Group (Adapted from Jansesick, 2010)

Question	Example Questions / Probes	Time	Field notes
Introductory Session Draw and talk session	• Use of feelings rating scale • Breathing techniques to help focus (to put children at ease) Would anyone like to suggest some rules for our session? (Speaking object, sitting in a circle, show respect to peers) Who can remember the rules for our discussion today? Can you tell me, what do you think art is? Drawing will be created by the children prior to commencing question 1	6-8 mins	
Question 1 (Basic descriptive)	- Can you each share with the group what you have drawn /written on your doodle sheet? - What do you like most about learning about art in school? - What activities are your favourite things to do in art. Probe: Can you tell me a little bit more about that? Key words: fun, making, looking, artist, paint, colour, experience, gallery	6-7 mins	

Question 2 (Experience/ Example)	- Can you tell me about some of the favourite pieces of art that you have seen before while in school? - Can you remember any art that your teacher may have shown you before?		
Question 3 (Clarifying)	- You mentioned that X was your favourite. Can you tell me why is it your favourite? - Can you tell me what it looks /sounds/ feels like? - What do you think about the artwork on the staircase art? What makes you say that? Key words: boring, painting, Your Seedling Language, feeling, emotion, making art,	4-5	
Question 4 (Comparison / Contrast)	- Can you tell me about any art you may have seen outside of school? - Have you been to an art gallery before ? Can you tell me a little bit about that experience? What did you see, feel, smell, hear or touch? Key words: school tour, outdoors, other places, motorway, art gallery, online, books	6 mins	
Question 5 (Closing)	We are just finishing up now...can you give me one or two words to describe what you think about art and why ? - Is there anything else you would like to mention that maybe you haven't already?	3 mins	

Appendix G

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Teachers' Focus Group based

(Adapted from Jansesick, 2010)

Question Category Purpose of Question	Example Questions	Time	Field Notes
Introductory Question Make participant feel at ease.	▪ Is anyone feeling nervous about today ? ▪ Can you tell me about how this year has been for you in terms of the teaching of art ?	3 mins	
Question 1 Basic descriptive	▪ What is your favourite aspect of visual art teaching? ▪ Key words: gallery, original artwork, internet, school grounds, reproductions, making art, curriculum, policy	7-8	
Question 2 Basic descriptive	▪ When it comes to looking and responding, where/ how do you source artworks for your class?		
Question 3 Structural	▪ How do you see our school's approach to the teaching and learning of visual art? ▪ What do we do well? / What could we do better? ▪ Art gallery visit, Per Cent for Art, cost, literacy and numeracy, curriculum	5-6	

Question 4 Follow up or clarifying	▪ You mentioned that you enjoyed teaching LAR...can you tell me more a little more about this? - or ▪ You mentioned that X was a reason why you don't do LAR as often as creating art/ you find it difficult to teach LAR....can you tell me more a little more about this? Key words: Time, literacy and numeracy, inexperience, location, cost, interest, hobby, interest, college experience, vocabulary, terminology	7-8	
Question 4 Comparison / contrast	▪ Do you see any connections between how we approach teaching art and other subjects? ▪ Do you think any skills can translate from art to other subjects and vice versa? ▪ Critical thinking, integration, child-led, literacy,	3-4	
Question 5 Experience/ example	▪ Can you tell me about a positive looking and responding experience you have had in the past? ▪ Why do you think it was a positive experience? ▪ Key words: Child-centred, active participation, child engagement, enjoyment, gallery experience, interest, ▪	3-4	
Question 6 Closing Give participants opportunity to mention anything extra.	▪ We are just finishing up now...of all the things we discussed what do you think is the most important?(round robin) ▪ Is there anything I have forgotten to ask and which you feel is important?	2-3	

Appendix H

Sample Information Sheet and Consent Form for Board of Management

Dear Principal, Board of management members,

I am writing to seek your assistance with a research study that investigates the teaching of visual art in primary school. This research is being undertaken as part of my Masters in Education and Visual Art from Marino Institute of Education. I hope that the findings of the study will inform how we can allow greater access to students and teachers to explore and enjoy artworks within their own school environment.

Participants in the research will include : (i) up to 8 fully qualified teachers (ii) up to 6 children from 3rd/4th class.

1. Each teacher will engage in two focus group discussions outside of school hours.
2. Teachers will engage in an instructional talk about the running of the gallery space outside of school hours.
3. The children will engage in two focus group discussions during school hours.

There are no risks in participating in the research. In order for children to participate, a parent/guardian consent form and child assent form will have to be signed. In order for teachers to participate they will be required to sign a consent form. GDPR regulations will be upheld throughout the research process. Teachers', children's and the school's identity will be anonymised. All interviews will be digitally audio recorded and stored securely until the research is completed, at which point this data will be destroyed. The participants' names will not be attached to any information I collect nor will these recordings be used by anyone other than qualified researchers working on this study. The Child Protection policy will be adhered to throughout the research process.

Should you agree to my undertaking of the research in St. Catherine's NS, each of you will be asked to sign this information/consent form indicating agreement. Please contact me via email at dsheehanmva18@mie.ie if you have and questions regarding the study. You may also contact my advisor for the project, Andrew Whelan, at awhelan@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

Yours faithfully,

Date: _____

Dawn Sheehan.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

Please read the questions below and indicate by circling YES or NO, whether or not you agree to the study taking place in St. Catherine's N.S.

Do you consent to the use of Your Seedling Language by teachers and students to facilitate the research ?

YES / NO

Do you consent to teachers of the school being involved in the research ?

YES / NO

Do you consent to children of the school being involved in the research ?

YES. / NO

Principal Signature: _____

BOM Member Signature: _____

BOM Member Signature: _____

BOM Member Signature: _____

BOM Member Signature: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I

Sample Information Sheet and Consent Form for Teacher Participants

Dear Teacher,

I am writing to ask for your assistance with a research study that investigates how teachers explore *looking and responding* to visual art. I hope that the findings of the study will inform how we can allow students and teachers to explore and enjoy artworks within our own school environment.

There are three parts to the study: (i) an opening interview (ii) an instructional talk about the artwork (iii) a closing interview. You may participate in one part, two parts, three parts or neither part of the research.

1. The interview will ask you some general questions about your background in teaching as well as questions about your previous experience of teaching looking and responding. The interview would last for approximately 45 minutes and it will be digitally audio recorded. This will take place outside school hours.
2. An instructional talk will take place between all teacher participants and I, so as to discuss the artwork, which will last approximately 45 minutes outside of school hours.
3. A closing interview with other participants will occur towards the end of the study, which will last approximately 1 hour. This will be digitally audio recorded. This will take place outside of school hours.

I hope you will be willing to participate because your responses are important and a valued part of the study. The experience will be wholly positive and will facilitate professional reflection. There are no risks associated with partaking in the research. Your participation will remain strictly confidential. Your name will not be attached to any of the data you provide. You are welcome to discontinue participation in the study at any time, should you wish to do so, without providing a reason. All audio data recoding will be deleted in June 2021.

Should you wish to participate, you will be asked to sign this information/consent form indicating agreement to participate in the different parts of the study. I fully understand that your time is valuable and your participation in this project is sincerely appreciated. Should you have questions regarding your participation, please contact me on dsheehanmval8@mie.ie. You may also contact my supervisor for the project, Andrew Whelan, at awhelan@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

Yours faithfully,

Dawn Sheehan _____

Date: _____

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

Please read the questions below and indicate by circling YES or NO, whether or not you would be willing to participate in the study as described.

Are you over 18 years of age?

YES / NO

Do you consent to be interviewed outside of school hours and have the interview audio recorded?

YES / NO

Do you consent to be interviewed on a second occasion outside of school hours and have the interview audio recorded?

YES / NO

Signature: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix J

Sample Information Sheet and Consent Form for Child Participants

Dear student,

I am doing a project on how we learn about art. I would like to know what children think about art. I am doing this project so that we can see how we can become better at looking and talking about art.

If you agree to do this project, you will be part of a small group of children from 3rd/4th class who will talk to me about art for about 45 mins on two separate days. You may be asked to draw some pictures in order to help me understand your opinions. When you give our opinion or make a drawing nobody else will be able to look at that information except for me. When the project is fully over the information you will have given will be kept private.

I have talked with your parent(s)/guardian about this research and they know that I am also asking you for your agreement. If you want to take part in the research, your parent(s)/guardian also have to agree. But if you do not want to take part in the research, you do not have to, even if your parents have agreed. No one will be mad or disappointed with you if you say no. It is your choice. You can think about it and tell me, your parent/ guardian or class teacher later if you want. You can say "yes" now and change your mind later and it will still be okay. If there are any words that you don't understand or things that you want me to explain, please ask me to stop at any time and I will explain.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. Sheehan

Date: _____

You may keep a copy of this for yourself.

Please read the following carefully and circle YES or NO

1. I understand what I will be doing for this study YES / NO
2. I have had all my questions answered YES / NO
3. I have talked to my parent(s)/legal guardian about this project YES / NO
4. I agree to take part in this research YES / NO

Signature: _____

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K

Sample Information Sheet and Consent Form for Parents of Child Participants

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to seek your assistance with a research study that investigates how we approach visual art teaching in our school. This research is being undertaken as part of my Master in Education and Visual Art from Marino Institute of Education..

As part of the study, I request your permission for your child to partake in two discussions with his/her peers, which will be facilitated by me. The discussions will last approximately 45 minutes during school time. The discussions will be audio recorded and will involve me asking your child his/her opinion about art and art education. Your child may be asked to draw pictures in order to help communicate their opinions.

There are no risks in your child participating in the discussions. Your child's opinions will be kept anonymous throughout the process. You will be asked to sign a form (below) indicating agreement for your child to participate in the study.

If you agree to allow your child to be audio recorded, your child's identity will remain completely confidential. His or her name will not be attached to any information I collect nor will these recordings be used by anyone other than qualified researchers working on this study. All recordings and drawings will be securely stored throughout the process and destroyed thereafter.

For more information about the study please contact me at dsheehanmva18@momail.mie.ie. Should you have questions regarding your child's participation in the research you may also contact my supervisor, Andrew Whelan, on awhelan@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 .

Yours sincerely,

Dawn Sheehan

Date: _____

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Please complete **one** of the two options below:

1. I **do** consent to allow my child _____ to participate in the research study and for him/her to be audio recorded. (print child's name)

2. I do **not** wish my child _____ to participate in the research study (print child's name)

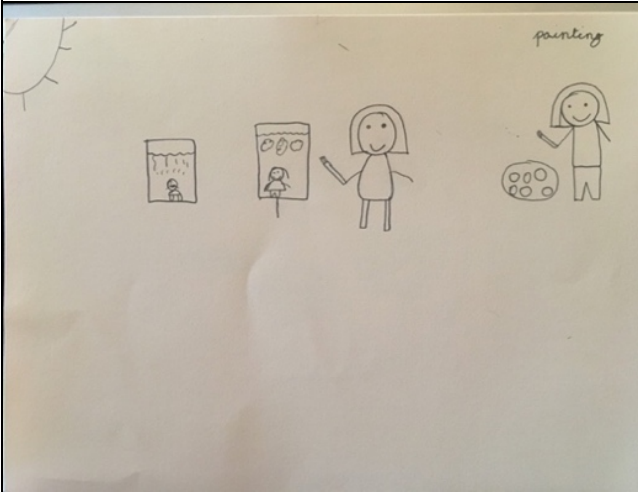
Signature: _____

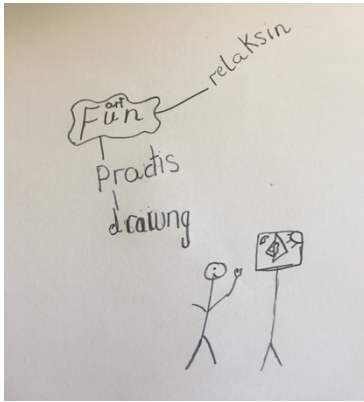
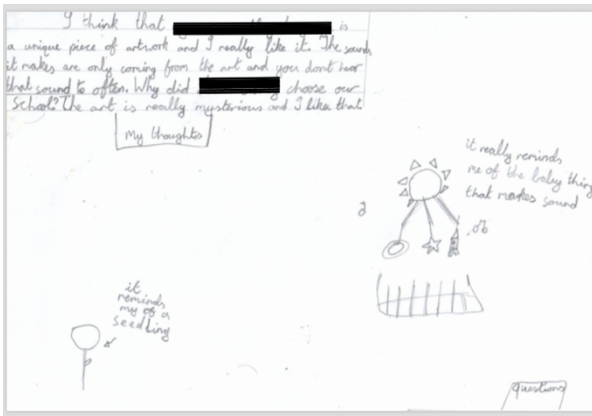
Signature of Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L

Child Participants Perceptions of Art: Pre-intervention (CFG-A) and Post-intervention (CFG-B)

CFG-A	CFG-B
	
“So I drew people painting. She was painting and doing lots of colourful stuff because she was happy”.	“Art is about sculpture, a picture, art has sound”.

	
“Art is relaxing. I practice drawing. Art is fun”.	“I think art is relaxing. It can be fun and art can be sculptures. Art can have electricty. Art can have different colours. My favourite art is patterns because they look cool. Some paterrens look has 3D”
	
“I think it’s having fun and being happy because you're being creative... and you can make things”.	I think that SOW is a unique piece of artwork and I really like it. The sounds it makes are only coming from the art and you don’t hear that sound [too] often. Why did the artist choose our school? The arts is rally mysterious and I like that. It reminds me of a seedling. It reminds me of a baby thing that makes sound

