

ART ATTACK

What are the potential consequences of continuing to devalue the study of creative subjects in secondary schools? Lesley Butterworth paints a compelling picture...



are preparing children and young people to be successful creative practitioners and to engage practically in the subject, but there are many related careers that they can move into that have art, craft and design as a significant, if not essential starting point.

Art, craft and design can lead to a career in the creative industries. Looking at this

area in particular makes an economic argument for the subject. Creative employment provides around two million jobs, in the creative sector itself and in creative roles in other sectors. Employment in the sector has grown at double the rate of the economy as a whole. The creative industries include craft, cultural heritage, publishing, software, TV and radio, designer fashion, design, computer games, advertising, architecture, interactive media, animation and photo imaging. Why are the creative and cultural industries so successful? Because of effective teachers of art, craft and design supporting and inspiring a future workforce!

Why do we teach art, craft and design? To prepare children and young people to engage in the historical, global and contemporary visual arts and become confident audiences. The Arts Councils of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are telling us that visitor figures in museums and galleries are growing. Why is that? Because teachers of art, craft and design in partnership with museum and gallery educators have worked together to increase engagement, confidence and learning about the contemporary visual arts.

Why do we teach art, craft and design? To support our children and young people to become critical consumers of products, services and systems. Design and craft teach us about the value of sustainability, and ethical and ecologically sound lifestyles. Craft and design are affecting change. Make do and mend becomes up-cycle, recycle and repurpose.

'Design links creativity and innovation, shaping ideas to become practical and attractive propositions for users and customers. Design may be defined as creativity deployed to a specific end.'

Sir George Fox, Chair of the Design Council

'Design is making things better. For people.'

Richard Seymour, Seymourpowell

Why do we teach art, craft and design? Because art, craft and design contributes to our well being and to our social, emotional and cultural development. Because craft fairs are reporting a 22% year on year increase. Because for many people an engagement in the arts and crafts provides a sustaining lifelong leisure pursuit. And because regeneration is so important – regeneration in our cities is social, economic, physical and cultural, directed at problems that need creative solutions from architects and artists working with communities and in public spaces.

The answers can continue. This is just a start. But two big questions remain: How can we not teach art, craft and design? And how is current education policy supporting young people seeking access to further and higher education in art, craft and design? We must be vigilant.

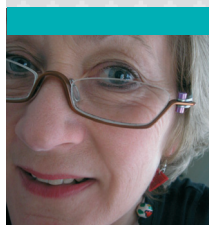
Why do we teach art, craft & design?

It's a vital question, and one that teachers and lecturers of art, craft and design all instinctively 'know' the answer to. But has there ever been a more critical time to make that often tacit knowledge explicit and to rigorously promote, advocate for and defend our subject to increasingly diverse, and sometimes hostile stakeholders? To the parents and carers of children and young people making choices at key stage 3. To young people making career choices in further and higher education. To heads of department, senior management teams and head teachers. To politicians and civil servants, editors, budget holders and potential funders.

Current government policy is not looking kindly on art, craft and design. There are barriers and we need increased advocacy to surmount them.

The English Baccalaureate, a performance measure that does not include art, craft and design, is having a toxic effect on cultural education in England. Surveys carried out by NSEAD are telling us that young people are being actively discouraged from continuing art and design beyond Key Stage 3. In September 2014 the new curriculum will be active in schools. I use the word 'new' advisedly. Although we are not yet appraised of its final content post the public consultation, we have strongly recommended the inclusion of the global, the contemporary and the future, alongside beauty, appreciation and a historical context.

So why do we teach art, craft and design? A compelling argument is to point to the potential career paths that young people can move towards by engaging in the subject. Yes, we



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