

*“To let my imagination
grab my pen”*

Perceptions of Learning within the
Writers-in-Schools
Scheme

Jane O’Hanlon

“To let my imagination grab my pen”

Perceptions of Learning within the Writers-in-Schools Scheme

Jane O’Hanlon BA MA

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Volume 1 of 2

Co-Principal Supervisor: Dr Mary Shine Thompson
Co-Principal Supervisor: Professor Michael O’Leary

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of EdD is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents
Dorothy Renshall and Myles O'Hanlon
who believed in the possibility of education

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Acknowledgements..... | i |
| Table of Contents..... | ii |
| List of Figures..... | viii |
| List of Tables..... | ix |
| List of Abbreviations..... | x |
| Definitions of Terms..... | xiii |
| Abstract..... | xviii |
| | |
| CHAPTER ONE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY | 1 |
| 1.1 Chapter outline | 1 |
| 1.2 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.3 Rationale for the study | 5 |
| 1.3.1 Research questions..... | 6 |
| 1.3.2 The policy and funding context | 7 |
| 1.3.3 Funding..... | 7 |
| 1.3.4 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2009) and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011b)..... | 8 |
| 1.3.5 Policy..... | 10 |
| 1.3.6 <i>Points of Alignment</i> | 11 |
| 1.3.7 <i>Creating the Conditions for the Arts in Education Charter</i> | 12 |
| 1.3.8 <i>The Arts in Education Charter</i> | 14 |
| 1.3.9 <i>Artists–Schools Guidelines</i> and Laureate na nÓg..... | 16 |
| 1.4 Researcher Perspective..... | 17 |
| 1.5 Organising framework for the dissertation..... | 18 |
| CHAPTER TWO PERCEPTIONS..... | 20 |
| 2.1 Chapter outline | 20 |
| 2.2 Introduction | 20 |
| 2.3 Perception..... | 22 |
| 2.3.1 Rationale | 23 |
| 2.3.2 The curricular deficit..... | 26 |
| 2.3.3 The research deficit..... | 29 |

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 2.3.4 | The ‘problem’ of transfer | 31 |
| 2.3.5 | The literate mind | 34 |
| 2.3.6 | Habits of mind and learning dispositions..... | 35 |
| 2.3.7 | Epistemologies | 37 |
| 2.3.8 | Language and curriculum..... | 38 |
| 2.4 | Historical review of arts in education | 39 |
| 2.4.1 | The Arts Council..... | 39 |
| 2.4.2 | The historical context..... | 40 |
| 2.4.3 | The Benson Report | 42 |
| 2.4.4 | A rights-based approach to arts and culture..... | 44 |
| 2.4.5 | The role of the Arts Council | 46 |
| 2.4.6 | ‘The Function of Art’ | 46 |
| 2.4.7 | Developments in arts education policy | 48 |
| 2.5 | The Writers-in-Schools Scheme (WISS)..... | 49 |
| 2.5.1 | Introduction..... | 49 |
| 2.5.2 | The Development of the WISS | 50 |
| 2.5.3 | The Writer-in-Residence Scheme | 52 |
| 2.5.4 | Conclusion | 53 |
| CHAPTER THREE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK..... | | 55 |
| 3.1 | Chapter outline | 55 |
| 3.2 | Introduction | 55 |
| 3.3 | The embodied mind..... | 58 |
| 3.3.1 | ‘Metaphors for learning’ | 59 |
| 3.3.2 | Learning as/and acquisition | 60 |
| 3.3.3 | Learning as/and participation..... | 61 |
| 3.3.4 | ‘Troubling dualisms’ | 62 |
| 3.4 | Conceptualisations of learning..... | 64 |
| 3.5 | Curriculum and policy..... | 67 |
| 3.5.1 | The second-level curriculum..... | 69 |
| 3.6 | The arts and education..... | 75 |
| 3.6.1 | Setting the context..... | 75 |
| 3.6.2 | Arts learning and education | 77 |
| 3.6.3 | Arts learning and literature | 79 |
| 3.6.4 | Arts learning and/or creativity | 80 |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----|
| 3.6.5 | Motivation..... | 83 |
| 3.6.6 | Risk-taking..... | 84 |
| 3.6.7 | Creative self-efficacy..... | 85 |
| 3.6.8 | Arts learning and the ‘Teaching Artist’..... | 85 |
| 3.7 | Arts Learning and the Curriculum..... | 87 |
| 3.7.1 | Arts learning and curriculum..... | 87 |
| 3.7.2 | Arts learning and social constructivism..... | 89 |
| 3.7.3 | Arts learning and assessment..... | 90 |
| 3.7.4 | Arts learning and transfer..... | 92 |
| 3.7.5 | Arts learning and engagement..... | 95 |
| 3.7.6 | Arts learning and meaning-making and aesthetic understanding..... | 96 |
| 3.7.7 | Arts learning as ‘process’ and ‘product’ and boundary object..... | 100 |
| 3.7.8 | Arts learning and expression or ‘when is art?’..... | 101 |
| 3.8 | Summary conclusion..... | 102 |
| CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY..... | | 105 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 105 |
| 4.1.1 | Chapter outline..... | 109 |
| 4.2 | Overview of GT..... | 109 |
| 4.2.1 | Background..... | 112 |
| 4.2.2 | Characteristics..... | 113 |
| 4.2.3 | The literature review..... | 114 |
| 4.2.4 | Types of GT..... | 114 |
| 4.3 | Data collection and data analysis..... | 116 |
| 4.3.1 | Coding of data..... | 117 |
| 4.3.2 | Open coding..... | 118 |
| 4.3.3 | Memoing..... | 120 |
| 4.3.4 | Research Statement: Exploring students’ perceptions of learning in and through the arts through while participating in the WISS..... | 121 |
| 4.4 | Research methods..... | 121 |
| 4.4.1 | Focus groups..... | 121 |
| 4.4.2 | Interviews..... | 122 |
| 4.4.3 | Non-participant observation and the use of video recording..... | 123 |
| 4.4.4 | Teacher and student journals..... | 124 |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----|
| 4.5 | Research design..... | 125 |
| 4.5.1 | Pilot phase..... | 126 |
| 4.5.2 | Setting up the pilot study..... | 127 |
| 4.5.3 | Issues identified during the pilot phase..... | 128 |
| 4.5.4 | The presence of the camera..... | 128 |
| 4.5.5 | Knowledge and understanding of the WISS..... | 129 |
| 4.6 | Phase 2: the case studies..... | 131 |
| 4.6.1 | Research sample..... | 132 |
| 4.6.2 | Data handling..... | 138 |
| 4.7 | Reliability..... | 139 |
| 4.8 | Ethical considerations..... | 140 |
| 4.8.1 | Ethical Dilemmas: conceptualising the role of the researcher..... | 141 |
| 4.8.2 | The use of video recording and video material..... | 143 |
| 4.8.3 | Researcher as research instrument..... | 143 |
| 4.9 | The audit trail..... | 145 |
| 4.10 | The strengths and limitations of a GT approach..... | 146 |
| 4.11 | Conclusion..... | 147 |

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

| | |
|--|-----|
| Students' Perceptions of Learning and Perceptions of Students' Learning..... | 148 |
| 5.1 Chapter outline..... | 148 |
| 5.2 Introduction..... | 149 |
| 5.3 Summary of findings..... | 151 |
| 5.4 Students' perceptions..... | 152 |
| 5.4.1 The high-stakes environment..... | 154 |
| 5.4.2 The curriculum..... | 155 |
| 5.4.3 Creative writing..... | 157 |
| 5.4.4 Students' perceptions of product..... | 159 |
| 5.4.5 Students' perceptions of arts learning..... | 160 |
| 5.4.6 The arts-learning environment..... | 162 |
| 5.4.7 Collaborative learning..... | 169 |
| 5.5 Teachers' perceptions..... | 173 |
| 5.5.1 The high-stakes learning environment..... | 173 |
| 5.5.2 Time constraints and assessment..... | 174 |
| 5.5.3 Arts learning: a complex array of learning outcomes..... | 175 |

| | | |
|--------|--|-----|
| 5.5.4 | The role of arts learning in promoting self-efficacy | 178 |
| 5.5.5 | Arts learning and risk-taking..... | 178 |
| 5.5.6 | Arts learning, group-work and time on task. | 179 |
| 5.5.7 | Signature pedagogies | 179 |
| 5.5.8 | Transfer of arts learning to other academic subjects..... | 181 |
| 5.5.9 | The role of students' writing as 'product' | 182 |
| 5.5.10 | Teachers' perceptions of the creative writing programme..... | 182 |
| 5.5.11 | Links with the curriculum | 183 |
| 5.5.12 | The relationship between teacher and artist-writer | 185 |
| 5.5.13 | The artist-writer as a flexible, adaptable professional..... | 187 |
| 5.5.14 | Conclusion | 188 |
| 5.6 | Artist-writers' perceptions | 189 |
| 5.6.1 | Artist-writers' perceptions of their signature pedagogy..... | 189 |
| 5.6.2 | Artist-writers' perceptions of the high-stakes environment: Time | 193 |
| 5.6.3 | Student selection | 195 |
| 5.6.4 | Curriculum and pedagogy | 197 |
| 5.6.5 | Harnessing the affective domain for learning..... | 199 |
| 5.6.6 | The importance of oracy | 202 |
| 5.6.7 | The role of process and product in students' learning | 205 |
| 5.6.8 | The partnership between the artist-writer and the teacher | 208 |
| 5.7 | Analysis of perceptions of learning..... | 210 |
| 5.7.1 | The influence of the high-stakes environment on students' perceptions of learning..... | 210 |
| 5.7.2 | Time constraints and the specified curriculum | 211 |
| 5.7.3 | An instrumental focus on assessment and 'points' | 212 |
| 5.7.4 | Group dynamics and student engagement | 213 |
| 5.7.5 | Arts knowledge and arts literacy..... | 214 |
| 5.7.6 | Signature pedagogies and processes | 217 |
| 5.7.7 | Studio thinking in a workshop environment..... | 220 |
| 5.7.8 | Perceptions of the partnership between the teacher and the artist-writer..... | 222 |
| 5.7.9 | Process and product and 'when is art?' | 224 |
| 5.7.10 | Perceptions of students' writing as boundary object | 225 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 228 |
| 6.1 Arts learning..... | 228 |
| 6.2 Pedagogy | 230 |
| 6.3 Arts provision..... | 231 |
| 6.4 Embedded arts provision..... | 233 |
| 6.5 Student writing as boundary object..... | 236 |
| 6.6 Recommendations | 237 |
| 6.6.1 Continuing Professional Development and Initial Teacher Education..... | 237 |
| 6.6.2 Further research with students | 238 |
| 6.6.3 Developing appropriate methods of assessment..... | 239 |
| 6.6.4 Further areas of research..... | 240 |
| 6.6.5 Conclusion..... | 242 |
| References..... | 243 |
| Appendices | 281 |
| Appendix 1 The Alchemist’s Niece: a novella | 282 |
| Appendix 2 Audit Trail | 327 |
| Appendix 3 Tables of Additional Quotations from Students, Teachers & Artist-writers | 337 |
| Appendix 4 Plain Language Statements & Informed Consent Forms | 358 |
| Appendix 5 Interview Schedule | 380 |
| Appendix 6 Letter of Approval & Letter re: Research Instrumentation | 384 |
| Appendix 7 Schedule of Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups | 387 |
| Appendix 8 Writers-in-Residence Application Form | 396 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Figure 1.1 | Characteristics of a successful Writer-in-Residence programme..... | 4 |
| Figure 4.1 | Outline of the research process..... | 107 |
| Figure 4.2 | Outline of three-phase research design..... | 126 |
| Figure 5.1 | Participants' perceptions of high stakes and arts-learning environments.. | 152 |
| Figure 5.2 | Students' perceptions of the learning environment..... | 169 |
| Figure 5.3 | Students' perceptions of arts learning..... | 172 |
| Figure 5.4 | Perceptions of the factors affecting the learning environment..... | 173 |

List of Tables

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Table 2.1 | CSO subject statistics for Leaving Certificate 2015..... | 25 |
| Table 2.2 | Proportion of Leaving Certificate candidates in arts subjects 2013–2015.. | 26 |
| Table 3.1 | Established and situated conceptualisations of learning compared..... | 62 |
| Table 4.1 | Research sample..... | 134 |
| Table 4.2 | Case study schedule..... | 135 |
| Table 4.3 | Data types and sources..... | 144 |
| Table 6.1 | Leaving Certificate results in Art and Music 2014-2016..... | 235 |

List of Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Explanation |
|--------------|---|
| ACNI | Arts Council of Northern Ireland |
| AiE | Arts in Education |
| CAO | Central Applications Office |
| CNCI | Council of National Cultural Institutions |
| CSO | Central Statistics Office |
| CPD | Continuing Professional Development |
| DAHG/DAHRRGA | Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht/Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural, Regional and Gaeltacht Affairs. This department changed designation during the course of the study. |
| DCYA | Department of Children and Youth Affairs |
| DES | Department of Education & Skills |
| DEV ED | Development Education |
| DICE | Drama Improves Competences in Education |
| ERC | Education Research Centre |
| ESRI | Economic and Social Research Institute |

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| ETAI | Encountering the Arts Ireland |
| ETI | Education and Training Inspectorate |
| GT | Grounded Theory |
| GUI | Growing Up in Ireland |
| ITE | Initial Teacher Education |
| JCSP | Junior Certificate Schools Programme |
| LTTA | Learning through the arts |
| NAEP | National Assessment of Educational Progress |
| NCCA | National Council for Curriculum and Assessment |
| NCFA | National Campaign for the Arts |
| NESC | National Economic and Social Council |
| NESF | National Economic and Social Forum |
| NI | Northern Ireland |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PDST | Professional Development Service for Teachers |

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| PI | Poetry Ireland |
| PISA | Programme for International Student Assessment |
| POA | <i>Points of Alignment</i> |
| ROI | Republic of Ireland |
| STEM | Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics |
| STEAM | Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics |
| TY | Transition Year |
| WIR | Writers-in-Residence Scheme |
| WISS | Writers-in-Schools Scheme |

Definitions of Terms

| Term | Definition |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Aesthetic | Aesthetic, from the Greek meaning ‘perception’, comes to us from German philosophers who used it for a theory of the beautiful. From this technical sense, it soon came to refer to good taste and to artistry in general; if something has "aesthetic value", it has value as a work of art (even if its monetary value is small). |
| Affective Domain | This domain of learning is taken to refer to growth in feelings or emotional areas (attitude or self). |
| Artefact | The term artefact is here understood to indicate something made by a human being, from Latin phrase <i>arte factum</i> , from <i>ars</i> skill + <i>facere</i> to make. In this study it refers to the finished pieces of writing produced by students when working with the artist-writer. |
| Artist–writer | This term refers to the writers who took part in the study. |
| Arts | The arts are modes of expression that use skill or imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences that can be shared with others. Traditional categories within the arts include literature (including poetry, drama, story, and so on), the visual arts (painting, drawing, sculpture, etc.), the graphic arts (painting, drawing, design, and other forms expressed on flat surfaces), the plastic arts (sculpture, modelling), the decorative arts (enamelwork, furniture design, mosaic, etc.), the performing arts (theatre, dance, music), music (as composition), and architecture (often including interior design). |
| Arts education | Arts education is that formal education in arts subject-areas which takes place as part of the school curriculum and is accounted for within normal curricular provision. |
| Arts in Education | Arts in education, defined as those “interventions by the arts world into the domain of formal education” (Arts Council, 2008, p. 11), is that form of education where skilled artists work with schools to create arts experiences that support the core educational mission of the school. It can take place within or outside the school, within all arts forms and across all disciplines. |
| <i>Arts in Education Charter</i> | <i>The Arts in Education Charter</i> (January 2013) was agreed by the DAHG and the DES in order to underline a commitment to arts education and in an effort to promote |

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| | a joined-up approach to arts provision at government level, across Departments, education agencies and arts organisations. The aim is to enhance arts education and arts in education provision in the classroom and beyond and to bring learners into contact with a range of arts organisations and cultural institutions. |
| Arts learning | Arts learning as used in the study designates learning both in the arts and learning through the arts (see definition of terms). |
| Bologna Process | The Bologna Process (1999) is one of the main voluntary processes at European level which define the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process is a Europe-wide, voluntary process, initiated in 1998–1999, and involving 47 national higher education systems including the Irish system. Its aim is to enhance graduate employability, student mobility and the quality of European higher education. |
| Breaking the Cycle | Launched in May 1996, this was a Department of Education scheme targeting resources at 25 large urban schools and 25 clusters of small rural schools to combat severe educational disadvantage over five years. |
| Cognitive Domain | The cognitive domain of learning is here taken to refer to the development of mental skills and/or knowledge. |
| Cross-sectoral | Cross-sectoral indicates the cross-cutting policies and practices as they apply to activities across the sectors of education and the arts. |
| Culture 2025 | The Programme for a Partnership Government, published in May 2016, committed to the arts and culture with the publication of <i>Culture 2025</i> . This document represents Ireland’s first cultural policy and sets out a framework and priorities for action over the coming years. |
| European Qualifications Framework | The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) acts to make qualifications more readable across the EU, for mobility between countries |
| Expressive learning | Expressive learning represents students’ creative or expressive activities. It is process-oriented and participative, engaging students’ imaginations and senses. It provides students with opportunities to engage in and explore their thinking, and to refine and communicate their ideas. Expressive learning inculcates capacities that have application across the curriculum including the |

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| | exploration of personal and cultural identities and requires application, perseverance and attention to detail. |
| Higher Implementation Group | Expert group representing the DAHG, the DES and the Arts Council to oversee the implementation of the Arts-in-Education Charter. |
| High-stakes learning environment | A learning environment where any test is used to make important decisions about students, educators, schools, or districts, for the purposes of accountability. The test is also important for the person taking it and passing (or not) has important consequences. |
| Instrumental | As a general sociological term, instrumental denotes the use of something, or the means, to achieve a desired end. |
| Joint Committee on Art and Education | Committee which oversaw <i>Points of Alignment</i> (2008) and appointed by, and representative of, the DAHG, the DES and the Arts Council |
| Junior Certificate Schools Programme | The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is targeted at junior cycle (lower secondary) students who are identified as being at risk of early school leaving. It was introduced to schools in 1996. |
| Learning in the arts | Learning in the arts refers to art-form learning in a specific art form e.g. painting or modern dance or creative writing. |
| Learning through the arts | Learning through the arts refers to the teaching of non-art-form content through the medium of an art form, e.g. development education being taught through creative writing or the teaching of history through drama. |
| Literary and narrative arts | The literary arts refer to imaginative or creative writing. The narrative arts are concerned with story, written or spoken, fictional or real. |
| Meaning-making | This is understood as “the process of how individuals make sense of knowledge, experience, relationships, and the self” (Ignelzi, 2000, p. 5). |
| Perception | From the Latin <i>percipere</i> , meaning to seize or understand. In psychological terms, perception is understood as part of human cognitive functioning, with both cognition and emotion/affect classed as forms of mental activity (Snow, Corno & Jackson III, 1996/2004, p. 243). |
| Poetry Ireland | Founded in 1978, Poetry Ireland is the national resource organisation for the support of poets and poetry in Ireland. It also runs the Writers-in-Schools scheme, an extensive |

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| | national arts-in-education outreach programme to primary and secondary schools throughout the 32 counties. |
| Product | Product in the context of this study is understood to refer to the product of learning and also to the writing produced by students, the product of the creative writing process (see Artefact). |
| Resource Organisation | Resource organisations, funded by the Arts Council, are arts organisations which constitute a network of supports across different art forms. They provide an information and advice service and devise and implement appropriate supports for particular sectors, working in partnership to ensure that people engage with high quality arts experiences. As a resource organisation, Poetry Ireland is the first point of contact for schools that want to work with an artist-writer, providing advice and assistance in identifying, securing and part-funding artist-writers to work with schools |
| The Arts Council of Northern Ireland | Generally known as the ACNI, this is the main support for arts organisations and artists in Northern Ireland, and includes a range of funding opportunities for artists and organisations |
| The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon | The Arts Council of Ireland (founded in 1951) is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. It works in partnership with artists, arts organisations, local authority arts offices and public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life and is the main statutory funding agency for the arts in Ireland |
| Transfer | Learning transfer can be defined as the ability of the learner to successfully apply the behaviour, knowledge, and skills acquired in one learning context to another context. |
| Transition Year | The Transition Year (TY) programme is part of the senior cycle in some Irish secondary schools and is a one-year programme taken after junior cycle and before the two-year Leaving Certificate programme. |
| Writers-in-Residence Scheme | The Writers-in-Residence Scheme was initiated in 2000 by Poetry Ireland as a development of the Writers-in-Schools Scheme. It supports, organises and part-funds short residencies of 6 to 8 weeks by writers and storytellers within primary and post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. The |

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| | scheme is supported by The Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon and by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. |
| Writers-in-Schools Scheme | The Writers-in-Schools Scheme (initiated in 1978 by The Arts Council)'s Literature Officer) is run by Poetry Ireland on behalf of the Arts Council. The scheme organises and part-funds visits by writers and storytellers to primary and post-primary schools in the Republic of Ireland (funded by The Arts Council) and Northern Ireland (funded by Arts Council Northern Ireland). |

Abstract

Jane O’Hanlon

“To let my imagination grab my pen”

Perceptions of Learning within the Writers-in-Schools Scheme

Background: The study arose out of the interplay between the cuts to funding in education and the arts and their implications for arts-in-education policy over the last eight years.

Purpose/Focus of Study: The study sought to discover the nature of arts learning in the second-level classroom and whether arts learning can support learning in the high-stakes environment. It sought to identify students’, teachers’ and artist–writers’ perceptions of students’ learning from participation in the Writers-in-Schools Scheme (WISS) which the researcher developed over 16 years in her capacity as education officer with Poetry Ireland. The research focuses on (1) the learning that students, teachers and artist–writers perceive takes place for students through their participation in the WISS; (2) whether these perceptions converge; (3) whether, and if so, what, distinctive modes of arts learning are associated with the WISS; and (4) whether these modes of arts learning and the affordances they offer can be integrated and embedded into the standard second-level curriculum.

Design: The study offers a conceptual framework that draws on educational and aesthetic theories of learning, combined with the results of four second-level case studies. Employing a grounded theory approach, this qualitative, three-phase study took place between January 2013 and May 2015. Participants included 91, mainly senior-cycle students, four teachers and four artist–writers.

Findings: (1) Students, teachers and artist–writers recognise that programmes delivered by well-prepared artist–writers, collaborating with teachers who scaffold the learning, contribute to the development of students’ confidence, specifically “the confidence of the imagination”, as evidenced by their reported self-efficacy in developing writing strategies and techniques. (2) All three groups perceived arts learning as contributing to students’ self-efficacy, with students, in particular, citing the significance of the collaborative structure found in the workshop/studio learning environment. (3) Students’ also reported gains in art form learning and creation, collaboration, expression/performance/presentation were reported to be distinctive modes of learning through the arts. (4) The findings suggest that arts learning can offer unique and enriching modes of engagement and transferrable learning strategies and skills across the curriculum at second-level.

Conclusions: The study suggests that arts learning offers distinct modes of learning. These modes can enrich the curriculum, particularly where access to aesthetic and expressive modes of learning may otherwise be restricted. It also illustrates the necessity for continual professional development for teachers and artist–writers around arts literacy, arts learning and the curriculum, and the development of classroom-based artist/teacher partnerships.

Keywords: perception; learning; arts learning; curriculum; second-level; collaborative learning; self-efficacy; group work; WISS

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 Chapter outline

The chapter outlines the research context and the research topic. It then goes on to explain the rationale for choosing to focus on students' perceptions of learning and sets out the research questions that informed the study. This is followed by an overview of the current arts education policy and funding contexts, including a brief outline of recent significant policy developments in order to further contextualise the study. The chapter concludes by outlining the organising framework for the dissertation.

1.2 Introduction

The current study was the result of a number of factors which emerged during the latter half of the last decade. Bamford's 2006 overview of arts education undertaken for UNESCO stated that "arts in education has an impact on the child, the teaching and learning environment, and on the community" (p. 11). In the Irish context there was a need for more evidence, particularly at second-level, against which to test this statement. The UNESCO *Road map for arts education*, also published in 2006, attempted to provide governments with policy guidelines to enhance arts education provision, and this issued in an explicit statement regarding its intrinsic value in *art for art's sake* (Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2103).

Paralleling this, in Ireland the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon published its own road map for arts-in-education practitioners, in the *Artists~Schools Guidelines* (2006).

This was followed by the publication of *Points of Alignment* (2008), hereafter POA, which provided a legislative framework for the implementation of an arts-education policy endorsed by the two government departments with responsibility separately for education and the arts. Again, paralleling international developments, this was followed by the publication of the *Arts in Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013), hereafter the AiE Charter, jointly published by the Departments of Education & Skills and the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht.¹

During this period also, Poetry Ireland, the national resource organisation for the support of poets and poetry in Ireland and organiser/administrator of the Writers-in-Schools Scheme, hereafter the WISS, instigated an independent review of the WISS (Gallagher, 2005). This review included the findings of an earlier unpublished review of the Writers-in-Residence scheme (O’Hanlon, 2002), hereafter the WIR, conducted two years after this scheme’s inception as part of the WISS (outlined chapter two). The review was conducted with teachers, students and artist–writers, and identified a number of those characteristics of a successful, school-based WIR programme elaborated on below (see Figure 1.1)

O’Hanlon’s 2002 review of the WIR identified the importance of planning, and particularly the importance of agreed learning intentions and learning outcomes between the teacher and the artist–writer prior to the commencement of the programme. This was important because of the need to clarify the various understandings and expectations of the relationship between the learning process and the expected outcome or product of learning for students and for schools, where the focus was on literacy and language development. Language development was seen as enhancing students’ self-efficacy through their confidence in the handling of language, raising their expectations of themselves, and in the development of their overall self-esteem and creativity. Literacy was a major focus of the

¹ This Department was renamed Arts, Heritage, Rural, Regional & Gaeltacht Affairs in 2016.

projects for schools and most of the schools adopted the idea of working on a specific project or product, in order to give a focus to the work. The emphasis was on drafting, editing and redrafting and the use of storytelling and illustration, particularly with reluctant readers. This led to the production of in-house publications such as make-a-book projects and broadsheets, with participation in end-of-project events/performances being common at second level which, in turn, encouraged the growth of a strong work ethic among teachers, artist-writers and students. The importance of having an enthusiastic teacher was underlined as having direct implications for overall outcomes and follow-up. The teacher's collaboration with the artist-writer was seen as basic to the operation of the programme and, therefore, the choice and matching between the school and artist-writer, in terms of experience and fit, was identified as equally important.

Along with an 18-month-long review of the WISS (Poetry Ireland, 2013–2016), and a review of international writers-in-schools schemes practice (Poetry Ireland, 2015), as well as the influence of national and international policy developments (dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two), these findings created a context for the study and also indicated a possible focus – concentrating on the perceptions of learning of students. They bore out Bamford's (2006) identification of the need for “clear objectives...efficient delivery mechanisms...skilful and committed teachers, artists and other personnel and favourable external conditions” (pp. 142–143), notwithstanding the particular and necessarily provisional nature of the 2002 review (see Figures 1.1 & 5.4).

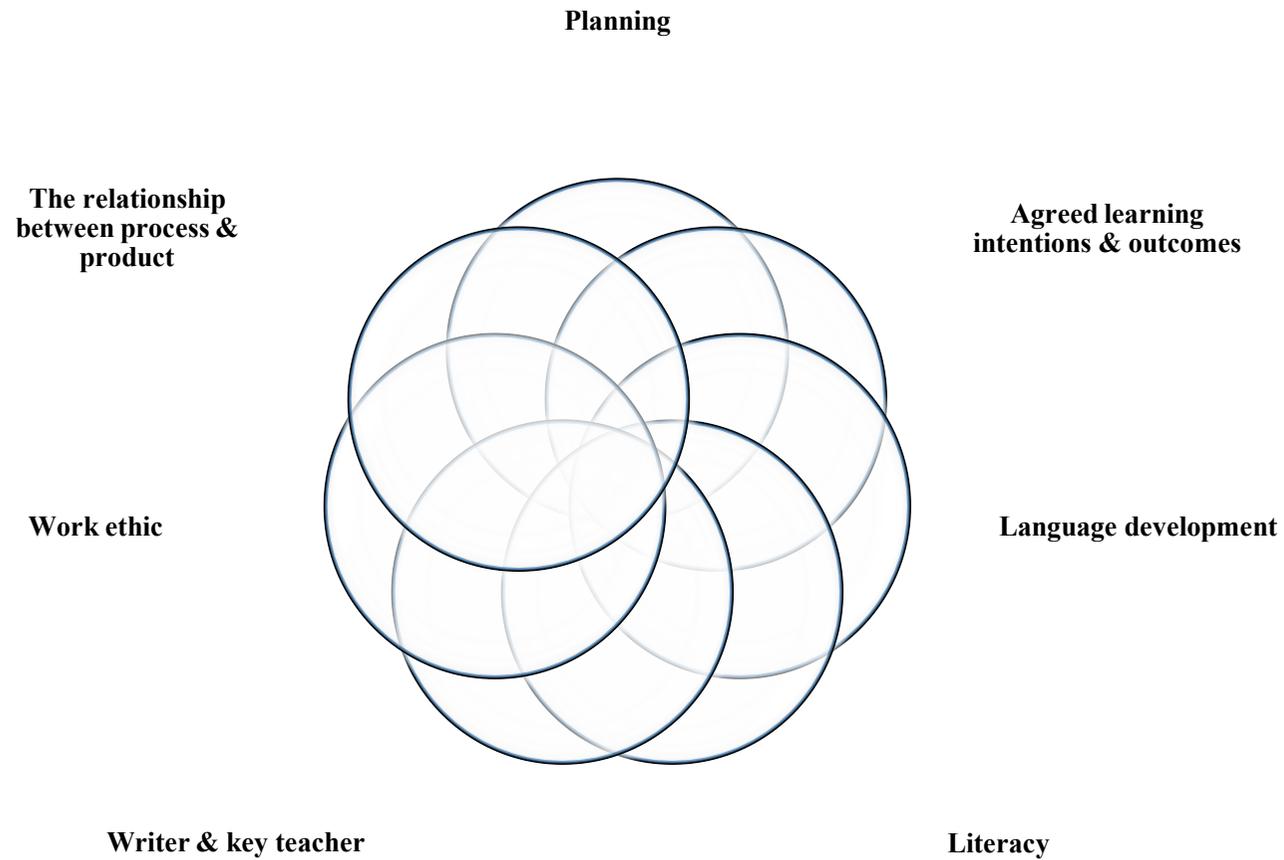


Figure 1.1 Characteristics of a successful Writer-in-Residence programme. Adapted from Education Report: September 2000 - September 2002. Unpublished report for Poetry Ireland

1.3 Rationale for the study

The rationale for the study was based around the need for more embedded arts provision within the second-level curriculum with a view to developing a framework for assessment for expressive learning (Dorn, Madeja & Sabol, 2004). The study set out to do this by uncovering students' perceptions of learning, as both learning in the art form and learning through the art form. This was based on the belief that "the arts are an integral part of a complete, successful and high-quality education" (INTO, 2009, p. 3) and that art objects produced by students have meaning and artistic value (Dorn, Madeja & Sabol, 2004; Goodman, 1978). Education in the arts, is seen as impacting on three dimensions of students' knowledge: the student's interaction with the object or the performance, his/her interaction with the artist-writer and/or teacher, and the student's own artistic practice and study (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8). The recognised art form provision at primary and secondary level in Ireland are visual art, music and drama (although in reality provision is confined to visual art and music, see Tables 2.2 & 2.3). It is recognised as encompassing arts education which is here understood as that arts education delivered by teachers as part of curricular provision and arts-in-education practice, outlined in the AiE Charter (DES/DAHG, 2013; see also UNESCO, 2006; Arts Council, 2008), as being that arts practice through which students experience art form learning and the various forms of cultural heritage, through encounters with artists and/or art form specialists. These encounters can occur either within or outside the school context. The focus of this study is on arts-in-education practice, specifically the WISS, which in this context has constituted the national arts-in-education literature scheme to schools since 1978 (M. Drury interview: Appendix 5).

1.3.1 Research questions

The researcher was interested in identifying and analysing the perceptions of the key participants - (1) students (2) teachers and (3) artist-writers - of the learning that occurs as a result of participating in a Writers-in-Residence programme, hereafter WIR programme. The rationale, outlined in more detail in chapter two, was informed by an understanding of the cognitive-affective nature of perception as embodied subjectivity. The aims of the study were to (1) to explore the learning and meta-learning of students through the exploration of their perceptions of their own learning, and to place this alongside the perceptions of students' learning by their teachers and the artist-writers (2) identify any gaps or convergences in these perceptions, (3) speculate about what these might reveal with regard to the affordances offered by arts learning, and (4) to situate arts learning in the context of the current second-level curriculum, having regard to the specified, enacted and experienced manifestations of curriculum at work in the second-level classroom.

In light of these perceptions, the researcher was interested in exploring (a) what form a framework for assessment for expressive learning or arts learning might take, particularly within the WISS? The study further sought (b) to clarify whether the learning was perceived as learning in the arts or learning through the arts or both, particularly since “the arts can be (1) taught as individual study subjects, through the teaching of the various arts disciplines, thereby developing students’ artistic skills, sensitivity, and appreciation of the arts, (2) seen as a method of teaching and learning in which artistic and cultural dimensions are included in all curriculum subjects” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8). In light of these distinctions, (c) what (if any) aspects of the curriculum were perceived to be influenced by students’ participation in the WISS, particularly in terms of literacy and language development? The study also wanted (d) to identify any aspects of arts learning around creative and expressive learning that might emerge from participants’ perceptions, and in particular, (e) to what extent did

students perceive themselves, or were perceived, to have gained the knowledge and skills as identified by NAEP² (2008, pp. 18–19) around form, structure and aesthetic understanding etc.? Finally, having observed many WIR programmes over the years, (f) the researcher was interested in identifying the signature pedagogies of artist–writers.

1.3.2 The policy and funding context

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...we had everything before us, we had nothing before us (Dickens, 1859).

The economic recession from 2008 combined with falling student performance in international standardised tests, in PISA 2009, severely impacted on the provision of arts education for second-level students in Ireland. However, the publication of an inter-departmental policy document, *Points of Alignment* (2008), an *Arts in Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013) and *Artist–Schools Guidelines* (2006), as well as the creation of the position of Laureate na nÓg, or Children’s Laureate (2010), somewhat revived the drooping spirits of those delivering arts education in schools.

1.3.3 Funding

The economic recession saw capitation grants cut, pupil–teacher ratios increased and progressive management structures, which had seen distributed leadership in schools, through the development of posts of responsibility, disappear overnight, with the setting in place of a moratorium on filling posts of responsibility from the 27th March 2009 (Circular Letter, 0042/2010). This meant that specialist or sessional teachers were no longer

² The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a continuing and nationally representative measure of trends in academic achievement among US elementary and secondary students in various subjects. For nearly four decades, NAEP assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and other subjects. See National Assessment Governing Board U.S. Department of Education (2008).

employed and schools' ability to participate in out-of-school activities was also curtailed owing to changes in substitution cover and budgetary restrictions on travel, bus hire and staffing.

1.3.4 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2009) and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (DES, 2011b)

The wriggle-room for arts provision within the curriculum was further reduced by the 2009 PISA results, which came as a shock. PISA is the OECD's international survey of 15-year olds in reading, mathematics and science, a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. To date, students representing more than seventy economies have participated in the assessment. The most recently published results are from the assessment in 2012 in which around 510,000 students in sixty-five economies took part, representing about 28 million 15-year-olds globally. Perkins et al., writing in 2011 stated that the results indicated that:

Ireland's mean score in 2009 is some 31 points [about one-third of a standard deviation] lower than in 2000, when reading was also a major assessment domain. This decline is the largest across all 39 countries that participated in both PISA 2000 and PISA 2009, resulting in Ireland's rank falling from 5th to 17th among such countries. The performance of students in Ireland declined uniformly across all ability levels and so cannot be attributed to one particular group such as very high or very low achievers doing poorly (Perkins, Moran, Cosgrove & Sheil, 2011, p. 3).

According to the Education Research Centre's website,³ the PISA 2009 results contributed to the development of the *National strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011–2020* (DES, 2011). Whilst the results were said to indicate “statistically insignificant” falling literacy and numeracy levels among Irish 15-year-olds, and have since been discredited as most probably having occurred as a result of methodological and demographic issues and anomalies (Perkins, Moran, Cosgrove & Sheil, 2011, p. 10), their impact continues to be felt through the national literacy and numeracy strategy. This has among its stated aims to:

Increase the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or above Level 4 (i.e. at the highest levels) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by at least 5 percentage points by 2020.

Halve the percentage of 15-year old students performing at or below Level 1 (the lowest level) in PISA reading literacy and numeracy tests by 2020 (DES, 2011b, p. 18).

Perkins et al., (2011), the National Economic and Social Forum (2007), hereafter NESF, and others (Long, 2015; Ercikan, Roth & Asil, 2015) suggest a measured approach to these kinds of ranking as being “more complicated...because rankings give an overly simplistic account of student performance and also because, on its own, the PISA assessment is not a comprehensive measure of educational standards” (NESF, 2012, p. vi). However, they continue to impact through the national literacy and numeracy strategy, which explicitly referred to the 2009 PISA results, in mandating an increase in the number of minutes per day to be spent on teaching literacy and numeracy (Circular Letter, 0056/2011a). In the

³ www.erc.ie Accessed 19.4.16

press release laying out the Department’s priorities for the implementation of the strategy, it was recommended that this time could be taken from non-core activities:

‘Schools will make greater use of standardised tests of reading and mathematics, in second and sixth class in primary and introduce these tests for 2nd year students in post-primary...‘find[ing] the necessary resources for literacy and numeracy by re-prioritising existing spending, by cutting activities **that may be desirable but less important**, and by ensuring that we get the very best outcomes from whatever financial and human resources we have’ stated the Minister⁴ (emphasis added).

In the context of this study, it is also worth noting, that the national literacy and numeracy strategy underlined Junior Cycle reform of both the Irish and English Language syllabi, acknowledging the importance of oral language development through fostering expressive, expository and explanatory language and presentation skills, appropriate to both audience and context “in a range of literary forms” (DES, 2011b, Footnote 8, p. 59). Since arts-in-education practice foregrounds expressive modes of learning, often through performance and presentation, including creative writing, it would appear to be a good fit with developments in the English curriculum at Junior Cycle level in terms of the affordances it offers students for opportunities for learning in and through the arts (NCCA, 2016b).

1.3.5 Policy

The beginning of the recession in 2008 coincided with the publication of *Points of Alignment* (2008), hereafter POA, the report of the DES and DAHG interdepartmental committee on the arts, and one of the most significant policy documents produced jointly by the departments of education and arts. The document stated that “Arts provision for children and young people both in and out of school is arguably the single greatest fault line in our

⁴ 08 July, 2011 - Minister Quinn launches national "Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life" strategy <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2011-Press-Releases/PR11-07-08.html>

cultural provision” (POA, 2008, p. 3). The report was unique in being a joint initiative between the DES and the Arts Council, and constituted a comprehensive review of the state of arts in education provision in the Republic of Ireland, concluding with a number of recommendations to government. However, the recession, along with other factors, including PISA (2009) and the national literacy and numeracy strategy (DES, 2011b), halted the progress of anticipated policy developments.

1.3.6 *Points of Alignment*

Policy developments at government level, and the appointment of Ireland’s first children’s laureate in 2010, created another immediate context for the study alongside the cuts to funding in the wake of the recession and the impact of the 2009 PISA results. Taken together they indicated both the possibility and the fragility of arts provision for children and young people, particularly within the formal education sector. It also served to highlight the research deficit. The publication of *Points of Alignment* by the Arts Council in 2008, hereafter POA, an in-depth examination of the rationale and role of arts in education at the time (and which continues to be the document of record), to “advise the Arts Council on how best to align the Council’s strategies for the promotion and encouragement of the arts with the priorities of the formal education system” (POA, 2008, p. 8), set the initial context for the research. This Report of the Special Committee on Arts and Education, set up by Ministers O’Donoghue and Hanafin in 2007, made a number of specific recommendations to government, none of which were implemented, or followed, up until the publication of the *Arts in Education Charter* in 2013.

With 27 per cent of the Irish population under 19 years of age (CSO, 2012), the Government’s intention to create the first national cultural policy, *Culture 2025*, which was

formally announced in June 2014,⁵ and published in July 2016, had particularly significant implications for the issue of arts in education. The launch of the *Arts-in-Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013), as well as the ongoing reform of the Junior Cycle, particularly the recognition of the importance of language literacy and oral language development within the English syllabus, were also significant developments, in the context of this study. These policy developments occurred in tandem with the Arts Council’s strategic review, *Inspiring Prospects 2014*, which eventuated in the publication of its ten-year strategic plan, *Making Great Art Work* (Arts Council, 2016).⁶ This document was the result of the Arts Council’s own call for a major review and was designed to inform its medium- to long-term strategic planning and to find ways to facilitate thinking about new ways of working, and reflecting the climate of public service reform in Ireland. The plan strongly reaffirmed the Arts Council’s commitment to continued and enhanced support for arts provision for children and young people, the significance of which can only be fully appreciated in the light of the of the Arts Council’s ongoing involvement over the last four decades as “a primary agent of both policy and practice in the arts-in-education” (Long, 2015, p. 268). The proactive role of the Arts Council, in contrast to that of the Department of Education, is discussed in more detail Chapter Two.

1.3.7 Creating the Conditions for the *Arts in Education Charter*

Along with the inauguration of the Children’s Laureate, 2010 also saw the Irish arts and education communities host three international conferences, *Creating Conversations* (January 2010), around teachers’ professional development in arts education; *Arts, Youth, Culture*: (March 2010) around a consultative youth forum on arts and cultural provision;

⁵ 24/06/2014 Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, T.D., announces plans to draft a National Cultural Policy – Culture 2025.

⁶ See Public Engagement Objective 8: Plan and Provide for children and young people (2016, p. 26).

Encountering the Arts, (November 2010), a conference surveying international practice in arts in education (Wolf, 2008; Christophersen, Breivik, Homme, & Rykkja, 2015). These events were specifically intended to highlight the recommendations made in *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council, 2008), and taken together, signalled a shift towards activism in the arts and education community. A direct result of this activity was the formation of *Encountering the Arts Ireland*, hereafter referred to as ETAI (Arts Council, 2010). This was a unique cross-sectoral alliance for the promotion of arts and education, and was formally launched in November 2013 by Ministers Quinn and Deenihan, representing the DES and DAHG.

ETAI adopted a rights-based approach to the provision of arts and culture for children and young people, taking as its core value, Article 31.2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, “to participate fully in cultural and artistic life” (UN, 1989). The objective was to have government follow through on the promises laid down in POA (Arts Council, 2008). Cohen-Vogel and McLendon (2009) suggest that government is the site wherein problems, policies and politics converge, residing in what Kingdon (1995) has described as policy ‘streams’. These largely independent streams converge from time to time and, given the right conditions, “take off” in unpredictable ways (Cohen-Vogel & McLendon, 2009, p. 739), such that “a problem is recognised, a solution is developed and available to the policy community, a political change makes it the right time for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe” (Kingdon, 1995, p. 64). The engineering is done by ‘policy entrepreneurs’, key people and/or organisations, who are often the critical factor in aligning the policy streams and “opening a policy window” (1995, p. 64). The publication of the AiE Charter, by the DES and DAHG, in January 2013, can be seen as the outcome of such a “contingent” (McLendon, Cohen-Vogel, & Waschen, 2014, p. 11) policy window.

Politically, the larger environmental conditions, including the recessionary funding cuts and the background of ongoing arts and education activity, gave rise to the recognition of the need for a more innovative workforce. Professional development for teachers, both continuing (CPD) and initial (ITE), became the focus of departmental attention. Allied to this, there had been a change of government and the appointment of ministers with an expressed interest in the area of arts education.

1.3.8 The *Arts in Education Charter*

The publication of the AiE Charter (DES/DAHG, 2013) was a significant policy development, responding to the climate of activism and the conditions prevailing at the time. Whilst “much of the Charter’s content derives from the more extensive report *Points of Alignment*” (Long, 2015, p. 268), the Charter was a joint document between two government departments, made up of a limited number of aspirations/recommendations. Two of these were directly linked to schools, and included the development of arts-rich schools and the active encouragement of arts in education policies by second-level schools. The Charter also proposed the creation of an arts-in-education web portal and professional development for teachers and artists (DES/DAHG, 2013, pp. 14, 18, 19), and committed to greater involvement in curriculum design and support for research (2013, p. 15). In what was read as an act of good faith, and a show of determination by both ministers, a group was appointed to oversee the implementation of the Charter, known as the Higher Implementation Group.

The implementation of the Charter was to be cost-neutral and there was no commitment to future investment or the provision of any funded initiatives. In this context it is worth noting that Government budgetary provision for arts and culture for 2016 was 0.11% per cent of GDP, compared with an EU average of 0.60 per cent. Therefore, whilst symbolically significant, the Charter had no financial underpinning, and was premised on

the basis that future provision be fashioned out of existing resources and funding, through the extension of collaboration and partnership at all levels. This was one of the weaknesses of the Charter, along with the fact that there was no reference to the voices of young people, nor was there a general consultation with the arts and education sector before its publication (Long, 2015). Currently there are a number of ongoing initiatives, including the setting up of the Arts-in-Education Web Portal “as a key national resource...building a community of practice within arts and education” (Arts in Education Web Portal <http://artsineducation.ie/>). Artists’ residencies have been established within the colleges of education, as well as an artist/teacher CPD initiative around the development of artist/teacher partnerships at primary level, and there are ongoing formal consultations involving education and arts organisations and agencies, the DES, the DAHG and the Arts Council. Despite the appointment of a director and an expert group to oversee implementation of the Charter, there was no provision of extra resources, either financial or human, towards either new or ongoing initiatives. Initiatives, such as the Artist/Teacher Partnership CPD initiative for primary teachers and the Arts-in-Education Web Portal, the information hub for the sector, continued to be funded out of existing resources at departmental level or from arts organisations’, cultural institutions’ and schools’ own resources.

Notwithstanding these deficiencies, the Charter’s symbolic capital resides in the fact that there is a commitment to a greater degree of cross-departmental and Arts Council coordination, and to the centrality of dialogue and consultation, through the Higher Implementation Group. The Charter represents a blueprint for future action and would not have been possible without the very real changes of the previous decade and indeed the previous fifty years (dealt with in chapter three). The centrality of children and young people to both the Arts Council’s strategic review (Arts Council, 2016) and *Culture 2025*

(DAHRRGA, 2016), the country's first cultural policy, also owed their presence to the sustained activity across the arts and education sector during that period.

1.3.9 *Artists–Schools Guidelines* and Laureate na nÓg

The publication of a number of important documents, such as the *Council of National Cultural Institutions Education Community Outreach* (ECO) document (CNCI, 2004); *Artists–Schools Guidelines* (Arts Council, 2006); *Points of Alignment* (Arts Council/DES, 2008), and the ongoing consultations, collaborations and alliances, in the decade between 2000 and 2010, created a climate of activism and expectation around arts in education. Characterised by a collaborative approach, which promoted “effective cooperation between government departments and agencies to support artists” (Arts Council, 2002, p. 13), this began early in the decade with the appointment of an education specialist within the Arts Council in February 2002, and the subsequent development and publication of the *Artists–Schools Guidelines*, in 2006. These guidelines were “designed to provide practical guidelines...[for] artists and teachers to work...with young people...to enhance their learning, enrich their experience of the arts and develop their creativity” (2006a, Introduction). Funded by the Research and Development Committee of the Central Policy Unit of the DES, the rationale underpinning the guidelines resided in a rights-based approach to the provision of quality arts experiences for children and young people, based on the exploration of “cross curricular activities” by teachers and artists (*Artist-Schools Guidelines*, 2006, p. 11), these guidelines were an important forerunner to both POA (Arts Council, 2008), and the Charter (DES/DAHG, 2013).

Therefore, the retrenchment that marked the focus on literacy and numeracy by the DES (2011b), partly as a result of the flawed PISA 2009 results, was even more keenly felt coming, as it did, at the end of a decade that had seen a flurry of activity in terms of policy and practice in arts in education. The first laureate for children's literature, Laureate na nÓg,

was appointed by the Arts Council in May 2010, on the back of what had been a thriving children's literature sector until 2008, which also saw some seminal literacy initiatives, including the work of the Junior Certificate Schools Programme Demonstration Library Project (CDVEC, 2005). This activity was the result of close collaboration with, and between, artists, arts organisations and cultural institutions and teachers and schools across the sector, as well as local authority arts offices. Education bodies involved in these developments included the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, the Education and Training Boards (formerly the VECs) and the Second Level Support Service (now the PDST) and a number of Teacher Education Centres. This activity was initiated and supported through collaboration between the arts and education community, the DES and DAHG, and the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. Therefore, despite the political inertia with regard to the implementation of POA (2008) and the loss of funding, there continued to be intense activity within the sector. This will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

1.4 Researcher Perspective

The research questions that informed the study were based on the researchers' 16 years' observation of the WISS, in her capacity as education officer with Poetry Ireland. This insider status (dealt with in chapter four under ethical issues) facilitated ease of access to schools, alongside an in-depth knowledge of the workings of the WISS, as well as good working relationships with both the artist-writers and the teachers involved in the study. The researcher's previous skills and experience, gained as a teacher and a counsellor, were also very useful as was her previous experience of conducting qualitative research which had employed close observation, interviews and focus groups. As the research was being conducted on the WISS as part of her work, the researcher had unique access to the

background to the scheme, including to those who had originally instigated it, along with the institutional knowledge and ongoing support of Poetry Ireland.

1.5 Organising framework for the dissertation

The study is organised into six chapters. This chapter introduced the rationale for the study and provided a contextual framework within which to situate the research. Chapter Two presents a more in-depth context for the study, giving an account of the historical development of arts education in Ireland and concluding with an overview of the WISS. Chapter Three looks at learning, curriculum and policy, arts and education and arts learning and presents the conceptual framework for the study. It provides a select review of the current literature with regard to social constructivist and aesthetic theories of learning, current views of curriculum and theories of self-efficacy as they might apply to the second level classroom. Chapter Four outlines the methodology for the study and introduces grounded theory (GT), outlining the research methods and research design. It outlines the methodology of the study and the rationale for the approach based on grounded theory and the methods used to carry out the research. There is a description of the research sample and a justification for the choices involved in the final sample. This chapter also provides an overview and rationale for the selection of a grounded theory approach to the study. The ethical considerations involved in the research are outlined along with giving an indication of the audit trail and the strengths and limitations of the GT approach. Chapter Five gives an outline and a consideration of the study's findings of students' perceptions of learning and the perceptions of students' learning by students, teachers and artist-writers. It makes the links to learning theory, perceptions of learning and self-efficacy in the second level classroom and contains the researcher's personal statement and reflections on the research

process. The final chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations arising from these findings.

CHAPTER TWO

PERCEPTIONS

2.1 Chapter outline

This chapter outlines the cross-sectoral contextual framework for the study, from the perspective of both education and the arts. It begins by offering (1) an understanding of perception as it underpins the study and goes on (2) to outline both the curricular and research deficits, taking account of the role of language and examining the epistemological assumptions, particularly with regard to knowledge. This is followed by (3) a historical overview of arts and education in the Irish context and the chapter concludes with (4) an overview of the WISS.

2.2 Introduction

The study identifies and describes perceptions of students' learning and meta-learning in and through the arts, within the formal education setting, through their participation in the WISS. In line with POA (Arts Council, 2008), and Hennessey and McNamara's (2011) study conducted with senior cycle students of English poetry, the study recognises that "there exists a relative silence in the promotion of arts-based subjects in education" (p. 207). Following Gadsden (2008), it questions the nature of the "socially constructed sense of the world...the learner, teacher, and researcher bring to the study and teaching of the arts?" (pp. 42–43), and focuses on getting "a stronger grasp on how people learn" (p. 44). The study seeks to triangulate the perceptions of learning through (1) students' self-reporting, (2) classroom observation and (3) the perceptions and observations of the four teachers and the four artist–writers who worked with the 91 students, over four

short writer-in-residence programmes between January and May 2013. A sample of students' work is presented as supporting evidence (see Appendix 1). The study draws on social constructivist, arts-based and aesthetic theories of learning in order to identify distinctive modes of learning through the arts, and to explore what these modes might contribute to the second-level curriculum.

The decision to focus on 'perceptions' of learning was two-fold. It revolved around a recognition of the cognitive/affective dimension of learning and its involvement in the cultural construction of mind (Eisner, 2004). Alongside this was the need to make reasoned claims for learning in and through the arts, that could be substantiated by the available evidence, in the light of warnings with regard to over-attribution from Winner and Cooper (2000), and more recently Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lancrin (2013). An analysis of the case study data, employing the method of constant comparison, outlined in Chapter Four, surfaced Sfard's concerning "two metaphors for learning" (1998, p. 5), which conceptualise learning as both an acquisitive solitary practice and as a participative collaborative encounter. This is broadly representative of the perceptions of learning of students, teachers and artist-writers in the study. These perceptions also tallied with the researcher's theoretical sensitivity and with her observations over almost 40 hours and subsequent interviews and focus groups.

2.3 Perception

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

(Williams, 1923)

As a philosophical term, perception is linked to understanding, sensing, awareness, intuition and insight, tracing its Latin origin to *percipere*, meaning to seize or understand. In psychological terms, perception is seen as part of human cognitive functioning, with both cognition and emotion/affect classed as forms of mental activity (Snow, Corno & Jackson III, 1996/2004, p. 243). A growing understanding of embodied cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1993; Bandura, 2001) has also helped to elucidate the somatic basis of consciousness, and the “always already embodied status of subjectivity” (Cromby, 2005, p. 133), alongside a greater appreciation and understanding of the role played by “feelings...as perceptions” Reimer (2004, p. 25). According to Perkins (1994), “knowledge lies at the foundations of perception” (p. 30), and mind, or self, is a cultural construct that is “profoundly influenced by the opportunities to learn that the school provides” (Eisner, 2004, p. 1), and for Bandura (2006) the self “must be socially constructed through transactional experiences with the environment” (p. 169). This social construction of the self arises from the individual’s situated interaction in, with, and through the environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Piaget, 1952). It is constructed through learning, which is characterised as understanding and meaning-making (Dewey, 1916). On this reading, individuals receive and process information, in turn actively creating

understandings that issue in meaningful and self-initiated responses and actions (Bandura, 2006), which occur through the “reciprocal interplay of intrapersonal, behavioral, and environmental determinants” (p. 165). The intrapersonal dimension encompasses “cognitive, affective, and biological event behavioral patterns, and environmental influences [which] all operate as interacting determinants that influence one another bidirectionally” (Bandura, 2001, pp. 14–15), making up the apparatus of the human mind or consciousness, which is itself an outgrowth of the developed neurological functioning of the human brain. Consciousness implies awareness and this awareness is facilitated through “feelings [which] are poised at that very threshold that separates being from knowing and thus have a privileged connection to consciousness” (Damasio, 1999, p. 43), while for Reimer (2004) “feeling is the connecting mechanism that allows this transition to happen – the transition from a person undergoing something both internally and externally and having the recognition that she or he is doing so” (p. 25). The rationale for the study was informed by the decision to focus on perceptions of students’ learning, based on an understanding of the cognitive-affective nature of perception as embodied subjectivity.

2.3.1 Rationale

This understanding of the cognitive-affective nature of perception grounded the study in an exploration of students’ experiences of their own learning within the classroom environment, and thus focused on the experienced curriculum (McCormick & Murphy, 2008; Andrews, 2004). Seven factors contributed to the rationale for the study, with (1) the curricular and research deficits in art education being of particular significance. The curricular deficit has to do both with the provision of arts subjects at second level, and the lack of student uptake of arts subjects within that provision. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 indicate the level of arts provision by number of schools in 2015, and also by student uptake for the Leaving Certificate between 2013 and 2015. Of interest in Table 2.1 are the gender

differences evident in student uptake, with music having 2:1 female weighting, art with craftwork again displaying a 2:1 female weighting whilst design & communication graphics display a 7:1 male weighting. Arts subjects such as choir orchestra and speech and drama, are almost exclusively female, where available. This reflects Smyth's (2016) recent findings, extrapolated from the *Growing Up in Ireland Study*, with regard to the gendered nature of arts participation by young people in Ireland. Of interest in Table 2 is the tiny percentage of ordinary-level students who take an arts subject at senior cycle (0.8 in music rising to 3.5% in art), with these figures remaining consistent or dropping over the three-year period 2013-2015. Similarly, Jordan's (2015) study also suggests that numbers remain low and static. These cursory findings indicate the need for more research into both provision and student uptake of arts subjects at second level in Ireland. (Conversely the researcher was able to locate 33 pieces of research conducted between 2000 and 2012 on primary arts provision in the St Patrick's College library location alone). Nested within this is (2) the growing focus on evidence-based research, measurement and standardised assessment (the aforementioned focus on assessment within the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, being a case in point), to which the arts as modes of learning are not as amenable as more propositional forms of knowledge, certainly within current forms of assessment.

A third factor was (3) the need to move beyond anecdotal evidence and advocacy in making the case for the importance of arts education. A fourth issue was (4) the current instrumental focus on transfer of learning from the arts to other domains of learning, and the fifth was (5) the growing focus on multimodal/new literacies within education and their demands on learners (and teachers), particularly in terms of the development of habits of mind and learning dispositions. The sixth consideration had to do with (6) the epistemologies underlying perceptions of knowledge, teaching and learning, and the pedagogies and methods of instruction to which they give rise. These pedagogies underpin

the enacted curriculum in the high-stakes environment of the second-level classroom, and the study sought to access students' perceptions of the experienced curriculum within this high-stakes environment. Finally, there was a concern with (7) the role played by discourse in shaping curriculum and policy within the spheres of both education and arts (Sugrue, 2004). Educational discourse, particularly at second level, is implicated in the perception of arts education as an optional rather than an embedded aspect of the specified curriculum. The research deficit around this perception of arts education was one of the main factors driving the study (see Tables 2.1 & 2.2).

Table 2.1 CSO subject statistics for Leaving Certificate 2015

| Subject | School Type | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Male (n = 109) | Female (n = 140) | Mixed (n = 443) | All (n = 692) |
| Music | 65 | 125 | 337 | 527 |
| Art (with design option) | 53 | 65 | 225 | 343 |
| Art (with craftwork option) | 65 | 111 | 305 | 481 |
| Choir | 1 | 28 | 12 | 41 |
| Orchestra | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Theatre & Stage | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Speech & Drama | 1 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| Design & Communication Graphics | 85 | 12 | 357 | 454 |

Table 2.2 *Proportion of Leaving Certificate candidates in arts subjects 2013–2015*

| Subject | 2013 (N = 54,408) | | 2014 (N = 56,975) | | 2015 (N = 57,929) | |
|------------------------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| | Art | | | | | |
| Higher level | 7,866 | 14.5 | 7,723 | 13.5 | 7,840 | 13.5 |
| Ordinary level | 2,430 | 4.5 | 2,110 | 3.7 | 2,045 | 3.5 |
| Music | | | | | | |
| Higher level | 5,713 | 10.5 | 5,926 | 10.5 | 5,866 | 10.0 |
| Ordinary level | 507 | 0.9 | 506 | 0.9 | 459 | 0.8 |
| Design & Communication | | | | | | |
| Graphics | | | | | | |
| Higher level | 4,017 | 7.4 | 4,097 | 7.0 | 4,192 | 7.2 |
| Ordinary level | 1,334 | 2.5 | 1,257 | 2.3 | 1,170 | 2.0 |
| Total | 21,86 | 40.3 | 21,61 | 37.9 | 21,57 | 37.0 |
| | 7 | | 9 | | 2 | |

2.3.2 The curricular deficit

From an educational perspective, both learning in and learning through the arts constitute important, and underrepresented, aspects of curricular provision, theorising and research activity, particularly at second level. Learning in the arts refers to learning within the specific art form and is usually taught by the teacher as part of curricular provision (sometimes in collaboration with artists or art-form specialists). Learning through the arts refers to curricular content delivered using arts-based learning and teaching strategies (sometimes, again, in collaboration with artists or art-form specialists). This is also referred to as arts integration or integrated arts (see Definition of Terms). This has to do with the contested nature of the value of the arts in education, and their perceived intrinsic and/or extrinsic or instrumental value and role (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013; Hickman, 2010; Bamford, 2006; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Catterall, 1998; Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kas, 2006). Bamford’s (2006) claim that “arts in education has an impact on the child, the teaching and learning environment, and on the community” (p. 11) is a large one, based on the correlational findings of an international research project,

conducted as part of the ongoing debate around the intrinsic value of the arts within education, that is the value of education in the arts for its own sake (Fleming & Bresler, 2015; Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013; Fleming, 2012; DICE Consortium, 2010; Arts Council, 2008; Bamford, 2006; Eisner & Day, 2004; Fiske, 1999; Robinson, 1982; Benson, 1979; Dewey, 1934). The establishment of more embedded, and/or core, curricular provision in the arts, particularly at second level, has been, and remains, contingent on a more developed understanding of the intrinsic value of the arts.

Nationally and internationally, arts education is part of curricular policy provision “in almost every country in the world” (Bamford, 2006, p. 11; Arts Council, 2008, pp. 16–19; NACCCE, 1999) and the Irish Primary School Visual Arts Curriculum describes the arts as “integral to primary education” (1999, p. 2). The same richness does not yet exist at second level, although there have been a number of welcome developments as a result of the new Junior Cycle Framework. Reference is made to “critical and creative thinking” as part of the new key skills at Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2012, 2009), and there is the *Short Course on Artistic Performance* (NCCA, 2016b) for junior cycle, based in an initiative between the DES and the Arts Council, outlined in more detail in Ní Bhriain’s 2014⁷ unpublished report referenced on pages 27/28 of the NCCA (2015) review of Junior Cycle Music. The (2012) Junior Cycle Framework includes “being creative” as one of the “Key Skills” at junior cycle (2012, p. 12) and the rationale for the Junior Cycle Visual Art Specification (2016a) states that:

Visual Art...recognises and rewards a number of different forms of intelligence, including emotional intelligence...[and] develops personal qualities of expression and empathy.... Making art develops the learner’s imagination through developing

⁷ Ní Bhriain, S. (2014). Performing Arts Learning Service (PALS): Draft Report on a Feasibility Study.

an idea or concept...allow[ing] them to exercise personal responsibility for specific tasks. Visual Art is ambiguous; there is no single ‘correct answer’....The subject promotes divergent thinking and develops the learner’s ability to interpret, make judgements and express opinions on a work. It also promotes respect for the work and the opinions of others. ...[It] is concerned with the personal, cognitive and physical fulfilment of the learner in both the present moment - producing work that gives personal pleasure and reward in the short-term, as well as in preparation for longer-term, more distant goals.... develop[ing].... creativity, critical judgement, working with others or working individually, providing and receiving constructive criticism, and respecting differences.... [and] provid[ing] the learner with a space within which it is safe to experiment, to fail and to learn (2016, p. 4).

Notwithstanding these welcome developments, there remains the need for an overarching curricular framework and guidelines for the arts at second level, comparable to that which currently operates at primary level. Both Jordan (2015) and Tanham (2015) have previously drawn attention to this, with Jordan in particular citing the “out-of-date Leaving Certificate [in visual art as being] ... not fit for purpose” (2015, p. 201).

Internationally, the acceptance of the value of the arts at the political level is more of a policy ideal than a reality, according to Bamford (2006). Whilst the recent research by Jordan (2015) on the experience of the artist as teacher, and Tanham (2015) on dance as art in the primary curriculum, is acknowledged, there is a need for more research into arts-based teaching and learning, or what I have designated as ‘arts learning’, from the perspective of education. The paucity of research has resulted in arts education being perceived as surplus to requirements, with both arts education and arts in education continually being justified within the curriculum in light of arguments relating to learning transfer, often far transfer (transfer outside of the domain of the arts) to other academic disciplines. The subsequent

‘instrumentalisation’ of the arts within education has resulted in mis- or non-identification of possible learning, on the one hand, and over-attribution of causal links on the other (Winner et al., 2013; Winner, 2011; Heltand & Winner, 2004; Winner & Cooper, 2000; Wolf, 1999).

2.3.3 The research deficit

Research on arts in education in Ireland has tended to focus on primary education and/or to be generated from within the domain of the arts rather than from within the domain of educational research. The Arts Council has conducted extensive research and commissioned several independent reports into the state of arts education, the most notable being *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* (1979), more commonly known, and hereafter, as the Benson Report (Arts Council, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2013; Kennedy, 1989; Drury, 1989, 2008; Benson, 1979, 1989). This lack of research from an educational perspective has been exacerbated by the current preference for measurable outcomes in education (Ball, 2000, 2012; Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009), which can be observed in the current national literacy and numeracy strategy (DES, 2011b) and the PISA reports. The paucity of research into arts education has resulted in a lack of understanding of the intrinsic value of arts learning which has, in turn, allowed a growing emphasis on the instrumental valuing of the arts, particularly their usefulness in relation to transfer to academic disciplines. This has been to the detriment of policy, practice and research in arts education, as evidenced in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 with regard to student uptake of arts subjects at senior cycle and the need for core curricular provision.

There is considerable anecdotal evidence from schools, teachers, artists and arts organisations with regard to the positive social, academic and arts learning outcomes for young people who participate in the arts, whether inside or outside school. There are many well-regarded studies and meta-analyses based, almost exclusively, on correlational findings

(Catterall, 2002; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Bamford, 2006; Winner, 2011; Burton, Horowitz & Abeles, 1999; Matarasso, 1997; Smithrim & Upitis, 2005; Harvey, 2006; Fiske, 1999). Winner's (2011) meta-analysis of education and arts research, conducted for the OECD, reported findings which suggested that students who participated in arts-related activities were four times as likely to do well academically and to participate in science and mathematics activities. Alongside this, they were three times more likely to be elected to a position of responsibility in school and to have higher attendance (Winner, 2011; Catterall, 2002).

Similarly, Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (1999) found that students who had engaged in arts activities displayed “capacities central to arts learning...creativity, fluency, originality, elaboration and resistance to closure”, had stronger expressive, imaginative, risk-taking and co-operative capacities and tendencies, and were more willing to engage in public displays of their learning (p. 36). These claims are repeated time and again, backed by strikingly similar anecdotal evidence, including that of the researcher herself, arising out of the experience gained through the WIR programme over the course of the past 16 years (O’Hanlon, 2002; Gallagher, 2005). They also reflect the aspirations of the aforementioned junior cycle visual art curriculum (NCCA, 2016a).

Research focused on transfer, particularly far transfer to academic subject areas, has been criticised as inferential, and insufficiently rigorous in making the case for a causal link between the study of the arts and greater academic achievement (Winner & Cooper, 2000). Similarly, Hetland & Winner (2004), highlighted the ways in which some arts in education advocates employed “scattered evidence, much of it not about the inherent value of the arts for children, but rather about the instrumental value of the arts – their effect on basic academic skills whose importance is undisputed” (p. 136). This serves to highlight an instrumental view of arts education as it has been employed to support academic learning

based around propositional models of knowledge acquisition (Gadsden, 2008, p. 41) almost exclusively. Benson also drew attention to this instrumental view of the arts as laid out in the DAHG Statement of Strategy (2011-2014) which outlined the following indicators for success:

Increase aggregate annual visitor numbers to cultural institutions to 4 million by 2016.

Increase aggregate output of television production sector to 300 million per annum by 2016.

Increase participation in the Arts and Culture naturally by 10% by 2016.

Increase the audience for Irish Arts abroad to 1 million per annum by 2016.

(C. Benson interview: Appendix 5).

2.3.4 The ‘problem’ of transfer

Echoing earlier warnings, Winner (2000, 2011) cautioned that the research claims for transfer from arts to non-arts learning continually exceeded the evidence. She further suggested that the focus on transfer is problematic in a number of ways. In the Irish context, the expectations around transfer from arts learning to other domains were exemplified by the reception of the review of *Breaking the Cycle* (Weir, Milis & Ryan, 2002a, 2002b), a pilot initiative targeted at improving resourcing in 33 urban (Weir et al., 2002a, p. vii) and 123 rural (Weir et al., 2002b, p. vii) disadvantaged primary schools, between 1996 and 2000 (Weir et al., 2002a, p. 1). Part of this resourcing included significantly increased access to “out-of-school activities and special projects” (Weir et al., 2002b, p. vii), including arts provision and specialist teachers (Weir et al., 2002a, p. 107). Whilst seen as beneficial overall, the findings did not provide evidence of benefits accruing from increased arts provision, and thus were unhelpful with regard to the perception of arts education. The review found that:

positive self-evaluations in Art and Crafts were associated with poorer reading and Mathematics scores, positive self-evaluation in Sport was associated with poorer reading scores, and positive self-evaluations in Music were associated with poorer Mathematics scores (2002, p. 105)

These findings would seem to indicate a lack of transfer between the expressive, kinesthetic and academic learning domains. Both reviews (2002a, 2002b) report positive impacts on the school, the teaching staff and on pupils' self-efficacy, but also unrealistic (low) teacher and (high) pupil expectations, a high degree of teacher turnover, and the fact that students in the programme schools were starting from an already low baseline (Weir, 2003, p. 2).

Perceptions concerning the 'impact' of arts learning echo those of Harvey's (2006) Cork-based primary-schools study who cites Fiske, (1999) and Catterall (1999), among others, in stating that "There is mounting evidence that the arts have a measurable impact on students in 'high poverty' and urban settings" (2006, p. 103). The question, therefore, becomes not so much one of whether the arts have some 'impact', but rather a question of what kind of 'impact' and how to identify it. This is further complicated when it is unclear what exactly is being identified and what to look for in terms of arts learning. Does the learning display cognitive, metacognitive, cognitive/affective, aesthetic, expressive or social aspects, or perhaps a mixture of all of these? Wolf (1999) previously problematised this argument, pointing to the need to focus on exploring exactly what it is that is being learned (p. 98), and in the OECD study *Art for Art's Sake?* (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013), the researchers stated that:

experimental studies...do not find a positive association between multi-arts education and cognitive outcomes. This leads to the conclusion that there is as yet no firm evidence that multi-arts instruction, whether in stand-alone arts classes or in

arts-infused/arts integration classes, leads to improvements in academic skills as measured by standardised test scores (pp. 74–75).

It has been suggested that near transfer, that is domain-specific transfer, might provide a more useful model for understanding and capturing transfer of arts learning (Bamford, 2006), and that identifying the habits of mind inculcated by, and through, arts learning, and how they function, in terms of both near and far transfer, would provide firmer ground for research than more instrumental approaches (Winner et al., 2013). Instrumental approaches are characterised by a focus on transfer of learning through the arts – whether learning in one domain might enhance learning in another – and have gained traction in the Irish context in light of the disappointing 2009 OECD PISA results (Perkins, Moran, Cosgrove & Shiel, 2010, 2011), which highlighted falling literacy and numeracy levels among Irish 15-year-olds. This resulted in the rigorous application of the national literacy and numeracy strategy (DES, 2011b).

Whilst acknowledging recent research (Jordan, 2015; Tanham, 2015; Smyth, 2016; Granville, 2012), there is a need for more research into arts-based teaching and learning from the perspective of second-level education. The paucity of research has resulted in the subsequent ‘instrumentalisation’ of the arts within education, resulting in mis- or non-identification of learning, on the one hand, or over-attribution of causal links on the other (Winner et al., 2013; Winner, 2011; Hetland & Winner, 2004; Winner & Cooper, 2000; Wolf, 1999). In the light of these considerations, the study set out to explore the perceptions of learning of students by speaking directly with students themselves, their teachers and artist-writers.

Writing, creative writing, and literacy have always been inextricably linked in educational practice, at the level of the enacted curriculum. Literacies are now recognised as multimodal, incorporating many more abilities, than the ability to read, and write. These

abilities include interpreting, discussing, viewing, creating, interacting and performing ‘texts’, encompassing personal, social, cultural and digital modes. Since it is in, and through, language that the individual is equipped to participate in society, it also includes the acquisition of linguistic competence across the range of skills necessary to negotiate that society (DES & ETI, 2015). Therefore, learners need and deserve access to differentiated, varied, specific and engaging activities and assessment processes, as well as the ability to derive aesthetic pleasure through these modalities (O’Shea, 2015).

2.3.5 The literate mind

Literacy, in its various forms, is a prerequisite for participation in the world as construed. The literate mind required to function in today’s world is radically different from that of even fifty years ago. This is recognised by the current national literacy and numeracy strategy, where it says:

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media (DES, 2011b, p. 8).

The literate mind is now ‘multimodal’ (Underwood & Farrington-Flint, 2014, p. 11; Jenkins & Kelley, 2013), no longer relying on information residing in the memory. It is now rather the processes of seeking, selecting and organising information that characterise the literate mind in the middle of the second decade of the 21st century. To be literate now means to “know how to select relevant facts, see patterns within related areas, and organize knowledge to meet specific learning goals. Learning is meaningful, purposeful, self-directed, and generative, for it leads to new discoveries and new knowledge” (Dorn & Soffos, 2001a, Kindle Location 412–415). Operating through the higher-order cognitive functions of perception, organisation, transfer and memory, the development of literacy skills requires the development of self-regulation and habits of mind in the learner, in order

that learning is purposeful and self-directed. In setting out to explore students' perceptions of learning in and through the arts the study also hoped to discover the habits of mind (if any) that are cultivated by these modes of learning and whether, in the perception of students, these "individual self-regulation process" (Baun, Owen, & Oreck, 1997) transfer to other domains of learning.

2.3.6 Habits of mind and learning dispositions

Habits of mind could be described as the cognitive/affective attitudes of the learner. In arts learning these habits of mind are cultivated within a workshop/studio learning environment, a creative space in which different rules apply, and different practices and ways of thinking are encountered. Studio learning "uses the arts as the vehicle for the curriculum rather than as a sidecar" (Stevens, 2002, p. 20), inculcating habits of mind and thinking dispositions associated with arts practice. Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan (2013) identify eight habits of mind cultivated through practice in the visual arts, but applicable across arts forms. These habits of minds include engagement and persistence, imagining or 'envisioning' what cannot be seen or does not yet exist, the development of expressive, observational and reflective habits of mind, along with a growing ability to take risks and to be able (and willing) to evaluate both their own work and the work of others (2013, p. 6). As such, learning through the arts can, in practice, take place inside or outside the school walls, and within and across all art forms and disciplines (Arts Council, 2006a, p. 8; Arts Council, 2013, p. 3).

Involving competences across a range of literacies (Dorn & Soffos, 2001a), these habits of mind and critical thinking and learning dispositions are perceived as central to the development of self-regulated learners' sense of engagement, motivation and self-efficacy, as well as play:

art-centered integrated learning...fosters dispositions toward learning and understanding that are critical to research in the disciplines and to learning in the classroom. These dispositions include curiosity, flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, and the willingness to look at an idea, issue, or problem from many vantage points, even a nonsensical one (Marshall & Donahue 2015, Kindle Location 376–408).

Gadsden also identifies five arts-learning dispositions, based on students' development of an understanding of "persistence...creativity...language, literacy and math...self-regulation...and students' development of critical reflection and introspection, particularly as these relate to empathy and understanding of others" (Gadsden, 2008, p. 44). Project Zero also highlights learning dispositions, or what is termed 'artful thinking':

Artful thinking focuses on a set of six thinking dispositions that have special power for exploring works of art and other complex topics in the curriculum. They are: questioning & investigating, observing & describing, reasoning, exploring viewpoints, comparing & connecting, and finding complexity...each of the six [also] represent forms of thinking that are powerful in terms of building understanding in other disciplines (Tishman, 2006, pp. 8–9).

This study seeks to identify these habits of mind and learning dispositions in the case study findings and to argue for a consideration of these habits and dispositions, as one set of affordances that can occur through arts learning. This shifts the focus from a preoccupation with learning transfer to a focus on the concept of learning dispositions and habits of mind, and from a preoccupation with the content of learning to a focus on the modes of learning and the affordances that these modes offer the 21st century learner.

By focusing on the development of habits of mind and the acquisition of thinking dispositions the issue of 'transfer of learning' is re-contextualised in terms of *how* something is learned, rather than focusing on *what* is learned in a specific domain or discipline,

something which remains unproven, beyond the claims of correlational attribution according to Winner et al., (2013). As Winner and Cooper (2000) remark, “the most direct link from learning in the arts to learning in other disciplines is a link in cognitive structure; a more circuitous link would be a motivational one” (2000, p. 12; Melnick, Witmer, & Strickland, 2011). Accepting the cognitive–affective and embodied nature of learning, the motivational link might be ascribed to students’ enhanced self-efficacy gained through engaging in arts-based learning. These ideas are embedded in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980, 1999) notion of embodied cognition, which originated in the work of Piaget (1952) and von Glasersfeld, (1995), and has been, and continues to be, the subject of much scholarship (Keysers, 2011; McGilchrist, 2009, 2012; Damasio, 1999). However, discourses of knowledge and truth form the basis, often unconsciously, of the way we think about learning or knowledge and how it is ‘acquired’, tending to be ideological and deeply entrenched.

2.3.7 Epistemologies

Epistemology is at the heart of any discussion about education. Within education, “epistemology has primarily been concerned with propositional knowledge, that is, knowledge [based on a view] that a certain core of information exists and is true, rather than other forms of knowledge such as applied knowledge” (Gadsden, 2008, p. 41). Ideologically, educationalists appear caught between viewing teaching as either the transmission of universal truths or as inculcating an understanding of knowledge as “temporary locations in dialogic space” (Gergen in McCarty & Schwandt, 1999, p. 58), the view that all ‘knowledge’ as we have it is always already constructed and contingent. Similarly scholars have taken issue with constructivism (Slezak, 2000), so that Kirschner’s (2009) tongue-in-cheek description of the gap that exists between the “sage-on-the-stage...and...fuzzy-brained social constructivists who believe that nothing is true” (2009, p. 144), whilst a caricature, does serve to illustrate the breadth of this epistemological and

pedagogical divide (McWilliam, 2009; Manus, 1996; Howe & Bery, 2000), along with all that it implies for teaching and learning, particularly given the role of language in learning (NCCA, 2005, p. 3; Pinker, 1995; Dorn & Soffos, 2001).

2.3.8 Language and curriculum

The contingent nature of language acquisition implies simultaneous cognitive, linguistic and emotional development, since human beings not only learn language, but also learn *through* language (NCCA, 2005, p. 3). Language is deeply implicated in the learner's cognitive/emotional development and understanding (von Glasersfeld, 1995) and is embedded in the process of knowledge making, both in establishing a discourse and conferring legitimacy upon it (Foucault, 1969/1989). Teaching is informed by theories of learning, and approaches to teaching, learning and curriculum inform what happens in the classroom, and are, in turn, informed by the prevailing political discourse (Kelly, 1977/2009).

For some time education in Ireland has been informed by the discourse of new management, focused on value for money, and performative targets (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009; Ball, 2000, 2012), compounded by the recession, continuing to be reflected in DES strategy statements (DES 2005–2007, 2008–2010, 2011–2014, 2015–2017). In curricular terms, this instrumental approach imposes a particularly narrow view of what constitutes knowledge and learning. It functions within a high-stakes learning environment that looks to the reproduction of 'declarative' knowledge by students, as they seek to negotiate the standardised testing environment at second level (Jonassen, 2009, p. 21). New ways of thinking about literacies (DES/ETI, 2015), skills (European Commission, 2010b) and the arts are required. As Efland (2004a) states:

The current understanding of cognition is more complex than was heretofore thought. And cognitive ability, which traditionally has been limited to the acquisition

of propositional or literal forms of thought, needs to be broadened to include conceptual activities that entail non-propositional forms of thought including the arts (p. 756).

In order to provide further context for the study, the next section outlines some of the relevant historical and policy developments within arts and education in Ireland, over the past 60 years.

2.4 Historical review of arts in education

And only when the danger
was plain in the music could you know
the measure of their true rejoicing in
finding a voice where they had found a vision (Boland, 1994).

2.4.1 The Arts Council

Beginning “in the economic circumstance of the early 1950s...[and] only six years after the creation of the Arts Council of Great Britain by the economist John Maynard Keynes” (Smyth, 2011), the first Arts Act saw the setting up of the Arts Council/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon in 1951. One of only two such councils in the world at the time (Long, 2015, p. 268), it was to function as an independent and autonomous, government-appointed, statutory body for the promotion and assistance of the arts and the development of “public knowledge and appreciation of the arts” (Arts Council, 2002, p. 50). Its core functions were policy making, educating, creating and funding the arts, which were defined as “painting, sculpture, architecture, music, the drama, literature, design in industry and the fine arts and applied arts generally” (Arts Act, 1951, section 9).

2.4.2 The historical context

Dreams and Responsibilities (Kennedy, 1989),⁸ commissioned by the Arts Council, “to trace the development of official arts policy in independent Ireland”, contains a lively account of the perception of “the fine arts” (1989, p. 11) amid the political, economic and social realities of the new state, and up to the late 1980s. It is rendered particularly vivid through access to private correspondence, and goes some way to explaining the continued lack of clarity with regard to the role of the arts (NESF, 2007, p. vi). The wider historico-political/social environment and the prevailing view of the arts underlines the difficulties faced by those who were advocating for arts education in Ireland:

in many countries there is a long tradition of symbiosis between the worlds of culture and of education...Neither in institutional terms, nor in terms of policy and practice, is this true of Ireland. It is important to understand how this leads to the cultural dysfunction (Drury, 1989, p. 11).

The Bodkin Report (1949) set out the state of the arts in Ireland in the years after independence, described by Benson that “austerity which characterised both the religious and political outlook of the early decades of the state (Benson, 1979, 1.6). An ardent advocate for the arts, Bodkin faced almost insurmountable political, social and economic obstacles (Kennedy, 1989), chief among which was poverty. Lee (1989) wrote of “mental disease...urban slums and a demoralised casual working class” (159). According to the Minister for Education, J. M. O’Sullivan, speaking in the Dáil in November 1929, “The chief difficulty in meeting these needs [for funding for proposed arts initiatives] is the financial one” (Dáil Debates, 32, 13 November 1929). Historians and commentators paint a stark

⁸ The Director of the Arts Council subsequently ordered that copies of *Dreams and Responsibilities* be shredded following controversy as to the book’s stance on who ought be credited with the creation of Aosdána, an Irish affiliation of artists engaged in literature, music and visual arts. This is a matter unrelated to the subject of this dissertation, and Kennedy’s book remains an invaluable concise history of the Arts Council.

picture of living conditions in Ireland between the foundation of the State and the nineteen-eighties:

In 1949 Ireland still had the highest rates of infant and maternal mortality in Europe. Poverty was still endemic; during the great freeze of 1946-7 the Archbishop of Dublin granted a dispensation from Lenten fasting...owing to...under-nourishment....in 1948, 80,000 people in Ireland still lived in one-roomed dwellings....In October 1949 the Censorship of Publications Board banned the report of the British Royal Commission on Population, on the grounds that it advocated contraception, the first time an official report had been banned (Ferriter, 2002, p. 479).

Mass emigration meant that by 1961 the population numbered 2.8 million, five per cent less than in 1922 (Kennedy, 1989), with over a half a million people leaving between 1945 and 1981 (Ferriter, 2010). Between 1922 and 1957, under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church which Lee characterises as “concelebrat[ing] the intellectual poverty of the period” (Lee, 1989, p. 159), there existed a policy of economic protectionism, so that Ireland remained chronically underdeveloped “as the whole nation conspired in the fiction that Europe and the wider world did not exist” (Kiberd, 1996, p. 471). In the context of a surging post-war European economy, Ireland was without a modern health service, a modern civil service (Lee, 1989; Ferriter, 2010), or a modern education system (Garvin, 2004). Akenson, Farren and Coolahan (2003) write that “during most of the twentieth century there was no such thing as an Irish educational system” (2003, p. 711), going on to conclude more positively that:

The two decades from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s witnessed many worthwhile reforms in education....The general approach taken by policy-makers was not to issue grand designs of overall reform...but rather to proceed by pragmatic

gradualism....[so that] while many reforms can be identified, they were devised within the existing administrative and structural parameters (2003, pp. 755-756).

Previous attempts at reform of these structures in 1974 and 1985 had met with little success, which was not forthcoming until the green and white education papers of the 1990s (Akenson et al., 2003, p. 756). It was against this educational backdrop that the groundbreaking report, *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* (1979), authored by Ciaran Benson (and more commonly known as the Benson Report), was commissioned by the Arts Council under the chairmanship of Patrick Rock, and supported by a high-level group.⁹

2.4.3 The Benson Report

Whilst Kennedy's 1989 report goes some way towards making sense of the history of the arts in Ireland in the early years of the state, it was the Benson Report (1979), more formally known as *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education*, which was the seminal document in making the case for arts in education in Ireland. Commissioned by the Arts Council and authored by Ciarán Benson, with the support of an expert working group/working party, the report set out the state of arts provision within the formal education system at that time. It highlighted the neglect of the arts in Irish education (Benson, 1979, Background, np), identifying poor facilities, inadequate budgets, an over-extended inspectorate, and teachers who were inadequately trained in the area of arts education, and outlined a blueprint for the future of arts in education.

Like many countries across the world, it was/is the cross-sectoral/cross-departmental nature of arts and education which has been the stumbling block in terms of policy, provision, training and financial investment (Bamford, 2006). The lack of an official policy

⁹ Seán Ó Tuama (chairman), Brian Boydell, John Coolahan, Bridget Doolan, George Dawson, Joe Dowling, Alice Hanratty, Séamus Heaney, Peter Killian (Dept. Ed.), Pádraig Macdiarmada, Diarmaid Ó Donnabháin, Colm Ó Briain, Cathal O Neill

outlining the educational value of the arts meant that they continued to be undervalued, whilst languages, sciences and mathematics dominated the curriculum, particularly at second level (Benson, 1979). Benson also highlighted the introduction of the 1971 primary school curriculum which:

has changed considerably the philosophy, approach and atmosphere of primary education. The inclusion of imaginative programmes in music, art & craft, drama and mime activities, physical education and dance, as integral parts of the curriculum, heralded a new era in Irish national education (Section 1.11).

The Department of Education's response to the Benson Report, the *White Paper on Educational Development* (1980), displayed an underdeveloped view of education, and "hid itself behind the usual alibi of expense" (Garvin, 2004, p. 179), justifying a continued lack of support for arts in education:

Public demands on the school system are **less urgent in art-related subjects**. Indeed schools have daily experience of pressure for examination results in the traditional subject-areas and an education system must maintain a dynamic interaction with the society it serves (DES, 1980, p. 64 emphasis added).

The response was predictable in the context of the introduction of free second-level education as recently as 1967, and the preoccupation of both public and political discourses with economic issues (INTO, 2009). Arts and culture would "not have not been commonplace in most lives and have certainly been absent in the lives of many" (Benson, 1989, Introduction, np), and there was little sense of the role and function of arts and culture, within society or within education.

This elitist understanding of the arts, as meaning the fine arts, "painting, sculpture, architecture, music, the drama, literature, design in industry and the fine arts and applied arts generally" (Arts Act, 1951, section 9), and here understood to indicate artistic activity

requiring great skill or accomplishment, was to continue into the nineties (C. Benson interview: Appendix 5), until the 2003 Arts Act broadened the term to include:

any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form...in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and...any medium when used for those purposes (Arts Act, 2003, section 24).¹⁰

The Department of Fine Arts, created in 1921, had lasted all of 19 weeks, before being merged with the Department of Education, not to reappear again for some 60 years (Kennedy, 1989). In 1993 ‘arts’ was included in the title of the newly established Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, with its own Responsible Minister at cabinet, Michael D. Higgins. Since then, ministerial responsibility for the arts has been reallocated five times, being combined with different portfolio responsibilities in a series of different and newly established government departments.¹¹ Currently, the arts portfolio is assigned to the Responsible Minister at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, with effect from May 2016.

2.4.4 A rights-based approach to arts and culture

After Ireland ratified the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1992 (DCYA, 2014, p. 103) and *Charting Our Education Future* (DES, 1995) demonstrated a growing recognition that “the provision of arts education is an issue of social equality, there is an increasing recognition that cultural poverty is a significant part of disadvantage” (p. 50). A rights-based approach, based on a view that increasingly saw access to, and participation in,

¹⁰ See <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2003/act/24/enacted/en/print#sec5>

¹¹ The Department has been variously designated Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht (1993–1997); Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (1997–2002); Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism (2002–2010); Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (2011–2016) and Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs (2016–present).

arts and culture as part of a citizen's rights, began to be reflected in Irish policy (UN, 1989; Moore, 1997; NACCCE, 1999; DES, 1995, 2005; NESF, 2007; Arts Council, 2008, 2010, 2013; DES/DAHG, 2013; Barnard, 2010; DCYA, 2014).

Charting our Education Future (1995) was followed by a call from the Arts Council and the Combat Poverty Agency (Moore, 1997) for an integrated and co-ordinated response to arts provision, for those with least access to arts and culture, particularly in terms of social cohesion. They pointed to the need for “forums...for those affected by poverty and disadvantage to explore their distinct cultural identities” (Moore, 1997, Introduction, np). The NESF (2007), in writing about the importance of cultural participation and social cohesion a decade later, identified “attitudinal...financial and physical barriers for many individuals and groups” (p. 144), with regard to participation in the artistic life of the country. This inequality of artistic opportunity was echoed the following year by the Economic and Social Research Institute, hereafter the ESRI, in its articulation of a rights-based approach to arts and culture:

Cultural inclusion is an equal right to participate in the nation's artistic and cultural life – to enjoy art, to make art, to participate in decisions about art, to comment vigorously on art – to be active cultural citizens. It can thus be thought of as a fundamental democratic right – alongside the right to education and to participate in the formal democratic process (Lunn & Kelly, 2008, p. 7).

Both the NESF and ESRI were primarily concerned with the role of the arts both as a right, and as a way of maintaining social cohesion. The significance of this shift in perspective in the understanding of arts needs to be understood against the historical backdrop of the low political standing of the arts generally and particularly within education up until the 1980s (Benson, 1979; Benson, 1989; Kennedy, 1989).

2.4.5 The role of the Arts Council

The *Arts in Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013) represented a ‘policy window’ or arts in education. A policy window represents that moment when “a problem is recognised, a solution is developed and available to the policy community, a political change makes it the right time for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe” (Kingdon, 1995, p. 64). It was the result of more than a decade of collaboration between various arts and education bodies, working together and in partnership with the Arts Council (described in Chapter One, section 1.3.7–1.3.8), the Charter was both materially and symbolically significant. In particular, it represented the Arts Council’s ongoing commitment to promoting arts in education at government level and fostering collaboration between the DES and DAHG over a number of decades. This commitment, particularly evident in the commissioned reports and the arts plans published since 1979 (Benson, 1979, 1989; Drury, 1989, 2008; Moore, 1997; Herron, 1999; Coughlan, 2002; Marzin, 2003; Matarasso, 1997; Arts Council, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016), arose out of a rights-based approach to access to arts and culture and the recognition that “the arts have been neglected in Irish education” (Benson, 1979, Background, np). Prior to the 1990s, the arts in Ireland were “seen as more of a luxury than a basic right” (INTO, 2009, p. 30), by governments more preoccupied with the population’s basic needs (Benson, 1979; Drury, 1989; Kennedy, 1989; Garvin, 2004).

2.4.6 ‘The Function of Art’

The decade between 1978 and 1988 saw major developments in arts in education (Benson, 1989, p. 27). The 1970s had already seen major developments in education in terms of the curriculum, including the 1971 primary curriculum, the expansion of the second-level sector and the improvement and restructuring of teacher education, particularly

at second level. This period also saw remarkable growth in the area of educational research in general, having been vastly under-researched according to Coolahan (J. Coolahan interview: Appendix 5; Coolahan, 1984, 1995).

Writing a decade later, in *Art and the Ordinary*, Benson (1989) stated that:

At a more private level there would be a general understanding that meanings in life must be made as well as found; that self-knowledge is all the greater if you have command of the symbolic means with which to make that knowledge, and that the sharing of experience of all sorts, which is something that lies at the core of being human in everyday life, would be thin to the point of disappearance without metaphors and music, images and enactments (Introduction, np).

Benson's (1989) review amounted to a critical analysis of arts and cultural policy and provision, arguing for a more informed understanding of the sector and finer and more discrete working definitions of community arts and arts-in-community, arts education and arts in education, youth arts and arts for a young public. It argued for the need for these related, but separate, areas of practice to be recognised as requiring distinct supports, from a range of agencies acting in various kinds and degrees of partnership, and for greater coherence with regard to policy and provision, along with more sensitive models of funding and support.

Drawing on the work of Nelson Goodman (1982), among others, Benson interrogated the question of the *function* of art, or what art does, suggesting that, in order to be fully realised, art needs not only to be made, but also to be made to work, i.e. function at the level of making meaning, particularly for the society within which it is created and to whom it is, inevitably, addressed. The function of art and its relationship to meaning-making were key ideas behind the 1989 Report, *Art and the Ordinary*. It is arguable that these ideas

could not have been expressed without the developments of the previous decade (C. Benson interview: Appendix 5).

Up until 1993, the main function of the Arts Council according to its standing order was “to maintain and encourage high standards in the Arts”. The privileging of the ‘fine arts’ meant that there was no place for community arts or arts in education or the more recent popular art forms, such as cinema. As chair of the Arts Council from 1993 to 1998, Ciarán Benson oversaw a sea-change in the Arts Council’s standing order, later termed the mission statement, which enabled the Council to “look at the ways in which art, artists and an art-understanding citizenry could interact. Obviously, crucially in there would be the process of education” (C. Benson interview: Appendix 5). It took 15 years before the 2003 Arts Act broadened the definition of the ‘arts’ to one that was more inclusive and reflective of contemporary arts and cultural practices. The Mission Statement now states that:

The Arts Council believes that everyone in Ireland has an entitlement to meaningful access to and participation in the Arts. The Council understands that it has a primary responsibility to encourage and maintain high standards in all art forms especially in the living contemporary arts...[and] to foster those structures which assist and develop dialogue between Artists, the Arts and communities from which they emerge (C. Benson interview: Appendix 5, quoting from private correspondence).

2.4.7 Developments in arts education policy

The proactive role of the Arts Council in devolving some of its arts-in-education schemes to outside agencies should not be under-estimated (T. Dorgan interview: Appendix 5). This followed the publication of the Arts Plan (Arts Council, 1995–1997) and included the devolution of the WISS to Poetry Ireland in 1996. This move towards implementing a partnership model by the Arts Council, the introduction of the 1999 primary curriculum with its focus on arts in the curriculum, and the reform of the Junior Cycle, particularly the

recognition within the English syllabus of the importance of language literacy and oral language development, were significant developments.

These factors, along with a large youth population (CSO, 2012) and the wider policy context established by the *Arts in Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013) and the decision by government to launch a cultural policy, *Culture 2025* (DAHRRGA, 2016), have in more recent years created a policy environment more conducive to the advancement of arts in education and more open to those arts and cultural providers who operate within the formal education sector, including the WISS. The concluding section gives a brief introduction to the WISS, including its history, development and rationale.

2.5 The Writers-in-Schools Scheme (WISS)

Now I'm not afraid to let my imagination grab my pen.¹²

2.5.1 Introduction

The WISS is one of the oldest arts in education schemes in the country (Gallagher, 2004). It is a national arts-in-education programme centrally administered by Poetry Ireland (Poetry Ireland, 2015, p. 1). The WISS was founded in 1977, as part of a general move towards greater Arts Council involvement in arts and education (Benson, 1979). Spearheaded by the Arts Council's Literature Officer, David Collins, and subsequently by his successor, Lar Cassidy, the WISS was clearly conceived as a literature in education initiative (T. Dorgan interview: Appendix 5; C. Benson interview: Appendix 5), in that "it came from, if you like, a literature impulse rather than an education impulse in here [in the Arts Council]" (M. Drury interview: Appendix 5). Writing a decade after the Benson

¹² Feedback from a student evaluation of a 2003 primary school Writer-in-Residence project.

Report, in an overview of the Arts Council's involvement in education, the then education officer, Martin Drury, (1989) stated that "The Arts Council's education policy in literature centres upon its Writers-in-Schools Scheme" (p. 25). This focus on *literature as art* means that the WISS falls within the remit of the Arts Council's Literature brief, rather than that of Young People, Children and Education.

Through annual funding support from the Arts Council, the WISS organises and supports artist-writers, both financially and professionally, to work across all genres of the literary and narrative arts including: performance poetry; drama; children's and young adult fiction; short story; storytelling; illustration and screenwriting, in primary- and post-primary schools within the island of Ireland. The Arts Council's almost 40-year involvement in arts in education, including the WISS, has continued to be realised directly by the provision of schemes and awards, such as the WISS, which enable artists to engage with schools (Arts Council, 2004, 2008; Drury, 1989; Benson, 1979).

2.5.2 The Development of the WISS

The WISS itself was a very small arts-in-education scheme, run centrally by the Arts Council, and built around the simple model of a two-and-a-half hour visit by a writer to a school, a basic structure which has been retained to this day. According to the former director of Poetry Ireland, Theo Dorgan, by the time WISS came within the purview of Poetry Ireland, "in January 1996" (Gallagher, 2005, p. 12), several aspects of the scheme needed attention (O'Hanlon, 2002; Gallagher, 2004). There were five major areas of concern, including the appointment of a dedicated education officer:

I wanted to appoint a full-time education officer but it had to be an education professional, not an arts professional because what we wanted to do was connect to the curriculum, connect to the pupils and connect to the teachers on a credible basis (T. Dorgan interview: Appendix 5).

Secondly, the WISS itself was circumscribed by the short-term nature of the visit structure (Gallagher, 2005). In tandem with this, there was the need for Poetry Ireland to have a greater understanding of the complex nature of the school environment within which the WISS sought to operate, particularly at second level (O'Hanlon, 2002; Gallagher, 2005). Thirdly, there was a lack of appreciation of the importance of arts education and arts in education within the education system at all levels (Benson, 1979; Kennedy, 1989), mirroring the general countrywide malaise (Garvin, 2004). Fourthly, the WISS lacked a sustainable structure, particularly in terms of funding, as well as a sense of investment and ownership by schools (O'Hanlon, 2002). Finally, there was a pressing need to find more creative ways to foster the Irish-language strand of WISS activities, inherent in its bi-lingual structure and intent:

I wanted to integrate Writers in Schools with the overall vision I had for the organisation which was absolute permeation of the language and the culture of the language ... I think anything that individuates and sequesters two traditions behind hedges and boundaries, is probably a retrograde step... The construction of mental and physical reservations for habitual users of the Irish language, I think, has been an enormous inhibiting factor in the perception of...Irish (T. Dorgan interview: Appendix 5).

In the year 2000, curricular change at both primary and post-primary level, alongside changes to the Arts Council's funding model, created an opportunity to expand the WISS. This expansion included the development of the Writers-in-Residence scheme (WIR), and the appointment of an education officer to oversee the expansion. This commitment to arts in education by Poetry Ireland was matched by the Department of Education and Science, which seconded a teacher to Poetry Ireland to fill the new post of education officer.

The work of the WISS continued to grow and develop over the years and now includes several thematic strands, e.g. development education and performance poetry, partnership in Laureate na nÓg, professional development for artist–writers, as well as policy and advocacy work through membership of ETAI and other partnerships (Poetry Ireland, 2015). One of the major developments within the WISS was the development of a model for a writer-in-residence-in-schools scheme, and it is this scheme which provided the vehicle for the research. This study is also the first in-depth study of the WIR scheme since its inception in 2000.

2.5.3 The Writer-in-Residence Scheme (WIR)

The rationale behind the development of the WIR was to create a model of arts in education practice which would facilitate longer-term involvement by students with an artist–writer. In order to do this, it needed to be flexible enough to be tailored to individual school needs and timetables, particularly at second level (Arts Council, 2006a, p. 11). It was, therefore, designed to function within a standard double-class period at second-level, i.e. not more than 90 minutes. It was also designed to encourage partnering by teachers and schools, artist–writers, arts organisations and local partners such as local authority arts officers (O’Hanlon, 2002). This partnership and collaboration ideally began with the project design and included the implementation of the project within the school, ongoing contact and project documentation as well as developing funding strategies and support networks (O’Hanlon, 2002).

The WIR sought to introduce a more developmental approach to working with the literary and narrative arts, in the classroom, developing approaches which enabled the participants to “explore the world of the imagination over a longer period of time, in the company of an experienced writer” (O’Hanlon, 2002; Gallagher, 2005, p. 17; Poetry Ireland, 2013), in a wide range of genres. A WIR project involved one visit per week by an artist–

writer to a school over an agreed period, usually lasting no longer than a term, during which the artist–writer worked with the same group or class (of ideally not more than 20–22 post-primary-level students). Apart from access to funding and the support of school management, the ‘success’ of a residency depended upon the involvement of a committed teacher, who would be given time for planning, evaluation and supporting students around their creative writing, as outlined in the *Artist-Schools Guidelines* (Arts Council, 2006a). The development of the teacher/artist–writer partnership, based on a shared understanding of the roles of the artist–writer and the teacher in the classroom, was, therefore, fundamental to the WIR.¹³ Thus, it was considered important that the study would also look to the perceptions of the teachers and artist–writers involved in the case studies for the research.

2.5.4 Conclusion

Providing young people, children and teenagers with positive and enjoyable experiences of reading, writing and language through structured encounters with artist–writers and storytellers within the school environment and giving them the opportunity to engage with creative writing across all the genres, particularly for those students who might not traditionally engage with books, reading, writing or the narrative arts outside the classroom, is the rationale behind the WISS (Poetry Ireland, 2013, p. 3;¹⁴ Gallagher, 2005). Through annual funding support from both Arts Councils, the WISS organises and provides support, both financial and professional, for artist–writers working in all genres in the literary and narrative arts, in making visits to primary and post-primary schools throughout the Republic and the North of Ireland.

Artist–writers working with the WISS must adhere to certain criteria (www.poetryireland.ie/education/information-for-writers/) and undergo an application

¹³ See WIR Guidelines <http://www.poetryireland.ie/education/wis-residencies.html>

¹⁴ Poetry Ireland Arts in Education Strategy Document, 2013-2016, Introduction. Unpublished.

process which includes: interview, induction, mentoring, child protection training and a Garda vetting process. Having satisfactorily completed this process their details are then listed on the WISS Directory, which schools can access through the Poetry Ireland website (www.poetryireland.ie/education/wis-visits/). Alongside a broad range of aims¹⁵ and objectives, there is a particular focus on the development of innovative strategies for learning through the arts, and a strong commitment to research and research-based approaches to practice. Poetry Ireland's arts-in-education programme has developed substantially and now includes a range of activities, including the WIR, which is the subject of this study, along with policy and advocacy work, ongoing research and substantial collaboration across the arts and education sectors, including, for example, an arts-based development education programme, which has a CPD strand for teachers.

¹⁵ Poetry Ireland Arts in Education Strategy Document, 2013-2016. Unpublished.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Chapter outline

Beginning by introducing the conceptual framework the chapter then goes on to a consideration of conceptualisations of learning, particularly social constructivist learning theory, followed by an overview of curriculum, focused on the second-level curriculum. Arts learning is then situated within this conceptual framework, with an exploration of what is meant by arts-based learning, including a brief overview of what is included in integrated arts, arts integration, arts fusion and arts rich learning environments. Finally, this section includes an important distinction between arts learning and creativity. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of the literature on self-efficacy, indicating how it underpins the interpretation of the findings in Chapter Four, and pointing to some examples of students' perceptions of enhanced self-efficacy through the modes and affordances offered by engagement in/with/through the arts (de la Croix, Rose, Wildig & Willson, 2011). The next section introduces the conceptual framework for the study.

3.2 Introduction

Chapter Three provides a conceptual framework and explores the ways in which various understandings of learning operate within the classroom. It goes on to present opportunities for the integration of the modes of learning offered by the arts. The conceptual framework informs the study by providing a way of understanding the learning is that is occurring when students engage in arts-based learning, how students, teachers and artist-

writers conceptualise this learning, and how this mode of learning can contribute to, and be integrated into, the curriculum at second level.

The chapter examines the relationship between the arts and education within the second-level curriculum. It is premised on the belief that the arts, as a principal form of meaning-making, constitute an essential part of educational provision for children and young people. In writing about the classroom, Eisner asserts that meaning-making is based on “a conception of knowledge that recognizes that all we will ever have are ideas about the world whose truth value is itself dependent upon the opinions of others....[in other words] *we make meaning*” (2002a, p.380, emphasis added). Bruner re-asserts the communal nature of this meaning-making process:

By virtue of participation in culture, meaning is rendered *public* and *shared* (1990, pp. 12-13, original italics).

Meaning-making, in this context, is conceived as a combination of thinking and feeling, mediated by the affordances and “ways of seeing” (Berger, 1972), offered by learning in and through the arts. Therefore, since curriculum is an “instrument of public policy through which the country’s self-understanding is expressed and communicated to the young generation” (Williams & McDonald, 2014, p. 251), the relative absence of the arts within specified curricular provision at second level would seem to require more critical consideration.

In offering this critical consideration, particular attention is paid to the specified (what is laid down) curriculum (McCormick & Murphy, 2008), in order to situate the subsequent argument, whilst the case studies focus on the experienced (what students’ experience), and to a lesser extent, the enacted (what is taught) curriculum (McCormick & Murphy, 2008), in order to access participants’ perceptions of learning. The rationale for this is based on the belief that having spent “approximately 480 weeks, or 12,000 hours, in

school” (Eisner, 1985, p. 87) by the end of senior cycle, students have a great deal to tell us about learning. By extension, the same logic applies to teachers and artist-writers whose perceptions also form part of the case study data. The study looks to students’ reported and observed self-efficacy, and offers an interpretation of the role of arts-based learning in the development of students’ self-understanding and knowledge making.

The grounded theory approach adopted in the study, was dictated by the study’s small-scale, qualitative nature, the rationale for which is outlined in Chapter Four. This approach facilitated the gathering of “self-reports [which] can be used effectively to measure student perceptions of motivation and cognitive engagement...[although] the results need to be replicated with other measures” (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, p. 38).

As outlined in Chapter One, the study arose out of the contested nature of the relationship between arts and education, a situation not unique to Ireland (Bamford, 2006). The study’s social constructivist perspective sees learning as contingent, agentic and context dependent, recognising that the inherently political nature of education (Kelly, 1977/2009), means that any attempts to advance schools’ arts provision will require appreciation of, the political constraints which govern curriculum development (Sugrue, 2004; Gleeson, 2009; Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013; Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009).

A recognition of, and engagement with, the research deficit identified in Chapter One, is critical to this effort. This study addresses that research deficit on three levels - it brings both an arts and an education perspective to bear on the experience of arts-based learning, or arts learning, at second-level; it captures the perceptions of learning of typical senior cycle students, their teachers and the artist-writers who worked with them; and based on the research findings, these perceptions, or what Sfard (1998) calls “local sense-making” (p. 12), are situated within a framework which conceptualises learning in terms of the overarching metaphors of acquisition and/or participation. These conceptual metaphors,

represent the ways in which meanings are construed, and they “structure what we perceive” (Lakoff, 1980, p. 454; Sfard, 1998; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Ortony, 1993). On this reading, learning in its more traditional form is conceptualised as an acquisitive activity, through which the learner passively acquires or receives knowledge. Participative learning, on the other hand, is a more social and situated form of learning, as propounded by Lave & Wenger (1991), which sees the learner as an active participant in a community of learners, based in a constructivist view of learning and meaning-making. Learning is seen as either the “acquisition” of canonical knowledge or as “participation” in contingent knowledge-making communities (Sfard, 1998, p.5). In line with Sfard and others (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Elmholdt, 2003; Colley, James, Diment & Tedder, 2003; Hodkinson, 2005; Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008), the study’s findings, arrived at through an iterative process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 1996, 2006, 2010, 2012; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), suggest that both exist within the classroom learning environment, often simultaneously in “a reality constructed from various metaphors” (Sfard, 1998, p. 10), which learners, teachers (and researchers) negotiate and work with and between, as needed. A more developed understanding of how human beings learn is helpful in this.

3.3 The embodied mind

[O]ur conceptual system is largely metaphorical....(and) not something that we are normally aware of....we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines (Lakoff, 1980, p. 454)

Evolution has shown that our “human capacities grow out of animal capacities.... [and] provide the mostly unconscious basis for our everyday metaphysics...our sense of what is real” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, Kindle Location 218-226)”. This has given rise to

the notion of the embodied mind, since “our bodies contribute to our sense of what is real” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, Kindle Location 418). Both philosophy and cognitive science have recognised “that cognition is a highly embodied or situated activity...and suggests that thinking beings ought therefore to be considered first and foremost as acting beings” (Anderson, 2003, p. 91). As a result of this embodied nature our understanding, or perception of the world is highly personal (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1993). As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated, it is built upon metaphor, which arise from within our embodied experience (Piaget, 1952), and metaphorical thinking has long been accepted as playing “a constitutive role” in science (Sfard, 1998, p. 5), and in enabling abstract thinking. These embodied metaphors conceptualise events in terms of “physical experiences” (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p. 30): for example, an argument is conceptualised in terms of war; falling in love is conceptualised in terms of a journey. The unconscious, animal-based nature of our perceptions means that they generally reside beyond our awareness (Lakoff, 1980), which may, in turn, “favour the misrecognition of their truth and thus the recognition of their legitimacy” (Bourdieu, 1989/1996, p. 5). In looking to capture students’ perceptions of learning and “our sense of what is real [which] begins with and depends crucially upon our bodies” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, Kindle Location 232-233), Sfard’s (1998) conceptualisation of acquisition and participation as “metaphors for learning”, was used to frame the study.

3.3.1 ‘Metaphors for learning’

Contemporary views of learning, as either symbol-processing or situated, can be seen as representing two understandings of mind, which, as Eisner (2004) reminds us, is itself a cultural construct (p. 8). For the purposes of this study these views of learning are conceptualised by the terms “acquisition” and “participation” (Sfard, 1998), and they provide the conceptual framework for the perceptions of learning of students, teachers and

artist-writers. They also provide a lens through which to frame the researcher's observations, as well as any subsequent data gathered over the course of the research period.

Undoubtedly the concepts - learning as acquisition and learning as participation - are ideologically charged (Bourdieu, 1989/1996). According to Bruner, they reflect the philosophical quest for (some pre-existing) truth and the artistic quest for meaning (Bruner, 1986, Kindle Location 183). Therefore, the conceptual framework was dictated by the nature of the research project itself, and by the decision to adopt a grounded theory approach, in order to highlight the (often simultaneous) presence of both metaphors in the perceptions of learning of students, teachers and artist-writers alike.

3.3.2 Learning as/and acquisition

The traditional view of knowledge was based on either the 'computational' model in which the acquisition of knowledge was akin to information processing (Bruner, 1986), and/or the philosophical model which viewed knowledge as a "symbol-processing" (Bredo, 1994, p. 26) event, with its base in idealism, whereby knowledge represented a pre-existing immutable reality and "thinking is a process of manipulating representations" (Winograd & Flores, 1986, p. 73 , in Bredo, 1994, p. 26). Learning has occurred when students' knowledge resembles that of the teacher or the text: "they know something" (Bredo, 1994, p. 26). This approach viewed learning as "the acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught" (OED). It is based on learning as the acquisition of knowledge, positioning that knowledge/learning as a form of capital, the primary aim of which is to convey status on the owner. Thus learning privileges the individual and becomes an article of exchange (Bourdieu, 1989/1996; O'Sullivan, 2005). In educational terms it is concerned above all with the content of the specified curriculum (McCormick & Murphy, 2008), and with "what is to be learned" (Kelly, 1977/2009, p. 32).

3.3.3 Learning as/and participation

Learning as participation is based on a situated view of learning (Bruner, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991), which sees learning as context specific and social, a collaborative and intersubjective experience, privileging belonging and identity according to Elmholdt (2003), and “in contrast with learning as internalisation, learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). This understanding confers agency and views learners as determining their own learning (McCormick & Murphy, 2008, p. 4). Conceptualising learning as participation is relatively new, and it fundamentally alters the understanding of learning to one of “doing, knowing, identity and belonging” (Elmholdt, 2003, p. 118). The image of learning and the learner has shifted, from passive to active, from thinking to doing. Learning is thus powerfully reconceptualised as a process of becoming (Colley, James, Diment & Tedder, 2003), based in an ideology of social responsibility and interdependence (see Table 3.1). The next section looks at how the dualisms represented by idealism and constructivism might be reconciled within the learning environment of the second-level classroom.

Table 3.1 *Established and situated conceptualisations of learning compared*

| Conceptual metaphor | Acquisition | Participation |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Pedagogy | Established pedagogical practices | Developing pedagogical practices |
| Environment | Conventional | Co-constructed |
| Transmission | Vertical instruction by experts | Horizontal collaboration with peers/by participants |
| Learning mode | Cognitive-passive-individual | Dialectical cognitive/affective, active-collaborative |
| | Deductive | Inductive |
| Epistemological stance | Universal truths, theoretical canonical/codified in texts | Contingent/tacit, practical/embedded & embodied embedded in community and identity |
| Knowledge | Having or possessing knowledge | Belonging, participating, communicating to understand |
| | Propositional/declarative | Expressive/experiential |
| Understanding | Abstract/universal | Embodied/contextualised |
| Outcome | Acquisition of information or skill | Identity/meaning-making |
| Teacher | Provider, facilitator, mediator | Expert participant, fosters practice/discourse |
| Student | Recipient | Participant |
| Assessment | Summative | Formative |
| Goal | Individual enrichment | Collaborative meaning-making |

Note. Adapted from 'Re-embedding situatedness: the importance of power relations in learning theory,' by A Contu and H Willmot, 2003, *Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science*, 14(3), p. 294.

3.3.4 'Troubling dualisms'

As Hodkinson (2005) avers, "learning is complex and relational" (p. 109), and riven with dualisms that are inextricably related to each other. This is particularly so in terms of the content to be learned and the process of learning, the experiences of the learner and the pedagogical implications for the teacher, and the differing values inherent in content, process and pedagogy (2005, p. 109). Sfard (1998) and Hodkinson (2005), suggest that, although the acquisitive/cognitive and participative/socio-cultural models are "paradigmatically

different and largely incompatible ways of understanding learning” (Hodkinson, Biesta & James, 2008, p. 29), the cognitive (privileging the individual) and the socio-cultural (privileging the collaborative) metaphors, can, and do, co-exist, and their difference lies at the level of discourse rather than ontology. Sfard (1998) suggests that “An adequate combination of the *acquisition* and *participation metaphors* would bring to the fore the advantages of each of them” (Sfard, 1998, p. 12, emphasis in original), particularly since it would seem impossible to escape the influence of these discourses on/of learning (Elmholdt, 2003), at least for the present.

This “patchwork” (Sfard, 1998, p. 13), is reflected in the findings of the study, with participants’ perceptions clearly reflecting the presence of both metaphors. This can be seen in this reflection from an interview with a student, which took place some two years after the initial case study, who reported that “it got interacted, we were doing it [writing] with ‘Joan’ and we were getting involved. ... you are actually doing it [and] you get a sense of it yourself” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The student’s perception of the contrast in being in an active learning mode with the artist-writer, and a more passive, receptive mode is striking. It foregrounds the “combination” or parallel modes of learning, which are operating simultaneously for the student, whilst also conveying her sense of agency and self-efficacy in “actually doing it”. This perception was replicated across the findings, garnered by focusing on students’ perceptions of learning, whereby the study sought to access participants’ experiences of learning at the cognitive-affective level (Snow, Corno & Jackson, 1996/2002).

3.4 Conceptualisations of learning

“Contrariwise,” continued Tweedledee, “if it was so it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn’t, it ain’t. That’s logic”
(Carroll, 1871, p.190 in Gardner, 2001).

Social constructivism represents a growing “incredulity towards metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. 12), and towards all ideologies and draws attention to, and makes explicit, the ways in which ideology contributes to the construction of reality, in the making and re-making of metanarratives. Education is implicated in reproducing these ideologies (Bourdieu, 1989/1996; Dunne, 2010; Egan, 1997; Foucault, 1969/1989), particularly through curriculum decisions, taken at both the specified and the enacted level (McCormick & Murphy, 2008). The curriculum inevitably reflects the political concerns of the day (Kelly, 1977/2009; Sugrue, 2004; Gleeson, 2009; Gleeson & Ó Donnabhain, 2009; The World Bank, 2005; Keeling, 2006; Kwiek, 2004). Curriculum both shapes and is shaped by societies’ view of education as a public good, now enshrined in the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998, p. 5), and the first piece of comprehensive legislation related to schools since 1922 (Looney, 2006, p. 346). However, the notion of the common good (representative, itself, of an ideological position), presents the need to:

Confront more sharply basic realities of schooling...[and] the standardised, graduated curriculum...the recurrent grading and the ritualised competition for scarce rewards later on (jobs, income, status) – with the convenient legitimisation that winners and losers were fairly selected on the basis of inherent merit and not of pre-existing inequalities that schools did no more than reinforce (Dunne, 26 October 2010, pp. 6-7).

Constructivist theories of learning serve to open up these tight curricular spaces to scrutiny and potential change. Based on the idea that “humans seek coherence and meaning” (Fosnot,

2005, p. 4), through communally negotiated understandings, “from a constructivist perspective, meaning is understood to be the result of humans setting up relationships, reflecting on their actions, and modeling and constructing explanations” (Fosnot, 2005, p. 5).

This communal dimension of shared meaning creates a shared discourse, established through collaborative and cooperative learning and thus avoiding the accusation of solipsism (von Glasersfeld, 1995). From a social constructivist perspective the classroom is reconceptualised as a workshop or studio learning space (Stevens, 2002; Marshall, 2014), an agentic space “where learning is authentic, experimental, practical, embodied, and cognitive....characterised by relationships of trust between students, students and teachers in the co-construction of knowledge” (Grushka, 2010, p. 18).

The conceptual framework for the study, based on a view of learning as a process of meaning-making (Bruner, 1996), offers a social constructivist understanding of learning as agentic, relational, context-dependent and developmental (Fosnot, 1996; Oxford, 1997; Piaget, 1955; Yilmaz, 2008; Richardson, 2003; Cunningham & Duffy, 1996; Popkewitz, 1998; von Glasersfeld, 1988, 1998). Learning is seen as occurring in relational contexts that facilitate exploration, risk taking, negotiation and collaboration by, with and between, teachers and learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 56), and as having permeable boundaries:

Constructivism's basic claim is simply that knowledge is "right" or "wrong" in light of the perspective we have chosen to assume....It is what legal scholars refer to as "the interpretive turn," or...a turning away from “authoritative meaning” (Bruner, 1990, p. 25).

On this view the learner is conceived “as an active, intentional being” with knowledge “constructed and negotiated with others” (Bruner, 1996, p. 65). Eschewing any kind of foundationalism, constructivism troubles the notion of ‘knowledge’, as always already

having an ideological basis (Blenkin & Kelly, 1998, p. 28), acknowledging that constructivism itself is constructed (Bredo, 1999, p. 128). As such, all forms of knowledge are seen as “temporary locations in dialogic space” (Gergen in McCarty & Schwandt, 1999, p. 58; Bredo, 1999), and, by extension, pedagogy itself can never be again regarded as ideologically “innocent” (Bruner, 1996, p. 63).

This is in contrast to the more traditional theories of learning and teaching, which envisage learning as cognitive information processing, the result of transmission and subsequent acquisition of abstract forms of ‘knowledge’ (Contu & Willmott, 2003, p. 284). Fosnot (1996) states that “constructivism is a theory about learning, not a description of teaching” (p. 29); Karagiorgi & Symeou (2005). Those who question the shortcomings of constructivism both as a theory of knowledge and in its implications for pedagogy include Kirschner (2009), who raises questions about epistemology and pedagogy, Philips (2000) who discusses the sciences in relation to constructivism, McCarty and Swandt, who are concerned with the solipsistic dangers inherent in constructivism, and Kotzee (2010), who in a somewhat similar fashion to Kirschner (2009), Fosnot, (2005) and Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005), is concerned with the development of a constructivist pedagogy.

Views of learning are related to views of knowledge and the underlying issue of epistemologies, previously referred to in Chapter One, concerning the ways in which ‘knowledge’ is conceived (Carson, 2004; Carr, 2010; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006; Eisner, 2002a, 2002b). McCormick and Murphy (2008, p. 8) distinguish between two concepts of knowledge, as “symbol-processing” in which knowledge is objective, passive and individual and as “situated cognition” in which knowledge is both active and social and is not conceived as being representative of reality. These conceptualisations reach back to classical Aristotelian concepts of *phronesis* /practical wisdom, *techne* /technical knowledge to do with the ‘making’ of things and *episteme* /theoretical or propositional/declarative

knowledge. They also have roots in the enlightenment (Dunne, 1993), which ushered in massive cultural shifts including a movement from an oral to a written culture, a shift in focus from the local and particular to the general, universal and timeless, and a conception of knowledge as universal, value neutral, and warranted (Eisner, 2002, p. 377). See Table 3.1 for a comparison of the two approaches. The next section goes on to consider curriculum in more detail.

3.5 Curriculum and policy

[E]ducation is essentially a political activity
(Kelly, 1977/2009, p. 187).

Adopting Gleeson’s (2009) formulation, curriculum is conceptualised as a “contextualised social process” (p. 119), the site of a form of socio-political activity “producing specific notions of citizenship” (Giroux, 1991, p. 507), and profoundly implicated in “making and remaking what counts as knowledge, skill and competence, human cognition and sociocultural action” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013, p. 2). Sugrue (2004) observed that curricula tend to reflect political rather than educational imperatives, and Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin (2009) point to the increasing emphasis on “technicist outputs” (p. 30), resulting from human capital discourses and the notion of the ‘knowledge (smart) economy’ (ICT Ireland & DES, 2009). This is not new. Kelly (1977/2009) depicted curriculum as a ‘battleground’:

between the claims of society and those of the individual, the vocational and the liberal, the economic and the humanitarian, a national investment and the right of every child, the instrumental and the intrinsic, what education is for and what it is, elitism and egalitarianism, and perhaps, in general, between the possible and the desirable, between reality and idealism (Kelly, 1977/2009, p. 190).

The *Investment in Education* report (OECD, 1965) had been “strongly influenced by theories of human capital formation” (Gleeson & Ó Donnabháin, 2009, p. 30), and O’Sullivan had previously drawn attention to the, “marketization of educational discourse” (1992, p. 433). Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin also identify this trend in the Department of Education 2005-2007 strategy statement, with its “customers and clients” (DES, undated, p. 6), linking it to the imperatives of the Lisbon Treaty (2007), and the EU focus on measuring creativity (Villalba, 2009). Subsequent Department of Education strategy statements (DES, 2008-2010, p. 61; 2011-2014, p. 3), and more recent concerns to do with performance indicators, quality assurance and accountability (2015-2017) continue to reflect this discourse. For instance, the EU focus on “employability...and learning mobility” in the period up to 2020 (European Commission, 2011, p. 2; 2010a; 2010b), has exerted significant influence on educational policy (Gleeson, 2013; Education and Culture DG, 2006; Fejes, 2008; Keeling, 2006). The EU has been an important influence in leveraging much needed change and development within education including the possibilities inherent in the EHEA (and other areas) which might not have otherwise been possible (J. Coolahan interview: Appendix 5).

O’Sullivan (1992) and Gleeson (2009) attribute the instrumentalist focus at second-level to the lack of a coherent philosophical framework upon which to base its values. Through a series of background interviews conducted by Gleeson, it emerges that “when it comes to the crunch, it is not curriculum that’s the big issue...it’s structure and management and power and control” (O’Brien, Assistant Secretary, DES, interview, 20.2.98, in Gleeson, 2009, p. 105). The failure of *Education for a changing world* (DES, 1992) to outline a philosophy of education (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. 113) resulted in education being relocated to a “mercantile paradigm....[an] institution...in which ‘trade/exchange’ is at its core” (p. 104). In this context the curriculum becomes hostage to what both Trant (1998) and Luke, Woods and Weir (2013) refer to as the ‘technical curriculum’, that space within which

curriculum design is circumscribed and limited to adjusting the content, rather than to more conceptual issues of structure and design (Blenkin & Kelly, 1998; Macdonald, 2003). It is this “technical form of the curriculum [that] sets the locus of curriculum authority” (Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013, Introduction), leading to the re-inscription of standardised curricula, which operate within “grids of specification” (Foucault, 1969/1989, p. 46; Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013, p. 16). These specifications are more acute at second-level, where they are used to justify and re-inscribe a competitive, high-stakes, academic curriculum. A brief examination of the second-level curriculum follows in the next section, in order to illustrate the circumstances within which current arts provision operates.

3.5.1 The second-level curriculum

Modern secondary education...has a global history, not simply a set of national histories. Clearly rooted in Europe, it has spread rapidly - especially in recent decades - throughout the world (Kamens, Meyer & Benavot, 1996, p. 133).

The history of secondary education in Europe reveals that it is based in power, privilege and pragmatism. Foucault (1975/1977) traces the school, in particular the secondary school, to the 18th century and the creation of “docile bodies” requiring “enclosure... [as] the educational space unfolds” (Foucault, 1975/1977, p. 146; Ball, 2013), what he called the birth of governmentality (Foucault, 1994/2002, p. 201). Established in the 15th and 16th centuries, as a classically based preparation for university (The World Bank, 2005, pp. 1-2), and firmly rooted in the reproduction of privilege (Bourdieu, 1989/1996; Kamens, Meyer & Benavot, 1996), the curriculum, or the course to be completed, also has well established, 17th century Calvinist roots (Gleeson, 2009, p. 91). The modern secondary school arose in the first half of the 19th century with the new nation states, which already displayed separate streams or curricular tracks, for the preparation of the new administrative class:

By the end of the 19th century it is already possible to talk about a modern secondary school, partly of a terminal nature and featuring a process of segmentation into alternative tracks - academic, vocational, and general (The World Bank, 2005, p. 2). The comprehensive school, based on a common curriculum, emerged after 1945, and by the 1960s and 1970s, lower second-level education was increasingly considered to be part of basic provision, particularly with the extension of compulsory education.¹⁶

Secondary education in Ireland can be traced back to the 18th and 19th centuries and the Protestant English Grammar School tradition (Gleeson, 2009). Up until 1966 second-level education was provided almost exclusively by either voluntary or vocational secondary schools and the Local Government Act of 1923 had authorised the payment of local authority scholarships for secondary school students. However, the numbers were small, with just 1,775 scholarships in 1963, amounting to less than 2 per cent, of the student body (*Investment in Education*, 1965; The World Bank, 2005).

The *Investment in Education* (1965) report, acted as “a huge wake-up call....Because it brought out the statistical data for the first time, in a comprehensive way and quite frankly it shocked the public. It shocked the politicians” (J. Coolahan interview: Appendix 5). O’Sullivan identifies a human capital agenda which “normalised the link between schooling and the economy, fundamentally redefining the role of the educational system in society” (2005, p. 129). The report revealed “an educational system based on low intellectual and relatively high financial requirements” (Lee, 1989, p. 361), non-meritocratic and wasteful of natural talent, and with over half of all children leaving school by the age of thirteen, it was a system clearly unfit for purpose. In outlining the rationale for the introduction of free

¹⁶ Enrolment in secondary education still remains well below the level of both primary and tertiary education in the developing world (The World Bank, 2005).

second-level education, in the year after the publication of the Investment in Education report, the Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, spoke of:

a dark stain on the national conscience....Every year some 17,000 of our children finishing their primary education do not receive further education. This....means that some one-third of our people have been condemned - the great majority through no fault of their own - to be part-educated unskilled labour, always the weaker who go to the wall of unemployment or emigration (Browne, 2008, p. 188).

Curricular reform (Coolahan, 1995, pp 12-17), free second-level education (Dáil Éireann - Volume 225 - 30 November, 1966, 1885), free school transport (Dáil Éireann – Volume 225 - 30 Nov. 1966: 1893), the introduction of a comprehensive schools movement (later to be confounded by the Bishops) and the founding of the regional technical colleges (Ó Donnabháin, 1998, p. 44), quickly followed the publication of the report. Community schools (1972) and community colleges followed. But the major outcome of the changes was that school completion rates soared (Coolahan, 1995, p. 15). In 1972-3 (the earliest year for which age-specific enrolment rates are available)

58.3 percent of 16 year olds and 43.7 percent of 17 year olds were enrolled in full-time education. Ten years later, these had risen to 76.3 percent and 58.4 percent respectively, and in a further decade, to 92.6 percent and 80.8 percent (Canning, 2007, p. 4). Some fifty years on from the Investment in Education (1965) report, 82% of the population complete at upper second-level and over 50% the population enter higher education (Williams & McDonald, 2014, p. 245).

Under the Education Act (Government of Ireland 1998, section 30:1), the second-level curriculum is set by central government, with advice from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (Granville, 2004, p. 68; Coolahan, 1995). The curriculum is based on a centralist model (Trant, 1998, p. 32), in which the ““curriculum”” means the list

of those subjects in which instruction is given to the pupils of the school in courses provided by the Minister” (DES, 2004, p. 4). It is divided into subject areas with structured objectives, and assessed by two standardised outcomes based terminal examinations, on completion of a three-year junior cycle and a two- or three-year senior cycle. This assessment currently takes place within a high-stakes environment, in a continuation of “the assessment dimension, that has traditionally dominated the Irish second-level curriculum” (Trant, 1998, p. 24).

The image of curriculum which emerges is that of a product, document, or plan for subject based instruction (Gleeson, 2009, p. 99), of propositional, declarative, abstract, and decontextualised knowledge. “Thus, two main forms of academic secondary education tend to predominant (sic) worldwide” (Kamens, Meyer, Benavot, 1996, p. 133), in the form of either the modern comprehensive structure, which provides a mix of subjects and specialisations, or in the differentiated secondary school structure, which includes technical, humanistic and modern language arts, and is akin to the classical model. The ubiquitous nature of this academic model of curricular provision “used for selective purposes” according to The World Bank (2005, p. 78), provides a major challenge for a move away from what is termed a “factory model” (2005, p. xxiii). This is despite calls by many for the need, as Lawton (1998) put it, to “re-think the functions of the school in the twenty-first century” (p. 17). In the case of Ireland it has been argued that:

because of our colonial past, Ireland’s shared educational values are ‘so highly legitimated within the elites dominating the educational system that they appear to require no rationalisation’ and are simply taken for granted with the result that many of the goals of second-level education are “simply post-factum rationalisations for contents already “chosen” by this elite tradition for reasons that are not clearly articulated” (Hannan, 1987, p. 60 in Gleeson, 2009, p. 10).

In this context, ‘educational values’ reflect the larger scale political conflicts and concerns (Egan, 1997). In recent times and following the (now largely discredited) PISA (2009) results, discussed in Chapter One, these concerns have been firmly fixed on core provision, particularly literacy and numeracy (DES, 2011; Circular Letter 0056/2011). This was partly the result of the fact that “Ireland’s mean score in [PISA] 2009 [was] some 31 points (about one-third of a standard deviation) lower than in 2000....the largest [decline] across all 39 countries that participated in both PISA 2000 and PISA 2009, resulting in Ireland’s rank falling from 5th to 17th” (Perkins, Moran, Cosgrove & Sheil, 2011, p. 2).

In critically examining these results Perkins et al., (2011) highlight certain significant administrative and demographic factors, such as the inclusion of a number of low scoring schools, an increase in the number of students from immigrant backgrounds and/or with English as a second language (p. 8), and an increase in the proportion of students with special educational needs, sitting the PISA examination in 2009. Alongside this they suggest that survey fatigue on the part of both teachers and students may have been a factor and, crucially, they also point to significant changes in student distribution:

the percentage of 15-year-olds in Transition Year increased from 16.0% in 2000 to 24.0% in 2009, while the percentage in Fifth Year dropped from 18.6% to 14.4%, with both changes reaching statistical significance. The largest within grade-level decline in reading (50 points) occurred for students in Fifth Year between 2000 and 2009, while the largest decline in mathematics (33 points) occurred for students in Transition Year between 2003 and 2009. The decline in reading in Fifth Year may be due to a shift of more able students from Fifth Year to Transition Year, while the decline in mathematics in Transition Year may reflect a mismatch between students’ mathematical experiences in Transition Year and the requirements of the PISA mathematics test (Perkins et al., 2011, p. 9).

This resulted in a renewed focus on what Luke, Woods & Weir (2013) term “the basics...[of] canonical classical knowledges” (p. 7).

In the context of an education system tied to the economy, the arts continue to be perceived as falling outside the realm of education (Gleeson, 2009, p. 19), and certainly falling outside core curricular provision, particularly at second-level, where domains of knowledge that are considered less well-structured are not conducive to achieving the results (or points) which generally dictate the choice of subjects at the senior cycle, thereby ensuring the continued underrepresentation of the arts at second-level in Ireland (Jordan, 2015; Tanham, 2015; Arts Council. 2008; Benson, 1979; CNCI, 2004; CSO, 2015). Transition Year is the exception in this regard, discussed in the findings in Chapter Five. Subject choice is dictated by what is available, which is in turn based on the perceived status of those subjects. These continue to have a traditional bias dictated by the requirements of university entrance, such that, Williams and McDonald, writing in 2014 report that:

the perceptions of a community regarding the superior value of the traditional academic curriculum run very deeply...[and] unless we have...a dramatic reversal in the requirements for university entrance, the priorities of parents, their children, and teachers regarding school are unlikely to change (p. 245).

These perceptions mean that the status and provision of the arts within second-level education in Ireland remains low. Current arts provision, at second-level, is almost exclusively in visual art and music, where available (see Tables 2.1 & 2.2) and the course of study is either not fit for purpose, as in the case with the current Leaving Certificate visual arts programme (Jordan, 2015), or is not provided, as in the case of dance (Tanham, 2015). Many students find themselves in the position of having to take subjects they like outside school, demonstrating the ways in which Kelly’s “competing ideologies” (1977/2009, p. 190) are experienced by students as they try to negotiate the current high-stakes model of

assessment at second-level (Dunne, 2010). The subtleties of this negation are well illustrated in the 2010 HEA report, *Hidden disadvantage? A study on the low participation in higher education by the non-manual group*, which examined the retention levels of post-second-level students entering further education in Ireland. In line with Lawton (1998), McCormick and Murphy suggest that this “requires us to rethink our views of the curriculum” (2000, p. 4), and the possibilities it offers to students. It is from within this framework and understanding that the next section turns to a consideration of arts learning.

3.6 The arts and education

3.6.1 Setting the context

Creation and presentation of visual art, music, drama, developing a sensitivity to and an understanding of historical and social contexts in which artefacts were produced and the development of the student’s critical response to the art form in terms of perception and reflection are considered central to arts curriculum documents (Hanley, 2003, p. 19). In the context of education the arts generally refers to music, dance, drama and visual arts, with dance and drama either underrepresented or absent (Dickinson, 1997), particularly at second-level, where curriculum space is “precious” (Richmond, 2009, p. 92). In this regard Sharp and Le Métails (2000) provide a useful critique of the advantages and challenges of creating a specific domain of arts learning (2000, p. 7). Within the second-level curriculum in Ireland the arts also refers to the visual arts, drama, music and dance although, the subjects taught are generally visual art and music. For curriculum purposes dance and literature are not regarded as distinct art forms, with dance being nested within physical education and literature being part of the language arts, linked with the subject areas of English and Irish.

Visual arts and music are regarded as separate disciplines and are taught by specialist teachers (DES, 2016).

Within schools, however, in Ireland and further afield, the arts can be and are ‘taught’ and/or engaged in and with, in a variety of ways. This can include an integrated approach whereby the arts are integrated within the curriculum as a whole, or are integrated within the academic subject area, or where the art form is taught as an individual discipline. The ‘teacher’ may be a specialist teacher, general classroom teacher, an arts and cultural provider or a “teaching artist(s)” (Burton et al., 2000, p. 231).

Since the 1980s both policy and provision have distinguished between arts education and arts in education; “arts education refers usually to mainstream teaching and learning of the arts as part of general education, while arts-in-education refers mostly to interventions from the realm of the arts into the education system” (DES/DAHG, 2013, p. 3). As part of this practice, artists across various art forms visit schools, or schools engage with arts and cultural organisations outside the school setting:

Arts-in-education practice involves skilled, professional artists of all disciplines working for and with schools in the making, receiving and interpreting of a wide range of arts experiences. Arts-in-education practice can happen within or outside the school. It ranges from once-off visits, through more extended programmes, to intensive, collaborative projects (DES/DAHG, 2013, p. 10).

This definition of arts in education in the Charter (DES/DAHG, 2013), illustrates both the current understandings of arts-in-education practice and the underlying tensions that can be (and are) generated by the various understandings of how arts learning might support the curriculum. The next section briefly considers various definitions and understandings of arts learning.

3.6.2 Arts learning and education

Art, broadly defined, is a fundamental human enterprise: the making of meaning, individual and collective, through representation. In making art we make ourselves. In understanding art we understand ourselves (Arts Council, 2008, p. 16).¹⁷

In acknowledging the original moral/didactic impulse behind the introduction of the arts into the curriculum to create (and govern) “a moral soul...[and] an efficient worker” (Martins, 2013, p. 75), we have to ask, “what do we mean (in the 21st century) by arts learning?” (Gadsden, 2008, p. 44). Firstly, there is the need to distinguish between conceptual learning, which is based on an understanding of learning as the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ and aesthetic learning which is based on an understanding of learning as engaging in the act of creating that ‘knowledge’, and which reflects a social constructivist view of learning as participation (Uhrmacher, 2009; Sfard, 1998; Fosnot, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Cunningham & Duffy, 1996). Various understandings of arts learning, incorporating the development of art form knowledge, artistic habits of mind, understanding of the arts world, performance and/or exhibition of work, and the academic and/or the social and dispositional outcomes of engaging in the arts have all been propounded (Fiske, 1999; Winner & Hetland, 2000; Deasy, 2002; Sahasrabudhe, 2005; See, & Kokotsaki, 2015). These understandings include instrumental claims for the transfer effects of arts learning to other, particularly academic domains of learning (Catterall, 1998; Perkins, 2000). More recent claims by Pepler et al., (2014), specifically to do with the “positive impact of arts integration on student academic achievement in English language arts” co-exist alongside the argument for the intrinsic importance of the arts to be understood as domains of learning to be engaged with on their own terms (Eisner, 1998). Russell and Zembylas, (2007) present a useful overview of research on arts integration, thus providing one viewpoint from which

¹⁷ Contained in a submission to Government by the *Council of National Cultural Institutions*, in response to the calls ahead of the National Development Plan (2007-2013).

to approach the troubled issue of transfer and the claims made about it, considered later in this section.

However, arts learning is conceptualised in terms of cognitive skills or habits of mind and behaviours or dispositions by Hetland et al., (2013) who have identified eight potentially transferrable habits of mind, which include expression, exploration and risk-taking, engagement and resilience, imagination, observation, reflection, and art world and art form knowledge (p. 6). Winner (2011) posits observation, imagination, expression and reflection as constituting four such habits of mind and Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin (2013) assert that the habits of mind that are cultivated in learning to observe, envision, explore, express, collaborate, persist and reflect, constitute the main argument for arts education. POA (2008) emphasised that student “engagement in the presence and immediacy of an arts experience is critical. It gives a concentrated experience that provides exciting, direct learning opportunities as well as the catalyst for further learning through subsequent reflection and action” (p. 56). One of the ways in which this experience can be made available is through working with a practising artist in the classroom.

In the European context there has been a growing focus on the importance of a broader idea of language education which promotes the importance of “cultural experiences....(and) the role of school as a place of potential social inclusion” through those very cultural experiences (Piper, 2015, p. 195). Students’ encounters with language and literature, referred to in Chapter One, loom large among these experiences and the next section considers the current conceptualisation of literature within the curriculum and briefly explores the relationship between arts learning, literature and literacy.

3.6.3 Arts learning and literature

With reading literacy and a focus on pragmatic texts being right at the centre of PISA, tensions between this notion and traditional notions of literature education have given rise to much discussion.

One concern, which has been articulated in many places, is that teaching will focus on literacy in the narrow sense and that interventions will be limited to skill training, especially with weaker students – at the expense of literature education and meaningful encounters with fiction, poems, drama (Piper, 2015, p. 195).

Arts-in-education practices engage students in the experience of language and literature as an art form. In the school context the study of literature is situated within the language curriculum where it tends to be conceived in terms of reception and reproduction. Encounters with literature are mediated by professionally scripted textbooks rather than through creative writing (Piper, 2015). The dichotomy between literal or cognitive and figurative or non-cognitive understandings and uses of language has also contributed to this approach to language (Efland, 2004a, p. 756). In the course of the study one focus group participant described the experience of studying English:

When you are in school, in English, they have a sample answer and they mark you against [it]... You are not writing what you feel are your own opinions because that's not right, that's not your example (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

A shift can be observed, at the senior cycle, from the more personal and social student oriented approach to the teaching of literature at primary and lower second-level. The focus at these levels tends to be on students' interests, employing, and integrating, texts (including multimodal texts) associated with popular culture. The senior cycle at second-level tends to focus on the canonical transmission and reproduction model (Witte & Sâmihăian, 2013, p. 8), based on the classical ideal and focused on university entrance as outlined earlier (Piper,

2015, p. 197). These observations around the teaching of literature were reflected in students' perceptions (see Appendix 3).

Students perceive the Leaving Certificate, which features in the national media every August, as significant for their futures, both in terms of tertiary education and employment opportunities and as such it is a very high-stakes examination (Banks & Smith, 2015). Students also recognise the low status assigned to the arts within the second-level curriculum, a status stemming from their 'low ranking' within instrumentalist models of learning and education. This dictates, and is dictated by, the common wisdom which says that "what is not measured is not important" (Goodlad, 1992, p. 195).

3.6.4 Arts learning and/or creativity

[T]he crucial (if controversial) point here is that nothing is, or is not, creative in and of itself. Creativity is inherently a communal or cultural judgment (Gardner, 2011, p. 33).

In terms of how creativity is measured (Kim, 2006), most of the "garden variety" creative work in the world is undertaken by people who may not have displayed any particularly extraordinary passion or talent when young (Amabile, 1983, p. 361). Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) have offered a (useful) "preliminary conceptual model to help...articulate [an understanding of] the nature of creativity" (p. 1). Their model outlines four broad types of creative activity: "pro-c" or what they characterise as professional (and specific) expertise, "little-c" which they take to mean that creativity displayed in everyday life; "mini-c" which represents interpretive or personal creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, pp. 2-4) and which is the creative activity most generally observed in the classroom (Henriksen & Mishra, 2015). Beghetto and Kaufman (2015) suggest that this is a useful way to think about creativity, on the grounds that:

people use categories and distinctions to make sense of their reality. Davis (2009), for instance, noted that humans "are constantly making conceptual distinctions—

and often amplifying them. The habit is vital . . . to our having a reality” (p. 7). Making distinctions is also at the heart of intelligent behavior. Indeed, Davis (2009) also explained that the term intelligent is derived from the Latin *inter-legere*, which means *to choose among, to discern* (2015, p. 240, emphasis in original).

Kaufman and Beghetto’s have previously defined ‘mini-c’ creative activity as that “novel and personally meaningful interpretation of experiences, actions, and events” (Beghetto, 2007, p. 73).

From Dewey (1934) to Uhrmacher (2009), creativity and meaning-making have been seen to reside in personal experiences. However, despite its long history and the more recent resurgence of interest in creativity worldwide (Shaheen, 2010), creativity remains “an elusive and contested concept” (INTO, 2009, p. 11), particularly when it comes to education, where it has had a “conflicted” relationship both within the classroom (Beghetto, 2006, p. 447) and within the curriculum itself (INTO, 2009). Psychology has long recognised “the relationship between learning and creativity” (Beghetto, 2007, p.73), with Vygotsky (2004) advocating that:

we should emphasize the particular importance of cultivating creativity in school age children...[since] orientation to the future, [and] behavior based on the future and derived from this future, is the most important function of the imagination (p. 88).

Creativity scholars, Amabile (1989), among others, speaking about children’s innate curiosity, suggested that “the most important element [for the cultivation of creativity is]...a deep sense of interest and excitement about learning” (p. 14). However, the creative and academic aspects of learning are still commonly thought of as being quite separate in curricular terms (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Beghetto, 2006).

The disconnect between creativity and academic learning is partly due to common (mis)understandings that are to be found in the myths and stereotypes of creativity (Plucker,

Beghetto & Dow, 2004). These misconceptions tend to equate creativity with “originality”, or/and with particularly talented individuals, who are seen as being born creative (Amabile, 1983; Dweck, 2000). There is also the belief that creative activity must always lead to an outcome or “product” (Beghetto, 2006, pp. 454/455) and this issue will be dealt with in more detail later on in the section.

Creativity scholars identify the difficulty as stemming partly from “the lack of a standard, carefully constructed definition of creativity” (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004, p. 87). Although there is an ongoing lack of definition of creativity (Henriksen & Mishra, 2015), there is general agreement that creativity exists on “a continuum” from Amabile’s (1983) “garden variety” (p. 361) or “little-c” creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, pp. 2-4) used to solve everyday problems, to what is termed “Big C” creativity, which is based on the traditional idea of the eminent, creative person (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004, p. 85; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The 1999 report *All Our Futures* defines creativity as the “imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value” (NACCCE, 1999, p. 30); that ability to produce work that is novel (i.e., original, unexpected), high in quality, and appropriate.

Craft (2003) saw “creativity as a fundamental attribute to enable adaptation and response in a fast-changing world” (p. 114), and, therefore, as being intrinsic to education (Henriksen & Mishra, 2015), whilst Zenasni, Besancon and Lubart (2008) found that “tolerance of ambiguity was significantly and positively related to creativity” (p. 61). Bamford (2012) used the term in two ways:

as both an adjective [i.e. describing a kind of activity, such as creative dance, creative learning, creative writing and so on] and as a verb or adverb in terms of someone acting creatively or being creative. Creativity includes thoughts, reflections, and actions that are marked by a level of innovation and playfulness (p. 19).

The element of playfulness that marks creative learning leads on to the question of motivation (Hennessey, 2010). Creative learning includes not only problem solving but also problem identification, and this possibly is an even more important component of creative learning, since one cannot solve a problem unless one has first identified it (Hennessey, 2010, p. 345) and much energy can be expended on solving the wrong problems, leading to demotivation.

3.6.5 Motivation

There is unanimous agreement on the importance of intrinsic motivation for creative learning. For Freud creativity arose from a lack, and the displacement of repressed needs (Hennessey, 2010, p. 342) whilst for Rogers, creativity depended on establishing the correct conditions of “psychological safety and freedom” (Hennessey, 2010, p. 345). Sternberg (2006, p. 90) views creativity as primarily “decision”-based and therefore, a facility which can be “developed”. Amabile’s (1989) work supports this view:

Talent, personality, and skill tell us what the child *can* do; motivation tells us what the child will do (Amabile, 1989, Preface, p. x, emphasis in original).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also views creativity as “something that we make happen” (p. 3) and as contingent on intrinsic motivation. Conversely, and significantly, there is also agreement that extrinsic rewards “long...part of the currency of schools” (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001, p. 1) dampen and subdue creativity (Amabile, Hennessey & Grossman, 1986):

Hundreds of published investigations have revealed that the promise of a reward made contingent on task engagement often serves to undermine intrinsic task motivation and qualitative aspects of performance, including creativity” (Hennessey, 2010, p. 345).

In looking at barriers to creativity in the classroom Beghetto (2006) cites “externally imposed accountability mandates” (p. 452) as having “profound influence on creativity”

because of current assessment practices (2006, p. 453). Based on the recall of propositional knowledge, the issue of assessment has been a constant theme throughout the history of creativity (Sternberg, 2004), with Dewey (1934) describing recognition as *perception interrupted*, in that the student falls back onto stereotypes already lodged in the mind and, thus, this recognition diminishes the possible expansion of perception inherent in the new learning (Dewey, 1934, p. 54). This is in line with Dweck's (2000) problematizing of confidence dealt with in the next section.

3.6.6 Risk-taking

Dweck (2000) has demonstrated that students absorb an understanding of creativity and intelligence as either “fixed” (unalterable) or “malleable” (developmental) at a very young age (Dweck, 2000, p. 20) and these understandings affect students' goals, such that “a belief in malleable intelligence creates a desire for challenge and learning” (Dweck, 2000, p. 38). Of interest here is how these beliefs are seen in relation to the notion of student confidence, which Dweck problematises and characterises as often based in a somewhat shallow, less reliable and easy response on the part of the student, distinguishing it from responses requiring more effort and, therefore, seen as a more reliable reflection of self-efficacy (2000, pp. 51-58). Emphasising extrinsic factors such as competition, comparison and assessment, can inhibit risk-taking, which is one of the key dispositions necessary for creative learning. According to Dweck (2000) easy praise or risk-avoidant behaviour may lead to perhaps the worst outcome of all, in that such students never come to value effort and all that that implies in terms of meaning-making, caring and self-efficacy (p. 41). Along with motivation and risk-taking, a student's sense of self-efficacy is another key factor in determining the student's creative disposition, and is considered in the next section.

3.6.7 Creative self-efficacy

[A] primarily intrinsic motivation to engage in an activity will enhance creativity, and a primarily extrinsic motivation will undermine it (Amabile, 1983, p. 366).

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli (2001) demonstrated the importance of self-efficacy in helping individuals deal with challenge, risk and failure and in bolstering effort and perseverance, so that “students of high perceived self-efficacy not only act on their cognized preferences but stick it out through tough times in preparing themselves for occupations presenting daunting challenges” (p. 201).

Creative self-efficacy is an outgrowth of this and relates to “a self-judgment of one's imaginative ability and perceived competence in generating novel and adaptive ideas” (Beghetto, 2006, p. 457). Teachers play an important part in the creation and maintenance of creative self-efficacy and positive teacher feedback has been identified as one of the strongest influences on second-level students' creative self-efficacy, in terms of providing them with timely and requisite support, challenge and calibration of effort (Beghetto, 2006, p. 458). Creativity plays an integral part in arts learning and in all learning. Arts learning attempts to harness the imagination in order to enlarge the experience of that learning through a combination of playful and effortful involvement in creating, interacting and working in and with an art form and/or artist. The role of the ‘teaching artist’ in promoting that playful and effortful involvement is discussed next.

3.6.8 Arts learning and the ‘Teaching Artist’

There is no agreed definition of the artist who chooses to work in schools. They are known as visiting artist, artist in schools, artist in residence, artist in the classroom, resident artist, arts educator or a teacher who is also an artist. Booth (2009), suggests the term ‘teaching artist’, defining it as “an artist who chooses to include artfully educating others,

beyond teaching the technique of the art form, as an active part of a career” (p. 3). This conceptualisation is useful, since much of what happens when an artist visits a classroom may either go beyond, or only superficially involve, art-form technique. This may be due to the brevity, or the particular focus, of the visit or residency, and is related to the understanding of the role of the artist in the classroom. This has to do with conceptualisation of learning as an act of creation, through which the student also develops their knowledge and acquires information. One of the artist-writers involved in the study described being at work in the classroom in the following way:

I’m not thinking ‘I’ve got a mixed-ability group here’ or ‘I’ve got somebody bright here and somebody not so bright’. I would never think like that. I would think ‘how are we going to....how is this going to make a story’. I’m always thinking about the story. So I’m thinking as a writer not as a teacher, that’s the difference (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

The word ‘art’ has an Indo-European root, meaning “‘to put things together’”, whilst the word teach comes from the Greek meaning “‘to show’” so a ‘teaching artist’, might be defined as “one who shows how to put things together” (Booth, 2009, p. 17). This understanding of the artist in the classroom as one who knows how to put things together within the affordances of their particular art form provides an understanding of the artist’s role in the processes of constructing and crafting learning. As another of the artist-writers put it:

Maybe teaching is too big a word. I would like it to sink in by osmosis almost, that my love for the people that I am talking about would somehow seep through to one of them or two of them or all of them [laughs] if possible. I try to do it with as much love and care as I possibly can. I love the things I am saying to them. I don’t usually

introduce things that I don't like. I don't know if that makes sense ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

As this comment suggests, both artist-writer and the artist-teacher (Greene, 1984), can bring a perceptible love and passion for the art form, alongside their knowledge of the craft. This falls within the area of the hidden curriculum which will be considered in the next section.

3.7 Arts Learning and the Curriculum

3.7.1 Arts learning and curriculum

Senior cycle education aims to foster an understanding and appreciation of moral, spiritual, aesthetic, social and cultural values that have been distinctive in shaping Irish society (NCCA, 2009, p. 14).

Curricular reform at both the Junior and Senior Cycle is ongoing. It is underpinned by a key skills framework, at both Junior Cycle (NCCA, 2015, 2016a, 2016b) and Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2009), built around critical and creative thinking, the ability to collaborate and initiate, reflect and communicate, and encompassing what has been described elsewhere as “tolerance, technology and talent” (Florida in Johnston, 2008, p. 32). These higher order skills have been “identified as central to teaching and learning across the senior cycle curriculum” for the twenty-first century (NCCA, 2009, p. 2). High quality arts education provision, involving such higher order skills as creation, presentation, connection, perception and reflection (Hanley, 2003), has been seen as contributing to gains in student knowledge through their interaction with art objects, artists and teachers, as well as through their own artistic practice, research and study (UNESCO, 2006, p. 8). This is supported by recent research conducted through the *Growing Up in Ireland* longitudinal study which found that:

Clear differences are evident in reading and mathematics performance according to the types of out-of-school activities in which children engage. Even taking account of a wide range of background factors, children who engage in cultural activities and social networking perform better in reading and mathematics than other groups (McCoy, Quail & Smyth, 2012, p. 7).

These findings are similar to those of Burton et al., (2000) who found that students who scored within what they designated the “high-arts group” attended schools where the arts were well supported and integrated into the curriculum (p. 252).

The arts, which have long been recognised as a means of gaining access to cultural capital and social mobility, are often the first items to be dropped by schools when budgets are stretched (Johnston, 2008, p. 5; Harvey, 2006; Fiske, 1999; NACCCE, 1999; JCSP, 2008). Since it is the curriculum that determines what is of value in terms of teaching, learning and assessment (O’Donoghue, 2012), in particular the ‘specified’ or “‘intended curriculum’....[which]acquire[s] particular value and meaning....[in] define[ing] what is possible, legitimate and worth pursuing” (p. 133), the precarious nature of the role and understanding of the arts within the curriculum, comes sharply into focus.

This is directly related to issues of transfer, examined in detail later in this section, and with a view of the arts as “affective and expressive” rather than cognitive and academic (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006, p.25). This in turn means that, in curricular terms, the arts are generally seen as an optional extra, a reward or an elective for the very talented. *Champions of Change* (Fiske, 1999) which involved seven teams of researchers in examining a diversity of programmes in arts education, displays quite a consensus regarding the value of in-schools arts learning. Through making connections, transforming the learning environment, providing challenges for the more able and connecting to real world environments “the arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached....in ways that they are not otherwise

being reached” (Fiske, ix-x). This encourages learning dispositions around self-efficacy, self-directed learning and risk management.

Conceptions of curricula can range from simply denoting those courses that are on offer, to the more multidimensional idea of curriculum as “all the learning experiences of students throughout their educational careers” (Witte & Sâmihăian, 2013, p. 5). This conception of curriculum encompasses the hidden curriculum, and it is where arts learning is seen as contributing to enhanced self-esteem, encouraging risk-taking and the breaking down of prejudice and contributing to the development of social skills (Burton et al., 2000). The next section looks at arts learning and social constructivism.

3.7.2 Arts learning and social constructivism

Curriculum, to me, ought to be a means of providing opportunities for the seizing of a range of meanings by persons open to the world, especially today (Greene, 1977b, p. 284).

Greene’s view of arts learning and its multifaceted role in representing, creating and expressing meaning, expands the understanding of learning beyond those intentional and structured spaces and experiences which constitute formal schooling (Fosnot, 2005; Fosnot, & Perry, 1996; Cunnigham & Duffy, 1996), and reflects a social constructivist orientation (Uhrmacher, 2009, p. 615). Both social constructivism and arts learning view learning as being broader than the specified (McCormick & Murphy, 2008) or “intended curriculum” (Eisner, 1990, 63). Learning is seen as always already social and situated (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 2003) and the learner as actively constructing meanings, and that “knowledge by which we come to first hand familiarity with this or that aspect of human experience” (Carr, 2010, pp. 9-10), rather than reproducing given understandings. Both views allow for a more layered understanding of learning and of the curriculum itself (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Eisner, 1985; Greene, 1984, 1987, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2008; McCormick & Murphy, 2008; Luke, Woods & Weir, 2013), acknowledging its multidimensional aspects, in terms

of the hidden curriculum (Kentli, 2009; Giroux, 2011), the explicit curriculum, the implicit curriculum and the null curriculum, “the options students are not afforded, the perspectives they may never know about, much less be able to use, the concepts and skills that are not part of their intellectual repertoire” and the space more often (un)occupied by the arts (Eisner, 1985, p. 107):

I want to argue that encounters with the arts can lessen the immersion we see around us today, and that they may do so by enabling people to break through the horizons of the ordinary, of the taken-for-granted, to visions of the possible, of "what is not" (Greene, 1977b, p. 287).

These compatibilities can be observed in the understandings of learning and arts learning as a way of seeing (Berger, 1972; Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990), experiencing (Eisner, 2002b; Dewey, 1934) and constructing learning experiences. For Fiske the arts change the learning experience because they:

Enable young people to have direct involvement with the arts and artists.... Require significant staff development....Support extended engagement in the artistic process.... Encourage self-directed learning....Promote complexity in the learning experience.... Allow management of risk by the learners....[and] Engage community leaders and resources.... (Fiske, 1999, ix-xi).

Social constructivist approaches to learning both appreciate and facilitate arts learning. However, the high-stakes environment at second level means that schools are primarily concerned with assessment, considered in the next section.

3.7.3 Arts learning and assessment

The public perception of the role of schools, which revolves around high-stakes testing at second-level, is not receptive to arts education. Concerns to do with the transfer of learning (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2006), the organisation of the curriculum and the

regularities of schooling (Goodlad, 1992), leave little time for arts subjects (Richmond, 2009), which also require specialist teachers. Development in assessment policy and practice in Ireland is relatively recent (Looney, 2006, p. 347), taking place amid ongoing controversy concerning reform of the Junior Cycle (O'Brien, 28.12.2015). Current assessment models are standardised and summative, suited to the well-structured domains of the sciences. However, when it comes to less-well or in Efland's words "ill-structured domains (such as the arts, medicine and law), learners are forced to organize their understanding by assembling knowledge from individual cases....engage(ing) in a constructive process where experience with a large number of cases is assembled" (2004a, p.756). Art form learning presents an additional complication in that it functions as non-propositional or "metaphoric forms of thought" involving more than one domain (Efland, 2004a, p. 756; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

Herpin, Washington, & Li (2012) found a lack of assessment tools, information and reportage with regard to assessment in the arts, as well as a general lack of clarity in understanding the difference between arts knowledge and arts skills and a need for professional development and assessment frameworks (2012, iv-vi). Assessment in the arts presents particular challenges, which require engaging with the demands presented by AfL (Hawe & Parr, 2014), and include the need to develop suitable tools for the assessment of expressive learning, including performance (Dorn, Madeja & Sabol, 2004), and the development of strategies for assessing the habits of mind or the "multifaceted cognition" that is developed through engaging in arts learning (Duckor & Perlstein, 2014, p. 7). Sensitive questions around what is to be assessed in terms of programmes, students and teachers come into play (Stake & Munson, 2008). However, the role of assessment in arts education might be said to constitute the elephant in the room, which must be engaged with "because assessments signal to students what is really valued and important" (Beghetto,

2006, p. 453). Therefore, if the modes of learning in the arts are not assessed then the implicit (and explicit) message is that they are either not important, or are not amenable to being assessed within the current standardised assessment framework, or both.

3.7.4 Arts learning and transfer

The recently published report from Durham University on the *Impact of arts education on the cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes of school-aged children: A review of evidence*¹⁸ (See & Kokotsaki, 2015), which was commissioned to investigate how the arts might support educational outcomes for disadvantaged young people, concludes that “the review found no convincing evidence that demonstrated a causal relationship between arts education and young people’s academic and other wider outcomes” (2015, p. 3), and echoes the findings of earlier research (Winner et al., 2013; Winner & Cooper, 2000; Winner & Hetland, 2000). The vexatious nature of this issue is exemplified in the divergence of views presented by various studies. Winner in a presentation to the OECD in 2011, whilst acknowledging some statistically significant results indicating a possible relationship between music and mathematics, drama and verbal skills and dance and visual-spatial skills, highlighted the difficulties in attempting to demonstrate transfer, citing the non-verifiability of mainly correlational studies. The report offered “observation or learning to see; envisioning what you can’t see or generating and manipulating mental images; reflection or meta-cognition and expression” as four potentially transferable habits of mind (Winner, 2011), and significantly proposed shifting the focus to one of explicit teaching for near transfer within the art form itself. The 2013 OECD Report *Art for Arts’s Sake?* acknowledged “some evidence of impact of arts education on different kinds of skills” and reiterated that:

¹⁸ The report examined 199 English language identified studies.

the main justification for arts education is clearly the acquisition of artistic habits of mind...not only mastery of craft and technique, but also skills such as close observation, envisioning, exploration, persistence, expression, collaboration, and reflection (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013, pp. 19-20).

Catterall & Waldorf, writing in *Champions of Change* (1999) claimed “strong and significant achievement effects” for the evaluation of the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) arts integration programme in schools for the period 1993-1998 (pp. 55-56), based on an examination of test scores for CAPE and non-CAPE schools. Smithrim & Uptis (2005) conducting a three-year research project for The Royal Conservatory of Music LTTA music programme, found a statistically significant correlation between music and computational skills, which they explain in part by suggesting that

computation is the kind of task that can be improved by paying closer attention to the material at hand - by being more fully awake and engaged in the task. It is much easier to improve a computation score than, for example, a reading score, where much more language knowledge and comprehension is needed to make a significant change (2005, pp. 121-122).

They too go on to suggest that it is other less tangible forms of learning which may ultimately prove more important (p. 125).

The Durham Report (2015) concludes that the arts need to be ‘taught’ for their own sake (See & Kokotsaki, 2015; Winner, et al., 2013; Hickman, 2010; Booth, 2009; Greene, 1977a, 1977b; Goodlad, 1992; Eisner, 1985, 2002a, 2004, 2005; Harland et al., 2000) as they free students from “the easily given” and move them towards meaning-making, thus enabling them to grapple with the fundamental human question of “how we should live” (Richmond, 2009, p. 104). Work by Rauscher et al., (1997) and the famous Mozart effect on spatio-temporal reasoning, represents some of the tensions and concerns about an

emphasis in which the sole focus is on transfer of the arts to other cognitive domains (Gadsden, 2008, p. 47).

Crossick & Kaszynska (2016) suggest that notions of transfer raise concerns about the possible instrumentalisation of arts learning, hierarchical issues within the disciplines and what is understood as learning outcomes. They conclude that “it may be more appropriate to see the importance of participation in the arts, and arts education, as less about a simple set of generic or transferable skills, and more as contributing to the habits of mind that provide a platform needed for all learning, such as following curiosities and possibilities, having a willingness to practice repeatedly, not taking things for granted, and developing a strong inner critic (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 115). They also make the point, along with Burton et al., (2000), that transfer is not unidirectional and that “perceptions of transfer may well be, in part, a function of the degree to which different disciplines share certain cognitive elements, dispositions, or ways of thinking” (p. 228). They question why “the specific learning affordances of the arts” are not taken more seriously since:

[There] are strong examples of how much stronger evidence can be found for the positive effects of arts participation on the processes involved in learning, remembering and problem-solving, and the formation of transferable skills such as communication skills and social competency skills, than in the narrower area of formal attainment in standardised tests. These significant findings should be emphasised, rather than being treated as less important than (at best modest) increases in attainment levels, even if the policy discourse at any one time might be thought to favour the latter (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016, p. 115).

Burton et al., maintain that transfer is more likely where there are common cognitive or symbolic elements but end by stating that the study does not offer evidence of transfer (2000, p. 252).

3.7.5 Arts learning and engagement

[E]ngagement is associated with positive academic outcomes, including achievement and persistence in schools (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004, p. 87).

Much energy has been expended by educators on “the importance of student engagement” (Christenson et al., 2008, p. 1099). According to Hickman (2010) the “singular contribution” of engaging in the arts for young people is in its facilitating of the expression and development of identity (p. 158). Engagement, which is also included in Hetland et al.,’s (2013) habits of mind, is best expressed in Csikzentmihalyi’s notion of “flow” as engagement and absorption in something that is found to be enjoyable and “intrinsically” worth engaging in for its own sake (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider & Shernoff, 2003, p. 160). The value and importance of engaging in arts learning lies in the different levels of understanding, meaning-making, expression, experimentation and risk-taking that it makes available to the learner, without the fear of being “wrong”, thus creating the space for introspection and the discovery of “personal meaning” (Winner et al., 2013, p. 20). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) and the Christenson, Reschly and Wylie (2012) suggest that student self-reporting is a useful way to gauge student engagement. The findings of this study regarding students’ perceptions indicated that students perceived arts learning as fostering a more open learning environment and an understanding of the potential benefits of engaging in taking risks:

It was very open. Since a lot of the schools are grade oriented and so – exams! This wasn’t like that at all because there were no exams in it. There was nothing to work

towards...as it was a creative writing class [so] you were more free to make mistakes and then build on them (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

In the research, engagement tends to be linked with persistence (Hetland et al., 2013). The study found that students' perceptions of engagement were heavily influenced by the collaborative learning environment established through group-work. It is this ability of arts learning to foster these kinds of sensibilities and understandings that gives rise to the notion of the intrinsic value of the arts for personal development and social cohesion and stability (Lunn & Kelly, 2008; NESF, 2007; Moore, 1997; Benson, 1979), reflecting the aims of the new senior cycle curriculum (NCCA, 2009, p. 6). From this perspective, the arts are seen as intrinsic to the development of the individual and the wider society.

3.7.6 Arts learning and meaning-making and aesthetic understanding

Active engagement, sensory experience, connections, imagination, perceptivity, and risk taking are conditions that encourage aesthetic experiences. It is these experiences that seem to support deep engagement as well as memory retention, an increase in knowledge, student satisfaction, meaning-making and creativity (Uhrmacher, 2009, p. 632).

The arts, grounded in human experience, are the embodied expression of the human search for meaning (Eisner, 2002b; von Glasersfeld, 1995; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Cromby, 2005) and they chart the human being's need for balance and equilibrium, in the ongoing quest for survival (Dewey, 1934). This "striving for symbolic representation and coherent meaning-making with other humans is a spiraling dynamic 'dance' of interaction and evolution, a search for equilibrium – a self-organising criticality" (Bak, 1996 in Fosnot & Perry, 1996, p. 29). Emotion plays a critical role in this experience, functioning as "the conscious sign of a break (in equilibrium), actual or impending" (Dewey, 1934, p. 14) and propelling the organism's expansion, in order to re-establish equilibrium and harmony. According to Vygotsky (2004), "emotions or anxiety are generated whenever our equilibrium with the environment is disturbed" (p. 54). Human meaning-making "refers to

the idea that students have found some value in what they have learned that has personal consequences” (Uhrmacher, 2009, p. 631). It has been conceptualised as “flow” or “optimal experience...something that we make happen” by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 3), seen as being achieved by “remaining on a learning edge” that honours past practices whilst expanding beyond them (Wenger, 2010, p. 181). It is accomplished across the lifespan (Mezirow, 2009), and grounded in cultural systems which form the basis of human experience, understanding and identity formation (Carson, 2004). Therefore, meaning-making and identity formation, “learning is/as becoming” (Wenger, 2010, p. 181; Colley et al., 2003), is seen as a continuous process, always already occurring in all situations and at all times.

Current models of curricular provision (Pearson, 2013), reflect an epistemology, based in a symbol processing view of knowledge (McCormick & Murphy, 2008), in which the individual mind interprets a pre-existing objective reality through a language based symbol system leading to the ‘acquisition of knowledge’ (Sfard, 1998). Dewey deemed this type of experience to be one of “recognition” (1934, p. 54), one dimensional and static so that, rather than the student gaining some new awareness, there is a falling back into the familiar:

Recognition is perception arrested before it has a chance to develop freely. In recognition there is a beginning of an act of perception. But this beginning is not allowed to serve the development of full perception of the thing recognized....In recognition we fall back, as upon a stereotype, upon some previously formed scheme...(upon) bare identification (Dewey, 1934, p. 54).

In comparison to this cognitive view of learning, arts learning and aesthetic understanding offer a cognitive-affective view of learning as perception, always already suffused by emotion (Dewey, 1934, p. 55), in which “to think is to feel, and vice versa....join(ing)

cognition, affect, and action in productive and powerful ways...more holistic in its substance and consequence....perception is illuminated by multiple senses and sensations” (Girod, Rau & Schepige, 2003, pp. 575-576). Aesthetic understanding foregrounds the pervasive role of affect in human perception, as forming the basis for the most profound learning experiences (Dewey, 1934, pp. 54-59), since we now know that “sensory experiences are crucial for long-term memory” (Uhrmacher, 2009, p. 631).

The term aesthetic is derived from the original Greek *aisthesis*, meaning to perceive with the senses (the narrower meaning of ‘appreciation of beauty’ occurred in mid-eighteenth century in Germany). For Aristotle embodied knowing or “*Aisthesis* then refers to our total sensorial experience of the world and to our sensitive knowledge of it” (Verrips, 2006, p. 28). *Aisthesis*, the aesthetic, also implies a state of wakefulness, particularly when related to its opposite anaesthetic (Greene, 1977b, p. 284), anaesthesia or as Verrips (2006) puts it, the “making...insensible” of people through the use of “ideology, discourse or language” (Verrips, 2006, p. 30; Foucault, 1969/1989; Bourdieu, 1989/1996). Rather than being an esoteric experience, aesthetic understanding for Dewey was based in a constructivist understanding which envisaged the wide awake (Greene, 1977b) learner actively creating their own experience (Dewey, 1934, p. 56). Booth (2009) echoes Dewey in usefully (and non-judgementally) distinguishing between the experiences of art and entertainment. Entertainment operates to fulfil expectations and thus is reassuring, whereas “art lives in an individual’s capacity to engage in that fundamental act of creativity - expanding the sense of the possible” (Booth, 2009, p. 2), occurring outside the known and familiar.

Discussing the teaching of science through the arts, Girod, Rau & Schepige (2003) suggest that aesthetic understanding has the capacity to transform and change the way the world is seen or perceived. This is partly to do with the kind of experience it is in being

whole and complete in itself, generally emotional, and therefore compelling, thus causing things to be ‘re-seen’, encouraging intellectual engagement, “aesthetic understanding teaches content *and* it demonstrates an empowering way of perceiving and interpreting the world....beyond traditional learning” (Girod, Rau & Schepige, 2003, pp, 578-579). They echo Uhrmacher (2009) in maintaining that classroom activities, imbued with artistic practices, can create aesthetic learning experiences for students (2009, p. 615), citing in particular the inclusion of “reflection” in aesthetically oriented lessons (2009, p. 625).

Girod et al., (2003) offer five guidelines for teaching for aesthetic understanding in science, which have wide applicability. These guidelines revolve around harnessing the excitement of the learning by crafting the content around the original idea and then conducting imaginative thought experiments to develop the student’s learning dispositions. There is an emphasis on the importance of nuance and detail, since the more one sees, the more one is able to see (Uhrmacher, 2009, p. 632), and on defamiliarisation and estrangement from the known, on what they term “re-seeing”, supporting and encouraging individual ways of seeing and so scaffolding self-efficacy and identity. Finally, according to Girod et al., it is important to model different ways of knowing, and the wonder of ideas (2003, pp. 579-580):

wondering isn’t just making sense of lived experience; it is lived experience. Like art making, wonder just may have value in and of itself. And also like creating art, there is a good deal of rigor involved on both the student and the teacher’s part. Wonder requires us to draw on thinking dispositions such as observing closely, living with ambiguity, perseverance, and being curious. Wonder is both a noun (e.g., the feeling of being surprised) and a verb (e.g., to think curiously) (Burton, 2013, p. 112).

3.7.7 Arts learning as ‘process’ and ‘product’ and boundary object

The product is important because it validates their (the students’) involvement (D. Lordan, personal communication, 30.5.13).

The *Creativity and the Arts in the Primary School* report states that literature was not found to be generally included within arts curricula (2009, p. 9), although literature does form part of the Junior and Senior cycle literature and language arts curriculum at second level in Ireland. Artist-writers working in second-level schools generally work within a designated subject area, with a subject teacher, more usually (though not always) in the English Language Arts. This results in a negotiated understanding of the nature, focus and outcome of the visit or residency, particularly in relation to understandings of process and product. Within current models of assessment there is a focus on, and the requirement for, the production of work as evidence of learning. This focus on product is not alien to the creative process, but in fact mirrors the focus on the production of a creative artefact or product, thus offering possibilities for the development of richer arts learning collaborations between teachers and artists:

The criteria of a perceptible outcome is useful because without observable and measurable evidence of some act, idea, or performance, it is difficult to determine whether creativity has occurred. By working backward from tangible artifacts (e.g., creative products, documentation of creative behaviors), latent theories of creative action can be inferred (Plucker, Beghetto & Dow, 2004, p. 91).

The notion of a boundary object was developed Star and Greismer (1989) at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, Berkley in order to address the needs of “extremely diverse groups of actors...[requiring] common understandings...[in order] to gather information which retains its integrity across time, space and local contingencies” (p. 387). These ‘boundary objects’ are endowed with sufficient “interpretive flexibility”

(Star, 2010, p. 602) to allow of (sometimes widely) divergent meanings and possible interpretations, whilst retaining their integrity, at both a common and individual level for those involved. Since the product (in this instance, student writing) is significant and meaningful to teacher, artist-writer and students, the product in this context becomes a boundary object enabling the establishment of a common understanding around shared goals and ways of working, yet managing to retain its integrity for both the teacher, the artist and the student (Star & Griesemer, 1989). The boundary object acts as a common denominator or bridge which allows the teacher and the artist to establish a common understanding and partnership; it allows the school to integrate arts learning into curricular provision. More importantly, it facilitates student engagement in and with arts learning and/or artists because “they like the idea of meeting a real writer, somebody that’s not dead!” (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School Teacher: Appendix 5). By extension the classroom becomes the studio, as students learn “to express themselves...in the search for meaning, value and oftentimes, truth” (Richmond, 2009, p. 102).

3.7.8 Arts learning and expression or ‘when is art?’

An added difficulty with regard to arts learning is that whilst there may indeed be a product, the product may eventuate in the expression of ideas and personal meanings in a way that renders it ephemeral (performance, found art, conceptual art) and “difficult to understand quantitatively” (Burton et al., 2000, p. 235), though no less rich and real for that. As Vygotsky, quoting Anna Grinberg, wrote ““When a child has something to write about, he writes (or speaks or acts) with great seriousness”” (2004, p. 52). The troubled question of the artistic merits of work produced by children (and young people) has been around for some time with Crothers and Gardner (1979) noting four approaches:

A number of researchers have sought to discover consistent patterns or stages characterizing the representational efforts of children....A second set of investigators

has focused on aspects of drawing ability such as the capacity to capture perspective or to copy geometric configurations....A third group has correlate attitudes, traits, or demographic variables of the individual with the quality or stage of artistic development....A fourth line of study has treated artistic quality or merit in children's work (1979, p. 570).

However, they went on to note that “investigators have not addressed the question of whether children are in fact producing works of art” (570). In adopting this approach they were following in the footsteps of Nelson Goodman, who in 1978 reframed the question concerning ‘what is art?’ to one of ‘when is art?’ (1978, p. 70). In doing so Goodman opened a range of possibilities for considering the work produced by children and young people (and indeed the whole area of community art (Benson, 1979), as one framed by context, intention and the interpretive flexibility of these ‘works of art’ as they are constituted as boundary objects. Therefore, whilst the question of what constitutes art is beyond the scope of this study, it is centrally concerned with the question of ‘when is art?’ and that most particularly from the point of view of the student.

3.8 Summary conclusion

The conceptual framework for the study addressed three central and inter-related concepts that inform Irish second-level education, namely, curriculum, arts learning and self-efficacy. The concept of the embodied mind is a central tenet of the thesis. The starting point in conceptualising both the possibilities and the challenges confronting arts learning in the second-level classroom was Sfard’s (1998) concept of “metaphors for learning”, which presents a view of learning (somewhat simplified in the context of what we know about the complexity of learning and cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Varela, Thompson

& Rosch, 1993; Bandura, 2001; McGilchrist, 2009, 2012, Damasio, 1999; Sternberg, 1990) as either an acquisitive or a participative activity, or both. This is particularly important since “our choice of metaphor is not a neutral decision...the way we tend to think about instruction says a lot about our underlying beliefs” (Wilson, 1995). The approaches to learning inherent in Sfard’s metaphorical view depict two models of learning, existing on a continuum from, at one end, the acquisition of knowledge by the individual learner, which in turn confers capital on the learner, which then has exchange value (Bourdieu, 1989/96; Dunne, 2010), to/and/or at the other end, view learning as socially constructed and context dependent, characterised by participation in communities of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1999). These metaphorical understandings represent quite different epistemologies and beliefs about learning and the learner and, as Wilson notes, these understandings inevitably impact on the curriculum, particularly as they affect policy decisions with regard to curriculum design.

Therefore, before considering the implications of the arts for the curriculum, it was necessary to consider the dominant role of policy in shaping the education process, and the always already politicised nature of curriculum. Discussion then focused on the distinction between arts learning and education, asserting the importance of recognising the aesthetic nature of literature as an art form within the curriculum, rather than its instrumental role in facilitating literacy. It was argued that some aspects of creativity, including its underlying motivational factors, the centrality of risk-taking and its impact on self-efficacy, can facilitate and nurture learning (Jeffrey, Craft, 2004; Kozbelt, Beghetto, Runco, 2010). The motivational factors involved in arts learning were seen as being intimately linked to the presence of the teaching artist in the classroom (Bresler, DeStefano, Feldman, & Garg, 2000; Booth, 2009; Sternberg, & Lubart, 1995; Robinson, 1982), in transmitting an understanding

of the artist's role in the processes of constructing and crafting learning, through their passion for their art form.

The final part of this chapter was devoted to arts learning and the curriculum. It was shown that arts learning, grounded in human experience and the embodied expression of the human search for meaning, takes place within the ambit of social constructivism and offered a view of arts learning and aesthetic understanding, as a cognitive-affective process, based in the human capacity to/for wonder (Burton, 2013; Girod et al., 2003). It is argued that arts learning is not solely a process, although the learning derived from the process of making art is centrally important. The product that is the outcome of the arts-learning engagement also has a value in its own right as an artefact (Lordan, personal communication, 30.5.13). It was argued that since the product is significant and meaningful to teacher, the artist-writer and the students, albeit for different reasons, it thus functions as a boundary object (Star & Greiesmer, 1989) in establishing a common understanding around shared goals and approaches, whilst still retaining its integrity for teacher, artist and student alike (Star, 2010). This facilitates the establishment of a common understanding between the teacher and the artist-writer, thus allowing the school to integrate arts learning into curricular provision. More importantly, it promotes students' engagement in arts learning, by shifting the focus to the making or the 'when' of art, rather than being preoccupied by questions of 'what' constitutes art (Goodman, 1978, 1982). The chapter underpins, and is in turn underpinned by, the findings of the study, laid out in Chapter Five. Before the findings of the study are presented and discussed, the methodology for the study is laid out in the following chapter, Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The focus of the study was on identifying and analysing the perceptions of the key participants – students, teachers and artist–writers – of the learning that occurs as a result of participating in a WIR Programme within the second-level classroom. By adopting a grounded theory, hereafter GT, approach, the aim of which “is to generate or discover theory” (Egan, 2002, p. 280), the intention was to render an account of the perceptions of learning of students. It did not seek to measure the extent of this learning, but rather to interpret the perceptions and understandings of the learning through students’ self-reporting (Pintrich & de Groot, 1990). Students’ perceptions were then further elaborated by reference to the perceptions of the teachers and artist-writers with whom they worked in the course of the case studies (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

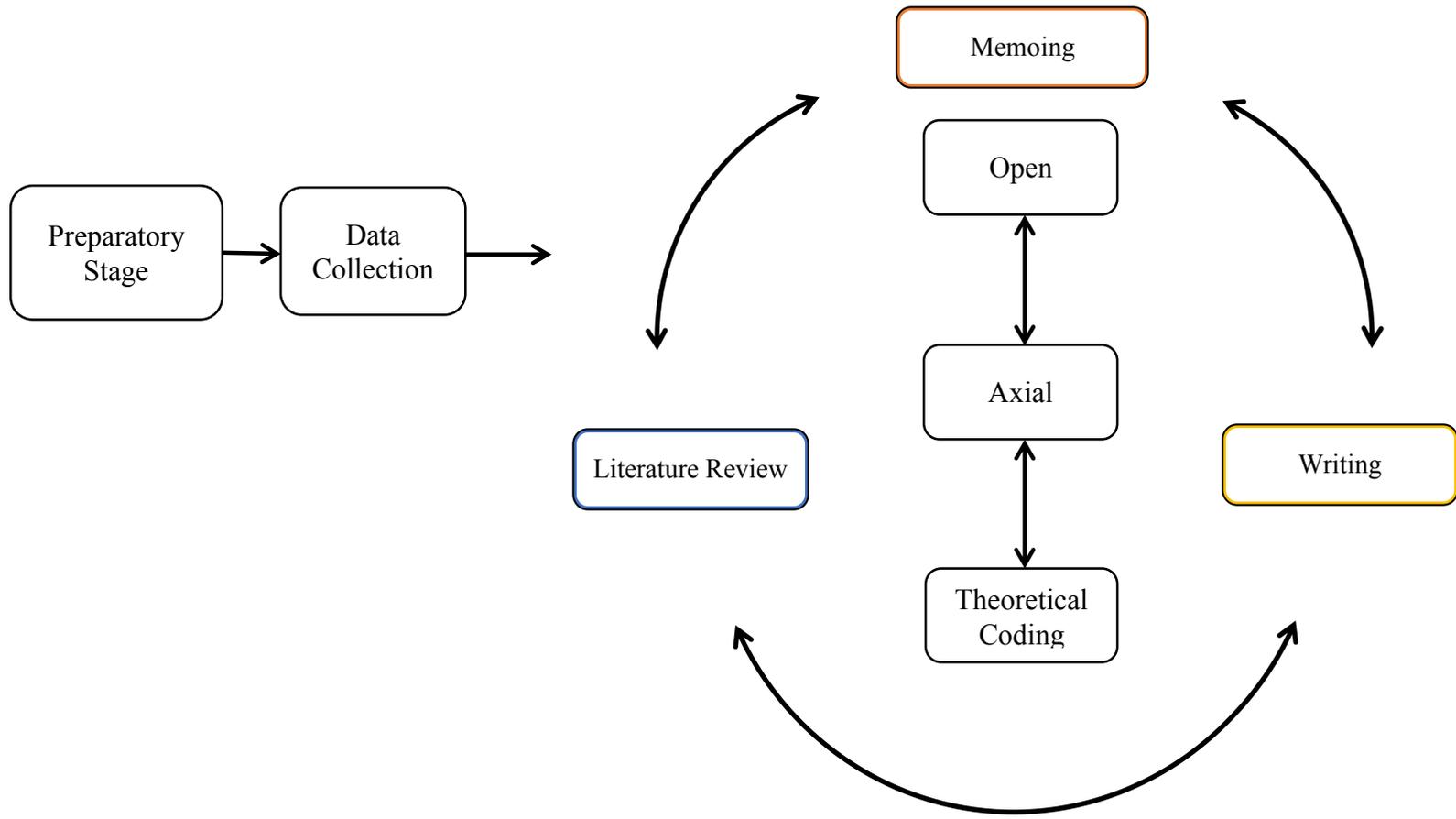
This three-phase, qualitative research process, which extended over a three-year period, began with a pilot study followed by case studies in four large second-level schools (see Table 4.1). The research process included classroom observations, focus groups, interviews, a review of current arts-in-education practice and a literature review (see Table 4.2). The research participants were purposefully selected from schools participating in the WISS writers-in-residence programme, in spring/summer 2013, previously described in Chapter One.

The process, as outlined in Figure 4.1, which is intended to indicate the iterative nature of the research process, was dictated by the grounded theory, hereafter GT, approach adopted for the study. The steps in the research process are then described in more detail

and need to be understood as overlapping and looping back on each other in a continual process of elaboration (where necessary) and re-visitation of the research data, and which, in line with the GT approach, includes the literature. This approach located and grounded the findings of the study in the data generated by students', teachers' and artist-writers' self-reported perceptions of learning. This allowed participants to speak for themselves and it also pre-empted researcher bias in the form of preconceptions about the outcomes of the research and the operation of the WISS, with which the researcher was closely involved.

This was also the reason that focus groups, in particular, were chosen as the mechanism for engaging with students, since focus groups are seen as encouraging “group opinions...not first produced in the discussion situation, but only *actualized* there” (Bohnsack, 2000/2004, p. 215). The role of the researcher then becomes one of “open[ing]up a collective meaning pattern...common to all the individual...narratives” (Bohnsack, 2000/2004, p. 217). Thus, by triangulating the data from students with that obtained from the teachers and the artist-writers, the researcher sought to control for any researcher “biases” (Tynan & Drayton, 1988, p. 7) and preoccupations.

Figure 4.1 Outline of the research process



| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Preparatory Stage</i> | Identification of arts learning as central research interest Identification of researcher preoccupations with, and preconceptions of, the WISS. |
| <i>Data Collection Stage</i> | Consisted of an initial pilot phase, followed by four on site case studies in individual schools. The pilot phase included one teacher and one artist writer interview and one focus group with students. The case studies consisted of 7 interviews with participating teachers and 7 interviews with participating artist-writers, 40 hours classroom observation, 3 student focus groups and the gathering of students' work. |
| <i>Literature Review Stage</i> | Conceptualised as part of data collection process, it began after the initial data collection in schools was completed. It continued over three years, including the writing up stage, as gaps in the data were identified. |
| <i>Memoing Stage</i> | Commenced with the pilot phase of the data collection in schools and was continuous throughout. |
| <i>Coding Stage</i> | Three stages - Open, Axial and Theoretical coding leading to the generation of a core category. |
| Open Coding | Open Coding identified 83 codes denoting emerging themes – using <i>in vivo</i> codes as suggested by GT. |
| Axial Coding | Axial coding helped to conceptualise the emerging themes into 6 categories based on the original <i>in vivo</i> codes. The creation and sorting of memos was an ongoing and important part of this process. |
| Theoretical Coding | Theoretical coding reduced these 6 categories to 5 categories mirroring the Key Skills at Senior Cycle: (1) Communicating (2) Working with Others (3) Information Processing (4) Critical & Creative Thinking (5) Being Personally Effective. These categories were further reduced to three sub-categories: (1) Communicating & Collaborating (2) Thinking & Learning (3) Developing Self-efficacy, giving rise to the identified overall theme: <i>Perceptions of the role of the WISS in creating a learning environment supporting students' learning</i> . This was informed by linking with the literature review and by the ongoing creating and sorting of memos, which was crucial to this phase of the process. |
| <i>Writing Stage</i> | Background & Context; Methodology; Findings; Literature Review; Conclusions; Discussion of the study's conclusions, and its limitations, as well as suggestions for future research. |

4.1.1 Chapter outline

The chapter begins with an overview of GT, its background and history and the various types of GT. The approach to data collection and analysis is then outlined, followed by an outline of the research methods and the research design, which provides an overview of the phase one pilot study and then goes on to look at phase two which was the main data collection phase of the study (see Figure 4.1). There is a description of the research sample (see Table 4.1) and data handling. This is followed by a discussion on the reliability of the study, as well as ethical considerations. There is a reflection on the role of the researcher which looks at the implications of the insider nature of her relationship with the WISS over a sixteen-year period. This reflection is also in line with Marshall and Rossman's (2011) view of the function of the researcher conducting qualitative research as the main research instrument. The chapter concludes with an account of the audit trail (see Appendix 2) and a brief consideration of the strengths and limitations of GT.

4.2 Overview of GT

GT is a commonly used research approach (Dunne, 2011, p. 111; Flint, 2005, p. 1), which focuses on the question "what is going on here?" (Morse, 2001, p. 13). A GT approach "aims at constructing a theory from data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 14), from an a posteriori position, that is after the fact and from the data, as opposed to the generation of hypotheses which are then tested on the data. A methodology based on GT was chosen for three reasons, as follows: (1) the complex nature of the environment (2) as an attempt to generate a theory of arts learning and (3) because GT acknowledges the interpretive rather than the explanatory role of findings. These three reasons are discussed in more detail below.

Firstly, because of the complex nature of educational research particularly within the classroom environment the focus on data produced by participants helped the researcher to set aside her preconceptions and to approach the data with a more open mind. This is at the heart of GT, and the researcher was aided by the range of methods available within the GT approach. Taken together with the contested nature of knowledge (McCarty & Schwandt, 1999; Jonassen, 2009) and evidence (Morse, 2006, p. 395) in postmodernity, this meant that the qualitative approach facilitated by GT emerged as the most ethical and practical approach to data collection. In line with the findings of Birks and Mills (2015) and Corbin and Strauss (2015), this is because qualitative data analysis seeks to explore and describe, rather than to explain data:

concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and lives, both to the researcher and themselves. *Out of these multiple constructions, analysts construct something called knowledge* (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 25, emphasis added).

In under-researched areas, such as arts learning, GT provides a way of constructing such ‘knowledge’ out of the “patterned relationships between social actors” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 636), in order to understand how the actors interpret the reality which they themselves have actively constructed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and how they respond to their experiences (Morse, 2001, p. 12).

Secondly, GT began to emerge, during the pilot phase of the study as the most flexible approach to the questions under consideration. The aim of the study was to develop a theory about arts learning, both in and through the literary arts forms as encountered by

students participating in the WISS based on - and in - the perceptions of the students, the teachers and artist-writers. GT could accommodate these different perceptions:

There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research but perhaps the most important is the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective, and in doing so to make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 25).

The theory produced through GT is generally a mid-range theory constructed through “abstract renderings of specific social phenomena that were grounded in data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7), and often focused on a behavioural phenomenon or concept such as coping, resilience or caring (Morse, 2001, p. 3). This is distinct from a grand theory which is “generated from logical assumptions and speculations about the “oughts” of social life” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Kindle Location 603). Given the study’s strong observational dimension, GT was deemed an appropriate approach.

Finally, GT was selected because, in acknowledging the interpretive (Suddaby, 2006, p. 638) rather than the explanatory role of findings, it recognises that they will always be “a representation of both participant and researcher” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 28) and, therefore, constructed by both points of view:

The researcher’s interpretative understanding, rather than the researcher’s explanation, of how the participant creates his or her understanding and meaning of reality is the result of the analysis (Hallberg, 2006, p. 146).

GT can take account of the closeness and distance between the researcher and research topic (see introduction to the WISS in Chapter Two and section on the researcher as research instrument (4.7.3) in this chapter). In fact some GT theorists maintain that a close relationship between researcher and researched is essential to the process, pointing to:

empirical research showing that the more time researchers spend on-site in organizational contexts, the more they report high levels of ‘self-learning,’ and the more their research is cited by peers (Suddaby, 2006, p. 640).

This understanding was considered doubly important owing to the previous involvement of the researcher with two of the schools in the study.¹⁹ A GT approach allowed the researcher to research herself in her role as education officer, whilst limiting the possibility of imposing preconceptions on the findings, and acknowledging and accounting for the involvement of the researcher in the study:

Unique to GT...[it] takes researchers’ perceptions into account in the research process. In other words, GT offers opportunities to the researchers to use their values and understanding in order to generate a new theory for a very complex phenomenon (Chong & Yeo, 2015, p. 263).

Since the aim of the study was to explore the learning and meta-learning of students through the description of their perceptions of their own learning, alongside the perceptions of their teachers and the artist-writers, GT emerged as a useful and appropriate way to approach the study.

4.2.1 Background

GT was developed in healthcare settings by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the mid-nineteen sixties, in response to the view of qualitative research methods as “impressionistic, anecdotal, unsystematic and biased” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 5). Developed in real-world contexts to study dying in hospitals (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), it

¹⁹ The researcher, in her role as education officer in Poetry Ireland, had previously worked with two of the schools in the study over a number of years through the WISS.

was a practical response to researching complex processes and issues with “slippery epistemological boundaries...[requiring] tacit knowledge” (Suddaby 2006, p. 639).

4.2.2 Characteristics

GT is not a linear methodological approach. Glaser and Strauss (1967) identified characteristics of GT which still generally hold true across various approaches. These include:

- simultaneous and ongoing collecting and analysing of data throughout the research process with data collection dictated by gaps in the data;
- constructing codes and categories from data using in vivo codes derived from participants’ responses where possible;
- constant comparison of data at all stages of the research process;
- pursuing emerging themes through each stage of data collection:
- memo-writing at all stages in order to identify categories, properties, relationships, gaps, ideas and conclusions; and
- non-representative sampling because the aim is theory construction
- delaying and/or not necessarily beginning with the literature review in order to encourage open-mindedness and the articulation of ideas (Charmaz, 2006, p. 6; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 27; Dunne, 2011, p. 116).

In this way, GT aimed to move beyond description into explanation of phenomena, because whilst description gives information about an event, theory aims to offer an explanation for that event (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 11). Glaser and Strauss, the founders of what is now termed classic GT, held a phenomenological position (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), whereby everything was subservient to the data, and theoretical considerations were to be avoided

until the core category had been identified. For them a GT needed to display a close fit with the data, be useful, endure over time, be modifiable, and have explanatory power (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006, p. 6).

4.2.3 The literature review

The place of the literature review in GT is contested, although it is probably fair to say that, contrary to other qualitative approaches, it is not seen as the starting point for research. This is in order “to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on your work” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 165). Charmaz goes on to comment that “delaying the review encourages you to articulate *your* ideas” (p. 165), although she is clear that delaying consideration of the literature is not an excuse for a “scanty” review (p. 111; Suddaby, 2006, p. 634). Contrary to Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1994) favour an early review of the literature in order to structure the research process. Dunne (2011), like Charmaz (2006), suggests that there may be good ideological and pragmatic reasons for delaying the literature review, in that it can serve to overawe the novice researcher and can also prove to be irrelevant and time consuming if conducted at too early a stage or is too prolonged (Dunne, 2011, p. 115). As Dunne comments, the issue is not whether, but rather when, to undertake the literature review, since it is necessary in order to situate the discussion, and “open-mindedness” is not the same as “empty mindedness” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996 cited in Dunne, 2011, p. 116).

4.2.4 Types of GT

In more recent times a number of approaches to GT have emerged alongside the original classic approach of Glaser and Strauss. Glaser and Strauss went separate ways in the nineteen-nineties (Charmaz, 2006, p.8), and GT is seen as spanning positions from positivist to interpretivist, depending on the approach adopted, and reflecting GT’s mixed

heritage in both Glaser's positivist and Strauss's qualitative research backgrounds (Flint, 2005; Lehane 2014). Strauss and Corbin (1994) developed an interpretivist approach to GT, acknowledging multiple perspectives, and stating that "interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study" (p. 274). They also developed a much more systematic approach to data analysis, which has been criticised by Glaser as being too prescriptive and thus violating the fundamental tenets of GT.

The interpretive tradition in GT sees data as enacted, constituting a narrative containing the voices of those studied, providing a story (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). The development of a constructivist approach to GT by Charmaz (2006) fits well with this interpretivist approach:

one way of understanding research is as a specialist form of learning - either learning something new about a phenomenon, or learning new ways to understand it (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 118).

Constructivist GT is "ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 31), and for the purposes of this study, theories are conceptualised as acts of construction constituting the researcher's interpretations (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 29) of the stories relayed by participants. Echoing Hodkinson (2005), Charmaz (2006) sees GT as a practice through which the researcher co-constructs the meaning with participants, and advises allowing the "research problem shape the methods you choose" (p. 15). Glaser and Strauss, the originators of GT, suggest that the aim of GT is theory generation rather than theory verification (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Kindle Location 849), based on elaborating the theory "to elicit fresh understandings" (Suddaby, 2006, p 636), rather than pursuing theory verification. This also seemed less in the vein of "vaulting ambition" of (Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 1, Sc. vii). These conceptualisations describe the evolution of the thinking behind the choice of research methods for this study, since the data sought on

perceptions of learning had, firstly, to be obtained from those involved in order to construct a theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 16). This in no way denies the researcher's own pre-existing ideas and theories, since she has been active in the field of arts learning for sixteen years. Rather, these "sensitising concepts" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 16; Bowen, 2006), or the researcher's pre-existing knowledge and expertise, were used to inform the initial research questions and to speculate about the process of arts learning (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 29).

4.3 Data collection and data analysis

Since GT, as a methodology, seeks to construct theory about issues of importance in peoples' lives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 2015), the process of data collection is inductive rather than deductive (Egan, 2002) in that the researcher does not begin with a set of preconceived ideas to be proven or disproven (Morse, 2001). Rather, the premise of GT is that "everything is data" (Schreiber, 2001, p. 64; Glaser, 2002), and issues of importance to participants emerge from the stories that they tell about an area of interest that they have in common with the researcher (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 26). The collection of this data, from different sources, is the basis of GT, and allows for the use of a wide range of methods. Data can be collected in the form of interviews, observations, focus group discussion, and documents (amongst others), with interviews being one of the most frequently reported methods. GT's methodological approaches are based on employing the most useful combination of methods for the particular study. This research employed (1) interviewing (2) observation (3) focus groups and (4) documentary evidence, in order to capture the perceptions of students' learning, from the self-reporting of students themselves, by observations of classroom sessions and by interviewing the teachers and artist-writers involved. This is in line with Pintrich and De Groot (1990), who suggest that:

Self-reports can be used effectively to measure student perceptions of motivation and cognitive engagement...but the results need to be replicated with other measures, such as think aloud protocols, stimulated recall procedures, structured interviews, or behavioral measures (p. 38).

Initial data collection for the study was broad-based and somewhat unstructured, particularly during the initial pilot phase, but became more focused as particular themes began to recur (Egan, 2002). Part of the rationale for employing a GT approach to the study was in order to organise and reduce the raw data through the process of constant comparison, by locating and sorting the data into themes which in turn formed categories. These categories fed into and emerged out of an overall category, which encapsulated the theory emerging from the data. In GT open coding is used to identify initial categories and their properties, axial coding refines these categories and selective or theoretical coding identifies the emerging story being told (Egan, 2002, p. 280).

Some GT practitioners (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Charmaz, 2006) advocate line-by-line analysis of the data for open coding as an analytic tool for data reduction. Others advocate the use of a broader approach (Chong & Yeo, 2015), identifying themes and refining these through constant comparison. Both approaches were employed for this study, since the data collection and analysis were ongoing and concurrent over three years. This enabled the researcher to recognise the themes as they emerged and as they were repeated. It also facilitated recognition of saturation of categories (Egan, 2002) when there was no benefit in gathering more data on a particular topic.

4.3.1 Coding of data

GT is an iterative process, involving successive passes over the data in order to allow the researcher to manage, reduce, and conceptualise the findings. This is accomplished through coding which is “a form of shorthand that researchers repeatedly use to identify

conceptual reoccurrences and similarities in the patterns of participants' experiences.... [leading to] a higher level concept that represents a group of codes" (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 177) or what is termed a category. Charmaz identifies three levels of coding, open coding, axial coding and selective or theoretical coding, which along with memo writing, give rise to "successively more abstract, theoretical ideas" (Charmaz, 2010, p. 166), in order to generate explanations and "conceptual categories" (Cooper, Chenail & Fleming, 2012, p. 6). GT is also an interpretive process and these successive stages allow the data to become more abstract and theoretical, leading to the final stage which is the development of a grounded theory which is "constructed out of the data *and* the interpretation of the researcher" (Cooper, Chenail & Fleming, 2012, p. 6, emphasis added), based on the researcher's reduction and interpretation of the data, through the coding process.

4.3.2 Open coding

The challenge for the researcher in the initial or open coding stages was to approach the data with an open mind, seeking to discover what they revealed, rather than imposing a priori interpretations. Therefore, it was important to keep returning to the theme of "perceptions of learning" in order to identify these perceptions within the data and, by so doing according to Cooper, Chenail and Fleming, (2012), keep the analysis open but focused:

Focused coding means using the most significant and/ or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57-58).

The initial stage of coding generated eighty-three (83) open codes (see Appendix 2). The next stage in the coding process entailed identifying the relationships and/or themes among these open codes so as to reduce them to a smaller and more manageable number of axial

codes. Axial coding is based on a strategy developed by Strauss and Corbin (1994) for bringing data together again in a coherent whole (Charmaz, 2006) “to organize and reduce the great deal of data, further sampling each piece of data into themes with similar properties, and consequently lead[ing] to theory formation” (Chong & Yeo, 2015, p. 261). Using the method of constant comparison, the original eighty-three (83) open codes were thus reduced to six (6) axial codes. Constant comparison is “an analytical process in which incoming data is compared with existing data in the process of coding and category development” (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 177). GT’s strategy of using “in vivo” codes (Charmaz, 2006, p. 55), or codes distilled from participants own words, which is done in order to convey participants’ meanings more clearly and directly, was also drawn upon during the process of open coding. Examples of concepts and ideas culled directly from these “in vivo” codes appear in the summary of findings in Chapter Four indicated by quotation marks.

The final stage of coding involved the generation of selective or theoretical codes (Charmaz, 2006), giving rise to the final categories and the “key conceptual category around which the remaining codes can be organised” (Cooper, Chenail & Fleming, 2012, p. 5). This “key conceptual category” is the core category, and “encapsulates a phenomenon apparent in the categories and sub-categories...and the relationships between these” (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 177).

GT recommends using the gerund verb form in order to capture the lived experience of participants (Charmaz, 2006). The five (5) theoretical categories identified were (1) communicating (2) working with others (3) information processing (4) critical and creative thinking and (5) being personally effective and these categories were found to map directly onto the key skills identified for the second-level senior cycle curriculum (see Appendix 2). These categories were then reduced to a final three categories (1) communicating and collaborating (2) thinking and learning and (3) developing self-efficacy, giving rise to the

conceptual category “perceptions of the WISS in creating an arts-learning environment supporting students’ learning”. This is in line with Hetland et al., (2013), and others, in “placing the arts learning at the core of the curriculum” (Stevens, 2002, p. 20).

4.3.3 Memoing

Memoing is a central feature of the coding process in GT. Memoing is the documentation of thoughts and ideas about the data, the data collection, and the theory generation process. Memo writing is “a fundamental analytical process...that involves the recording of processes, thoughts, feelings, analytical insights, decisions and ideas in relation to a research project” (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 179) and is an intrinsic and ongoing feature of GT. Memoing begins very early on in the data collection process and continues until the end of the study. These memos can be about the collected data or the research process itself, or they can be used to record emergent ideas and concepts (Chong & Yeo, 2015, p. 261). Analytic memos were generated from early on in the research process and some of these memos fed directly into the final research findings. They helped in identifying common themes, pointing towards possible theoretical frameworks and finally in linking the findings to the theoretical framework. Memo writing can also be a way of keeping the researcher alert to personal bias and to the particular sensitivities or taken-for-granted aspects within the research findings or the research process. In this instance, memo writing also acted as useful speculative tool for teasing out issues that arose during phase two of the research process around the case studies.

4.3.4 Research Statement: Exploring students' perceptions of learning in and through the arts through while participating in the WISS

The case studies, which were conducted through the WISS, were designed to elicit students' perceptions of learning, and more specifically, their perceptions of arts learning. The aims of the study were to (1) to explore the learning and meta-learning of students through the exploration of their perceptions of their own learning, and to place this alongside the perceptions of students' learning by their teachers and the artist-writers (2) identify any gaps or convergences in these perceptions, (3) speculate about what these might reveal with regard to the affordances offered by arts learning, and (4) to situate arts learning in the context of the current second-level curriculum, having regard to the specified, enacted and experienced manifestations of curriculum at work in the second-level classroom.

4.4 Research methods

Case studies were chosen as the most useful and appropriate approach for conducting classroom-based research in the second-level environment and the research methods or "tools" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 15) chosen as the most suitable means of gathering the kinds of data sought by the study within this environment included semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, which were video-recorded as an aide-memoire by the researcher, focus groups and documentary evidence including background research on the WISS, and examples of student writing and journals, which were to be kept by students and teachers.

4.4.1 Focus groups

It was decided that focus groups with students would provide the richest and least intimidating method of exploring students' perceptions of learning, as the aim of the focus

group is to gather information on “the perceptions, beliefs, traditions and values of its participants” (Calderón, Baker & Wolf, 2000, p. 92). Although it had been initially envisaged that focus groups would take place at the beginning and end of the case studies, it became apparent during the pilot study that conducting focus groups before the students had participated in the programme would provide no useful data as “you actually had no expectations of what you were going to do” (Student Focus Group (1) Park School: Appendix 5). Therefore, student focus groups were conducted at the end of the project in late spring 2013 and again two years later (with a number of the same students) in late spring 2015, thereby providing an unanticipated longitudinal dimension to the study with, which helped to enrich the findings and clarify a number of questions in relation to students’ perceptions of their leaning as a result of participating in the WISS.

4.4.2 Interviews

Interviews are one of the basic tools of qualitative research and they fall into three types: unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). Whilst unstructured interviews, which are not pre-specified in any way, are considered by some (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004) to provide the richest source of material and give interviewees more control (Charmaz, 2006), semi-structured interviews were chosen for the study, as they facilitate “some consistency over the concepts that are covered in each interview” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 39). This format allowed for a number of pre-selected topics to be addressed, without imposing a rigid structure; thus the interviews could move beyond the topics that were addressed. This method was considered the most appropriate in eliciting the perceptions of teachers and artist-writers, and also in allowing for the emergence of unsought-for data which might enrich the overall findings and valuable findings to do with the practical issues impacting on how the WISS functions at second level

did emerge during the course of the interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used throughout the study with all of the interviewees.

4.4.3 Non-participant observation and the use of video recording

Observation is a more time consuming and demanding technique for collecting data. One of the important reasons for conducting observations is verification. Although people may relate events from one perspective, something else may in fact be taking place, either known or unknown to the participants, and “the only way to know this is through observation” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 40). Observation was crucial to this study, as the researcher wanted to gain a more informed understanding of the operation of the WISS across a range of students, teachers, artist-writers and schools. The observations were video recorded as an aide-memoire and in order to counter the insider knowledge and possible bias of the researcher. This entailed a video camera being placed beside the researcher (at head height) so as to capture, insofar as possible, the researcher’s point-of-view in order that she would be able to revisit and recapture this original point-of-view when looking back over the video-recording to analyse the findings. This was achieved by projecting the footage onto a blank screen, thus enabling the researcher to re-experience the event and allowing in-depth mining of the recordings, by focusing on similar or different issues or aspects across or within sites at each viewing. By video recording the observations across the four case study locations, the researcher was able to directly observe the details of what took place in each location and to compare and contrast these details, both within and across the research sites, thus gaining access to rich data. These data could then be cross-checked and verified with participants through interviews and focus groups, as well as by continually referring back to the filmed observations, in order to check detail and accuracy. Being able to compare the data across case studies contributed to the initial open coding of data which generated eighty-

three (83) open codes, thus beginning the process of identifying themes and generating theory.

Non-participant observation on the part of the researcher played a significant role in data collection and theory generation. Therefore, the idea of video recording the case studies presented itself as necessary from the outset in order to be able to revisit individual sessions as often as possible to check for detail and accuracy and to generate alternative readings of events or material. This was considered particularly necessary for the researcher given her long involvement with the WISS. All of the audio and video footage was transcribed and all of the video material was viewed a number of times and memos written long before any coding was undertaken. Filming of classroom-based sessions and interviews, as an aide-memoire, yielded rich data and enabled the checking of the data for accuracy, the reviewing of details of classroom observations, the capturing of the artist-writers' pedagogy and students' responses to it and, most usefully for the researcher, provided the opportunity of re-immersing herself in the actual atmosphere of the classroom.

4.4.4 Teacher and student journals

Whilst the methods chosen, including the use of video recording, worked well the attempt to have students and teachers keep project journals did not. The researcher was curious to see whether they might prove to be an accessible and useful source of information but made no reference to them beyond setting them out as part of the initial agreement to participate in the research. This suggests that there may have been a lack of clear instruction on the part of the researcher with regard to what was being asked of students and teachers, particularly given the level of cooperation that was forthcoming with all the other aspects of the research process. It also suggests that a more structured and creative way of integrating these journals (which were perhaps perceived as instruments of evaluation) into the research process was required, in order to obtain 'buy-in' from both teachers and students.

4.5 Research design

Adopting a GT approach, this three-phase, qualitative study included a pilot phase, which was conducted in one of the case study schools, followed immediately by the four cases studies, in two urban and two rural post-primary schools in locations in the east, west and south of the country and in the midlands. Phase one of the study, which took place between December 2012 and March 2013, was the pilot phase, which preceded the case studies and consisted of four workshops, and interviews with a participating teacher and a participating artist-writer as well as interviews with two identified experts, a non-participant artist-writer and Ciarán Benson, author of the Benson Report (1979). Phase two, which took place between March and August 2013, represents the main data collection phase of the study. This involved the observation of twenty-three (23) one-and-a-half hour creative writing workshops conducted by an artist-writer in the company of a collaborating teacher; three student focus groups and fourteen (14) individual interviews with participating teachers and artist-writers, a focus group with the staff of the WISS and an interview with Martin Drury, then Director of Strategy with the Arts Council. Phase three represents the longest phase of the study, commencing in February 2014 and concluding in April 2016. It comprised (6) identified expert interviews, as well as three (3) follow-up student focus groups, in three of the four research study locations, with a number of students who participated in the original workshop in spring 2013, including one student interview (with a participating student who had gone on to third level). Students who participated in this follow-up round of interviews, did so in a totally voluntary capacity and all interviews were held in the original case study locations, barring the interview with the third level student. The fact that the follow-up student focus groups were conducted some two years after the original case studies (spring 2015) meant that they generated rich longitudinal follow-up data. This aspect was unanticipated in the original research design and was one of the

definite benefits and outcomes fostered by adopting a GT approach to the study. Interviews were also conducted with, Theo Dorgan, former Director of Poetry Ireland, and John Coolahan in his capacity as Chair of the Higher Implementation Group for the *Arts-in-Education Charter*. There were also interviews with one further identified non-participant artist-writer and three identified non-participant teachers, one of whom worked at third level in the area of teacher education (see Figure 4.2).

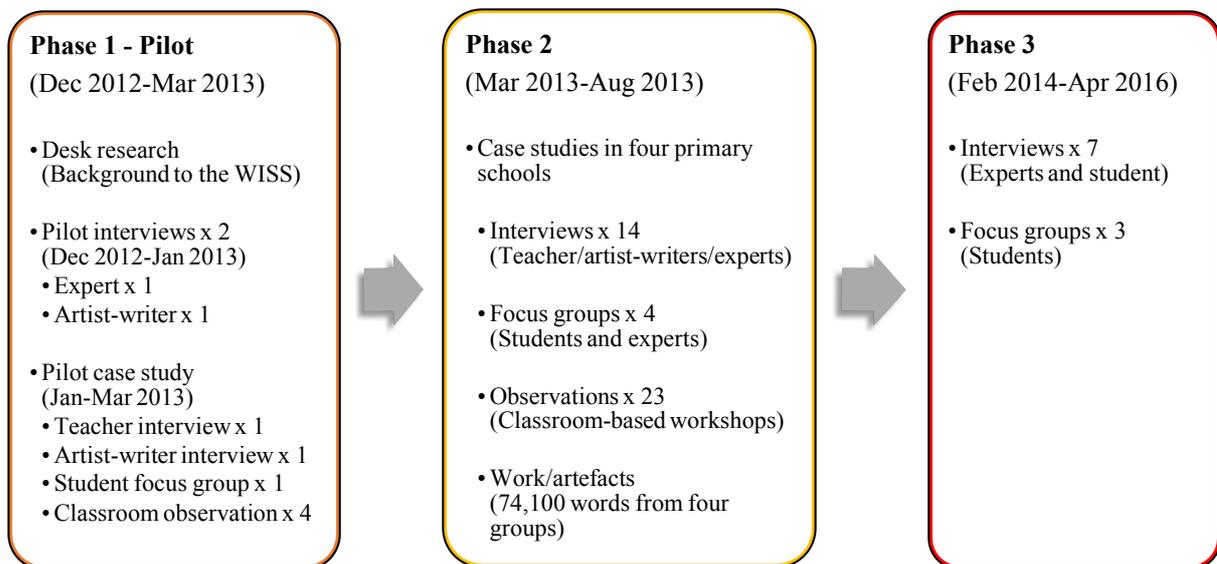


Figure 4.2 Outline of three-phase research design

4.5.1 Pilot phase

The pilot phase of the project began on 20 December 2012 and ended on 20 March 2013²⁰ and included the piloting of the research instruments. Researching the background of the WISS, an interview was conducted with Ciaran Benson, former chair of the Arts Council and author of the Benson Report (1979). This interview was undertaken in order to contextualise the WISS, founded in 1978, within the wider cultural landscape of the time.

²⁰ See Appendix 5 for full schedule of interviews, focus groups. See Table 4.2 for full list of artist-writers' sessions in schools.

This interview was followed in January 2013 by an interview with an artist-writer (now living abroad) who had been a regular participant on the WISS, in order to explore perceptions of the WISS with an artist-writer for the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted between January and March 2013, including the piloting of the following research instruments:

- observing and video-recording of four one-and-a-half-hour writer-in-residence sessions/workshops;
- interviewing one artist-writer and one teacher; and
- conducting a student focus group.

4.5.2 Setting up the pilot study

The location chosen for the research pilot was one of the four schools chosen for the case-studies. It was selected on the basis that as the artist-writer residency was starting earlier than the others (16th January, whilst the rest were due to begin in March 2013) and was running for longer (nine one-and-a-half hour sessions rather than six), it seemed in keeping with a GT approach of doing more in-depth work with a smaller number of participants, to use it as the location for the pilot phase. The site for the pilot study was a large, rural, coeducational school that had been participating in the WISS for four years. The already established familiarity and trust facilitated access to the school setting and allowed the researcher to observe the operation of the WISS in a location in which it had become part of curricular provision. The artist-writer involved had also previously worked with the WISS and with the school. The teacher in the pilot school was young and relatively new to the school, but was aware of the WISS as an annual residency which had been

embedded into the school timetable by a supportive principal. Case study interviews were conducted on-site.

4.5.3 Issues identified during the pilot phase

Issues that emerged during the pilot phase included logistical issues such as poor lighting and acoustics, the limitations of the physical space within the classroom itself, and particularly the lack of available and suitable spaces for filming and conducting interviews and focus groups. Interviews also posed difficulties for the teacher in terms of timetabling. One of the strategies to emerge from viewing the film footage was the idea of using a fixed camera, positioned so as to capture, as nearly as possible, the point-of-view of the researcher-observer, in order to help as an aide-memoire when writing up observations. Other issues flagged during the pilot phase included observed and reported elevated anxiety levels, on the part of both the teacher and the artist-writer, owing to the presence of the researcher and the camera, and the effect of the presence of the camera on the class dynamic. All of these issues reappeared in other locations, to either greater or lesser extent, but tended to fade quickly in most cases.

4.5.4 The presence of the camera

The presence of the camera was significant for students, although this did vary across locations and over time most students became accustomed to and then ignored its presence. The longitudinal element of the study helped to give an insight into the students' experience that it would not have been possible for them to articulate at the time; however, two years later, their reflections when asked about the effect of the camera, they were quite clear that, whilst some students found it initially quite unsettling, others found that it was not an issue and most forgot about it.

4.5.5 Knowledge and understanding of the WISS

The pilot study sought to identify how the WISS was perceived generally by teachers and schools. There was in fact very little knowledge or understanding of what it might mean to have, or to work with, an artist-writer in the classroom on the part of those teachers who had no previous involvement with the WISS. As previously noted almost all of the participating students displayed a similar lack of knowledge and understanding. This included understanding the impact on classroom dynamics, particularly between the teacher and students, the pervasive influence of the high-stakes environment on students' expectations of themselves, of the workshop, of the artist-writer's pedagogy and of the teacher's role within that altered dynamic. As the findings indicate, for those teachers who were less or unfamiliar with the pedagogical approach employed in the creative writing workshop, including (1) collaborative group work (2) a focus on oral work in the initial stages of the construction of narrative, along with (3) the seemingly slower pace of students engaging in writing, these ways of working employed by the artist-writers were the cause of anxiety and confusion on the part of some teachers and students.

The differing pedagogies used by the artist-writer and teacher, and the way they affected students' expectations (see Appendix 3) and teachers' perceptions of the creative writing programme, as both process and product, were tied into the 'rigour' of the demands of the high-stakes learning environment, and to the teachers' own approach to learning and teaching. There was the perception of the need of some students for more direction in their learning in terms of learning intentions and learning outcomes:

Talking about the process of writing is one thing, writing something is a different thing. If they were writing a little bit more every week, maybe the task of getting the work from them wouldn't be as much of a struggle ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

to a perception that it is the openness of the learning involved in the creative writing process that is its particular strength, so that students are:

feeding what they learn from that, very kind of open process, because it is a very open process in our experience here, in to, ultimately, the exam... terribly simple but very wonderful work ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

There was a general perception that students' reading habits have changed, in that "they don't read, and there is a presumption on the writer's part that they read" ('Ann' teacher interview (1), Bay school: Appendix 5), and therefore, students are bringing less in terms of their own resources in reading to their work with the writer. On the other hand, the teacher from Hill School expressed the view that the most important factor in the creative writing process was the learning environment itself, so that "if you can eliminate angst [from the learning environment] you have an atmosphere that learning can happen" ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). These contrasting observations serve to illustrate the range of views of creative writing on the part of teachers in the study.

The differing pedagogies used by the artist-writer and teacher, and the way they affected students' expectations (see Appendix 3.), emphasised the importance of establishing a common frame of reference between the teacher and the artist-writer with regard to learning intentions and learning outcomes.

These issues became more defined over the course of the research and many of them were subsequently addressed in the interviews and focus groups conducted during the third phase of the research. Thus the study proved highly successful in identifying and foregrounding issues to be addressed in order to improve the future implementation of the WISS. This is in line with the GT approach which allows for and encourages the continued collection of data until the categories are saturated.

4.6 Phase 2: the case studies

The main body of the study, which comprised four case studies in four different second-level schools, took place between March and May 2013. It included the observation and videoing of twenty-three (23) classroom-based workshops, comprising some thirty-five (35) hours observation by the researcher (see Table 4.2); fourteen (14) individual interviews, six of which were repeat or second interviews with three of the four participating teachers and three of the four artist-writers (see Appendix 5). Due to unavoidable circumstances one teacher was unavailable to participate in the first round of teacher interviews and similarly one of the artist-writers was unavailable to participate in the second round of artist-writer interviews. A similar issue arose in connection with one of the student focus group, resulting in three student focus groups rather than the anticipated four. The three focus groups consisted of a mixed group of eight (8), an all-girls group of sixteen (16) and a mixed group of nineteen (19) participating students. The large numbers in two of the focus groups reflect the fact that they involved the whole class present on the day, because the schools could not facilitate the splitting up of the class due to staffing and accommodation difficulties. This aspect serves to highlight the logistical issues involved for schools and teachers, in running a programme such as the WISS, and which surface as part of the findings in Chapter Five. Group composition was also affected by the fact that teachers were reluctant to exclude students from participating in the focus group. The composition of the focus groups was decided by teachers, following discussion with students, but ultimately depended on the availability of students on the day. The importance of this became very clear in the longitudinal follow-up, in which students themselves volunteered to participate, with the teacher merely helping to facilitate the focus group by acting as a go-between with the researcher and in organising a venue within the school for the focus group to take place. These follow-up focus groups, although small, were in line with the experience of others

(Tynan & Drayton, 1988), who suggest that it is more important that the participants be well chosen and have “some common interest” (p. 6) rather than that the group be a particular size, although an optimum size of six to eight is generally recommended (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008, p. 293). Focus groups are considered more useful for gaining insight into a phenomenon than for providing statistically relevant data (Gill et al., 2008), and will not work where “participants are uneasy with each other, and will therefore not discuss their feelings and opinions openly” (Gill et al., 2008, p. 293). This was the case in one instance, where the group comprised a larger “naturally occurring” (Kitzinger, 1995 p. 300) highly competitive group including slightly more boys than girls. The majority of the feedback during the initial focus group consisted of the repetition of the word “boring”! However, members of this group also produced some of the best student writing and provided insightful data as part of the longitudinal follow-up two years later.

4.6.1 Research sample

The research sample (see Table 4.1) was a purposeful selection taken from among the forty-five (45) second-level schools that successfully applied to the WISS to have a writer in residence between January and June 2013.

The applications came from schools in twenty-one (21) counties and included requests for artist-writers in the areas of children’s fiction, the short story, creative writing, poetry, storytelling and drama. No schools were solicited for the study, and all complied with the usual criteria, as prescribed by the Poetry Ireland WISS guidelines. In this way the initial sample reflected the general cohort of second-level schools applying to the WISS, although we do get applications from small primary schools for support for single one-off writer visits.

The schools selected for the case studies were a purposive sample selected from these forty-five (45) second-level schools. The selection took account of demographic

considerations and did not include fee-paying schools, focusing on the general school population and reflecting the profile of applicants to the WISS. All the schools were large second-level schools, catering for between 600 and 900 students. The sample included two rural and two urban schools, two of which had previously engaged in writers-in-residence projects with the WISS and two of which had never participated in the WISS. Consideration was also given to gender balance, and the sample included three co-educational and one single-sex school. This selection was justified on the basis that single-sex schools comprise 29 per cent of second-level schools (see Table 2.1 from CSO statistics for 2015 which records a total 209 out of 692 schools as single sex), reflecting the pattern of applications to the WISS. The final consideration for participation was the school's willingness to take part in the research. Participating students were chosen by the school in advance of the application and this selection process along with the aforementioned breakdown of schools, was seen as generally reflective of the mix of students and schools that have participated in the residencies Scheme since its inception as part of the WISS in 2000 (see Chapter Two).

In the final purposive sample, two of the case studies involved TY students, again reflecting the general profile of second-level applications to the WISS writer-in-residence programme (O'Hanlon, 2002; Gallagher, 2005; Poetry Ireland, 2015). This is because the it is a good fit with TY mirroring the focus on aesthetics education:

The aim is to develop an awareness and appreciation of visual art, music, dance, drama, photography, etc. Critical reading, viewing, listening and exposure to the living arts are worth promoting (DES, 1994/1995).

The other two case studies included a 5th year group and a mixed-age/mixed-class group, comprising students from 1st to 6th year, with an interest in creative writing (see Table 4.1). This again reflects the cross-section of second-level schools participating in the WISS.

Table 4.1 *Research sample*

| | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| School | Urban secondary | Urban secondary | Rural secondary | Rural vocational |
| First time in scheme | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Location | East | West | Midlands | South |
| Overall students | | | | |
| Girls | 897 | 271 | 427 | 288 |
| Boys | 0 | 484 | 387 | 307 |
| Total | 897 | 755 | 814 | 595 |
| Participating students | | | | |
| 40 boys / 51 girls | | | | |
| 1 st year | - | - | 16 (12 girls) | - |
| 2 nd year | - | - | 2 /1 boy | - |
| 3 rd year | - | - | 3 /2 girls | - |
| Transition year | 26 (girls) | 24 (2 girls) | 5 /3 girls | - |
| 5 th year | - | - | 1 /girl | - |
| 6 th year | - | - | 2 /girls | 25 (14 boys) |
| | - | - | 3 /girls | - |

Table 4.2 CASE STUDY Schedule: January – May 2013

| | Sub-genre | Class | Location | WISS Status | School | Dates |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Pilot Study (Case Study 1) | Playwright in collaboration with an English subject teacher | 5 th year | South | Repeat WISS School | Co-ed Vocational | 16.01.13 23.01.13 30.01.13 06.02.13 |
| Case Study 1 | Playwright in collaboration with an English subject teacher | 5 th year | South | Repeat WISS School | Co-ed Vocational | 20.02.13 27.02.13 20.03.13 10.04.13 24.04.13 |
| Case Study 2 | Children’s writer/ Illustrator in collaboration with an English subject teacher | Mixed | Midlands | New to WISS | Co-ed Secondary | 05.03.13 11.04.13 16.04.13 23.04.13 30.04.13 14.05.13 |
| Case Study 3 | Children’s Fiction / Young Adult Fiction writer in collaboration with a non-English subject teacher/ Media Studies Teacher | TY | East | New to WISS | Girls’ Secondary | 08.03.13 15.03.13 22.03.13 12.04.13 10.05.13 17.05.13 |
| Case Study 4 | Poet/dramatist in collaboration with an English subject specialist teacher | TY | West | Repeat WISS School | Co-ed Secondary | 22.04.13 29.04.13 13.05.13 20.05.13 20.05.13 24.05.13 |

Participants in the four case studies included ninety-one (91), mainly senior-cycle students (see Table 4.1), four teachers and four artist-writers (see Table 4.2). There were two male teachers and two female teachers and two male artist-writers and two female artist-writers. Two of the teachers had over thirty (30) years teaching experience each, one had sixteen (16) and one teacher had less than five (5) years' experience. Three of the teachers were English teachers and one was a specialist English teacher, who taught only English, to all levels. Two of the English teachers were also writers, one of whom was a published poet, but the youngest teacher did not report engaging in writing. The fourth teacher was not a teacher English, but was involved in teaching the humanities, with specialisms in literacy and media studies, and was also a writer. Two of the teachers had previous involvement with the WISS, whilst two had no previous experience of the Scheme.

The four artist-writers were all well-established writers who had been engaged with the WISS for at least twenty years (giving them a cumulative total of over 80 years' experience of working in classrooms). They included a poet who was also a dramatist, a fiction/children's fiction writer, a playwright, and a children's writer and illustrator. Two of the writers had previously worked in the schools in which the case studies were conducted, whilst two were working in the case-study schools for the first time. All of the artist-writers involved in the case-study schools had been selected by the schools themselves, either through previous experience of working with them, on the recommendation of a colleague and/or by referring to the Writers-in-Schools online Directory.²¹

Over the course of the three-year period between December 2012 and April 2016, a number of identified individuals and representatives of organisations were also interviewed in order to explore the current educational and cultural contexts within which the research

²¹ See <http://www.poetryireland.ie/education/writers-directory/>

was taking place, beginning with Ciarán Benson, the author of *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* (1979), a seminal and still current report on arts in education in Ireland. Other interviewees included Martin Drury, Director of Strategy with the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon, who clarified the fact that the original impetus behind the WISS in 1978 was provided by David Collins the then Literature Officer with the Arts Council, who saw the Scheme as having a definite literary provenance. John Coolahan, as a scholar of educational developments in Ireland and in his capacity the chair of the Higher Implementation Group for the *Arts in Education Charter*, provided a focused historical lens which enabled a deeper perception and appreciation of the more recent developments that have taken place in second-level education in Ireland. The former director of Poetry Ireland Theo Dorgan, under whose auspices the WISS came within the ambit of Poetry Ireland in 1996, provided the background to this significant development for the WISS and for Poetry Ireland. The education staff of Poetry Ireland provided invaluable corroborating information on the operational aspects of the WISS. Further identified expertise was also sought from two second-level teachers (who had almost sixty (60) years' teaching experience between them), one in English and one in arts-based educational programming, as well as the expertise of a practitioner in teacher education at third level, who is also an artist and a scholar within the field of arts education, was also sought. Finally, two experienced artist-writers, a children's writer and storyteller, who have both had a longstanding involvement with the WISS were also interviewed in order to access their views and understandings of the operation of the WISS (see Appendix 5 and Table 4.2).

4.6.2 Data handling

Data for the study were gathered through:

- non-participant classroom observations, which included the use of video;
- work produced by participants;
- semi-structured interviews with participating teachers and writers, at mid- and end points of the residency;
- focus groups with students;
- memos comprising researcher observations and shorter, unstructured conversations with school staff and others; and
- longitudinal follow-up research comprising three student focus groups (see Appendix 5) and one student interview two years after the original case studies were conducted.²²

Data were collected in the form of video and audio recordings and were kept on portable hard drives and USB sticks in a secure location. All consent forms were retained and logged, and incomplete forms were returned for completion. All interviews were transcribed and logged as well as being kept in clearly coded files for easy retrieval in both audio and visual formats. The files were securely stored at a private location and were not retrievable by anyone except the researcher. Field notes and memos were made during each workshop, and following each interview and focus group. Between the four participating schools, students' writings generated some 74,157 words and are presented as an example of the work that students can produce as part of a creative writing workshop (see Appendix

²² Individual interviews with students were never envisaged as part of the research process and this single student interview was the only instance. It was an unanticipated outcome of the longitudinal research process and occurred because the student, who was over eighteen years old and had progressed on to third-level, had done particularly well on the creative writing programme and, therefore, I was interested in her reflections on the programme.

1, *The Alchemist's Niece*, a collaborative novella written by seven students). However, as mentioned earlier, the attempt to have students and teachers maintain journals as part of the process proved entirely unsuccessful and none were submitted to the researcher on completion of the project. The major learning for the researcher from this was in highlighting the need for more preparation and lead-in time for this aspect of the data gathering with teacher and students and the need to anticipate both students' and teachers' ambivalence about this aspect of the process. In hindsight, and for the future, this approach to data gathering – in the form of learning journals- would be best handled by the teacher and the artist-writer agreeing to build it in as part of the overall work of the creative writing programme.

4.7 Reliability

Conducted in three phases and using a GT approach, the research involved an iterative approach, with the focus for each phase of the research arising out of the previous phase. In this way it was hoped to remain as close as possible to the participants' viewpoints. Employing the method of constant comparison to distil these perceptions allowed a theory of arts learning to emerge which was then tested against the existing social constructivist and aesthetic theoretical models of learning. To this end triangulation of data was achieved through observation, interviews and focus groups and the production of work by students.

Conducting the research over two years and in three phases allowed for prolonged engagement, and also served to distance the researcher from the data. The creation of this distance was necessary as the researcher was in effect researching herself (dealt with further in Section 4.7), since she had designed, managed and delivered the WIR since its inception in 2000. In order to minimise and/or avoid the threat of researcher bias, fortnightly meetings with a critical friend were scheduled, as part of the supervision process. The awareness of

the need for vigilance in relation to researcher bias also became one of the main reasons for adopting a GT approach, in that it allowed the data to speak for itself, and build towards a theory of arts learning. The longitudinal follow-up, which took the form of interviews and focus groups with small groups of students from three of the four participating schools, two years after the completion of the residencies, was crucial in highlighting emerging themes and informing the researcher's approach to analysing the data.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines, as laid down in the St Patrick's College, Drumcondra Code of Ethics²³ and as outlined by the 2002 Code of Conduct²⁴ (Creswell, 2009), were followed. The purpose of the research was clearly stated in cover letters and plain-language statements (see Appendix 4), which were given to all participants including students, parents /or guardians, teachers, principals and artist-writers, along with all reasonable assurances of confidentiality. The researcher was described as a student on the EdD Programme in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and informed consent forms were included with the cover letter and plain language statements (Robson, 2011). It was emphasised that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any stage of the process. Details of the intended use and possible publication of the research were discussed with all participants. Permission of the school authorities was sought at, and for, all stages of the research, particularly around the use of video, and issues of confidentiality and anonymity in relation to the use of images were discussed with the participants. This was also necessary in order

²³ <http://www.spd.dcu.ie/site/research/UndergradGradFinalAug2012.rtf>

²⁴ www.apa.org/ethics

to be in compliance with the *Poetry Ireland Child Protection and Welfare Policy*²⁵ and in line with the researcher's role as designated child protection officer for the organisation.

Ethical clearance was sought from St Patrick's College before any research commenced and, following college ethical guidelines and procedures the researcher underwent Garda vetting. The stipulations involved in this clearance were strictly adhered to and following preliminary contact by phone and a follow-up school visit by the researcher, the plain language statements and parental consent forms were sent to the principals of the selected schools. This was followed by plain-language statements and consent forms for the participating students, teachers and artist-writers (see Appendix 4). The researcher spoke to the individual teachers, artist-writers and student groups and explained the nature of the research and that the data would be anonymised and the video footage used for research purposes only. This was particularly important as there was considerable general anxiety among students with regard to where and how the footage would be used, owing to the emergence of serious issues of cyberbullying (O'Neill, 2013).

4.8.1 Ethical Dilemmas: conceptualising the role of the researcher

One of the main ethical dilemmas for the researcher was the inappropriateness, as researcher, of intervening in situations or making suggestions which would have improved the quality of the experience, particularly for the students. This would have been entirely consistent with and appropriate in her role as education officer, and not being in a position to intervene resulted in the persistence of some issues which might otherwise have been successfully addressed at an early stage. This would have included ensuring clear communication between the teacher and the artist-writer prior to the commencement of the programme. It would also have included seeking regular feedback from both the teacher

²⁵ Poetry Ireland child Protection and welfare Policy <http://www.poetryireland.ie/education/resources-for-teachers/>

and the artist-writer during the course of the residency in order to address issues as they emerged. As the education officer cannot be present in all situations, and as we are aware that issues do arise from time to time, this foregrounded the need for more and better CDP around artist teacher partnership and collaboration in the delivery of arts-based programmes, whilst also the need for more information to be made available on the operation of the WISS itself. Therefore, being unable to intervene in this situation did not invalidate the experience as a valid WISS experience. Rather, to this end, the research was successful in indicating the strengths and weakness within the way the WISS currently operates. Separating the role of researcher from the role of education officer was one of the main areas of learning for the researcher, in learning to distance herself from the immediate situation in order to gain a more informed perspective, enabling her to move beyond her current assumptions about, and knowledge of, the WISS. This fulfilled one of the original aims of the study, which was to gain a deeper understanding of the way the WISS operated in second-level schools.

A second ethical issue involved balancing the rights and needs of the researcher with the rights and needs of Poetry Ireland, the organisation through which the research was carried out.²⁶ Since the research was carried out on and through the WISS, the researcher was professionally obliged to ensure that the individual programmes were given as much support as possible, particularly as there was the expectation or understanding that this support would be forthcoming. This placed the researcher in an awkward position on a number of occasions, particularly in relation to teachers and in some cases artist-writers, in trying to maintain the balance between providing appropriate levels of support, whilst seeking not to contaminate the research itself by skewing the data through addressing various issues as they arose.

²⁶ See Appendix 6 for Letter of Approval to carry out the research from Poetry Ireland Director Joseph Woods.

4.8.2 The use of video recording and video material

Further ethical dilemmas were raised by the decision to use video as a method of documenting the case studies. As a matter of course, informed consent forms were completed by students, their parents or guardians and school principals, but the researcher was aware of the ethical issues of using video recording with minors and the immediate issues it presented with regard to child protection as well as issues to do with the preservation of anonymity and confidentiality (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, pp. 150-151). Therefore, it was decided to use the video material as an aide-memoire only. Film footage was stored on portable hard drives at a secure, private location, and was accessible to the researcher only. All the participants were given an assurance that no further use would be made of the video material without their explicit permission. It was agreed that contact would be made with students through their schools (or former schools) should this be necessary and all film data will be disposed of within two years of the completion of the project.

4.8.3 Researcher as research instrument

I don't think that anyone who has not engaged in analysis of qualitative data can truly understand how the process engulfs you. I heard people speak of being 'immersed' in the data and 'drowning' in data. I think it is somewhere between these two extremes. In reality you wallow in various depths of analysis. You don't see it coming with grounded theory. Analysis starts with the initial data collected and before you know it you are surrounded by it – physically, mentally and emotionally (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 173).

It was following these experiences that GT presented itself as a possible methodological approach to the study. GT acknowledged and validated the experience, theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 78) and interpretive role of the researcher, particularly within the constructivist tradition, and also in terms of the impossibility of "value neutrality....[since] knowledge is not neutral, nor are we separate from its

production” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 185). GT provided the researcher with a way of understanding and conceptualising the research experience and her role within it:

It is not a researcher’s perception of an event that matters. Rather, it is what participants are saying or doing that is important....it is not my knowledge that is relevant but *the meaning...to the participants and how those meanings are formed and transformed* (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, pp. 78-79, emphasis added).

Theoretical sensitivity, or the researcher’s ability to recognise data, or those elements of the data that might be relevant to and contribute towards theory, arises precisely from the experience and insider knowledge of the researcher (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 12). GT’s location of the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher in this way allowed for, validated and utilised, the researcher’s dual identity as education officer and researcher. It also accounted for the researcher’s role as the main research instrument since “in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 112). Table 4.3 illustrates the interpretive role of the researcher throughout the various dimensions of the research process.

Table 4.3 *Data types and sources*

| Types | Students’ work | Focus groups | Classroom observations (including video) | Interviews | Literature review |
|--|----------------|--------------|--|------------|-------------------|
| Sources | | | | | |
| Student | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | |
| Teacher | | | ■ | ■ | |
| Writer | | | ■ | ■ | |
| Expert | | ■ | | ■ | |
| Researcher observations/ interpretations | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |

4.9 The audit trail

The audit trail or “record of decisions made in relation to the conduct of research” (Birks & Mills, 2012/2015, p. 177), for the coding of data is laid out in Appendix 2. The data was mined from the transcription of all the recorded classroom observations, interviews with teachers and artist-writers and focus groups with students, and had been transcribed as they were completed. These transcriptions provided the material for the initial open coding of the data and threw up eighty-seven (87) open codes. Experts, including two teachers and two artist-writers who were not involved in the case studies, but who had been involved in similar programmes, were also identified and interviewed in order to triangulate the findings. These interviews were also transcribed as they occurred. Data were triangulated by comparing student, teacher and artist-writer, initially using the eighty-three (83) open codes. This involved an iterative process of moving between the large number of codes to the more manageable set of axial codes as they emerged over time, since GT is designed with this very process in mind, to make large amounts of data more manageable (Chong & Yeo, 2015, p. 261).

Following the process of open coding, which was completed in the summer of 2014, no further coding was carried out until after the completion of the follow-up focus groups with students in May 2015. This turned out to have been an important decision as it was these final focus groups with students, conducted two years after the original case studies, which provided the researcher with valuable insights into the original material, indicating possible ways of engaging with the data, leading to richer interpretations. This timeframe, from the completion of Phase two data collection in schools, until the final interview with John Coolahan in April 2016 (see Appendix 5), also facilitated a review of the literature, which was not commenced until June 2013 and carried on through to the end of the writing up process December 2016, in accordance with the GT approach.

4.10 The strengths and limitations of a GT approach

GT is a qualitative research approach that provides the researcher with both flexibility and rigour. This flexibility allowed the researcher and the research methods to change and develop in response to the situation and the data. Since GT is located firmly within the qualitative research paradigm, it acknowledges and privileges the experience of research participants and it is the data provided by participants that in turn becomes the developed GT or (more likely) the extended understanding of the subject of the research.

GT is an approach that seeks to explain social phenomena from the point of view of those most closely involved or affected by those phenomena and it is particularly suited to research topics where there has been little previous research. Therefore, since the study sought to explore the perceptions of learning of participants, GT's assertion of the situated and contingent nature of knowledge provided a research strategy that enabled the researcher to identify, gather and triangulate data through methods that were appropriate, particularly given the classroom-focused nature of the research, and less invasive. It validated the use of a small research sample, privileging quality over quantity. In particular it validated and accounted for the insider status of the researcher as being a strength of, rather than a threat to, the research in its use of the researcher's theoretical sensitivity to emergent issues. In this way, it accounted for and theorised the role of the researcher as the main research instrument, and thus contextualised the interpretive role played by the researcher in GT. It imposed rigour on the researcher in terms of delaying the literature review until after data collection and initial coding, thus avoiding the imposition of a priori findings or conclusions about what would be found in the data.

The limitations of GT are the obverse of its strengths in many ways. It is based firmly in a qualitative research paradigm working off a small research sample and depending on in-depth research with participants. The generalisability of the research may be

restricted, and the insider status or embeddedness of the researcher and the theoretical sensitivity generated by the researcher's insider status are also factors which may influence the interpretation of data. Further, the degree of researcher agency involved in the interpretation of data can also be seen as possibly giving rise to researcher bias. However, as all research relies on some form of interpretation, this is not necessarily seen as a negative factor in GT, since ultimately "the actual production of theory...requires a final analytical leap" (Birks, & Mills, 20012/2015, p. 173). The question of the experience of the researcher in using GT was also a factor, since although the researcher had carried out previous qualitative research, this did not involve a GT approach and, therefore, was the cause of some anxiety on the part of the researcher. However, the immersive nature of the data analysis, which extended over three years, went some way to addressing this issue.

4.11 Conclusion

Given the nature of the study in trying to access the perceptions of learning of students within the high-stakes environment at second-level, GT provided the necessary combination of flexibility and rigour. It allowed the researcher to conduct research within a highly structured second-level environment, across three groups of participants, including students. Furthermore, the iterative nature of the GT approach to data analysis meant that the data could be added to as necessary and the constant comparative method ensured a rigorous set of findings, whilst also safeguarding against researcher bias. The next chapter lays out these findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Students' Perceptions of Learning and Perceptions of Students' Learning

5.1 Chapter outline

The first section summarises the findings of the study, particularly in relation to the importance of the learning environment and the distinctive pedagogies employed by artist-writers. It also briefly considers how these pedagogies promote self-efficacy. There follows an overview of students' perceptions of the learning environment, the curriculum, of creative writing and of product, and their perceptions of arts learning. The third section summarises teachers' perceptions of students' learning, and in particular the learning environment, the curriculum, teachers' perceptions of arts learning, transfer, self-efficacy and the teachers' perceptions of the importance of students' writing, along with their view of the teacher artist-writer partnership. The fourth section deals with how artist-writers perceive their signature pedagogies and the learning environment of the school, the importance they accord both the affective domain in arts learning and students' oral language development in promoting collaborative learning. It also records artist-writers' perceptions of the importance of the product of arts learning as well as their views on the artist-writer's partnership with the teacher.

The final section analyses the findings regarding perceptions of learning, the instrumental focus of the senior-cycle curriculum and the competitive group dynamic of the high-stakes learning environment. It concludes that more, and more developed and focused,

ITE and CPD is required at second level to deepen the understanding of arts learning and studio thinking which underpin the pedagogies employed by artists/artist-writers, as well as the dynamics of the artist–writer partnership with the teacher. The work produced by students as part of the creative writing programme was seen to function as a product/ artefact and means of understanding and meaning-making for each of the participant groups – students, teachers and artist–writers – whilst also broadening students’ perception of art, the artist, art-making and the art world. Therefore, in the context of the creative writing programme, art ‘happened’ through students’ active participation in the process of producing writing. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the function of students’ writing, and contemplates the question of when and in what circumstances students’ work becomes ‘art’?

5.2 Introduction

The chapter presents and analyses the findings the study. The research sought to extend the understanding of students’ arts learning²⁷ (learning in and through the arts) in the second-level classroom by exploring students’ perceptions of their own learning and others’ perceptions of students’ learning. As outlined in Chapter Three, the case studies recorded the perceptions of learning of ninety-one students, their teachers and the artist–writers who worked with them, through classroom observation, focus groups and interviews.

Students’ perceptions of learning in and through the arts were circumscribed by their experience of the high-stakes learning environment at second level, with its focus on standardised assessment and the necessity for students to produce work in order to validate their learning. Therefore, students’ preliminary conceptualisations of the arts-learning

²⁷ The term “arts learning” will be used throughout the chapter to denote both learning in the arts and learning through the arts unless otherwise stated.

environment were influenced by their experience within this high-stakes environment, which was characterised by high levels of anxiety around the time demands of the specified curriculum. The perception was that the arts-learning environment was ‘different’, being more open, with permission to make mistakes and to learn from these mistakes. The absence of assessment meant that there was a freedom from prescription, unlike other aspects of the curriculum. Students liked the collaborative learning and group-work structure of the arts-learning environment, especially working within groups that did not know each other well. Students reported that they ‘enjoyed’ the experience of working with a ‘professional’ writer and of being involved in critiquing their own and others work within the safety and structure of the creative writing workshop.

Teachers’ perceptions were circumscribed by the demands of the high-stakes environment, both on the students and on themselves, which gave rise to logistical difficulties and pressure, particularly around time and the curriculum. Teachers were, therefore, sometimes conflicted with regard to what they wanted and what was possible. It was notable that second-level teachers generally received little or no ITE, CPD or inservice training in arts in education, and consequently the levels of arts literacy and knowledge of arts in education were generally low. Teachers’ expectations were that students would learn additional writing skills and techniques and for some teachers there was the expectation that students would also produce finished pieces of writing. Teachers recognised the benefits of arts learning for students’ self-efficacy, particularly their self-confidence, self-expression and risk-taking and their ability to work collaboratively with others.

Artist–writers were primarily conscious of thinking of themselves as ‘writers’ rather than teachers when they worked with students. Therefore, they were primarily concerned with introducing students to the ‘craft’ and ‘graff’ of the creative writing process. Artist-writers also felt that it was important for students to have a finished ‘product’ in order to

validate their involvement in the creative process. They saw oracy and group-work as fundamental to students' learning, both in and through the arts, and they were sensitive to the pressures of the high-stakes environment, on both students and teachers, and on the life-stage issues for teenagers. Artist-writers were aware of creating a learning environment in which the conventions were those of the creative writing workshop and the art studio, rather than the classroom, in order to support students learning to engage in the making of art. Their pedagogy focused on collaborative learning strategies, encouraging risk-taking through group feedback mechanisms, and the belief that all students could benefit from participation in an arts-learning environment (see Appendix 3, Student/Teacher/Artist).

5.3 Summary of findings

The quality of the learning environment in forming students' views of learning, particularly in relation to the "specified curriculum" (McCormick & Murphy, 2008, p. 3; Kelly, 1977/2009), emerged as a dominant theme among students, teachers and artists. This theme was related to students' perceptions of the "signature pedagogies" of artist-writers, as identified by Shulman (2005) and discussed by Thomson, Hall, Jones and Sefton Green (2012). These signature pedagogies included, in particular, a collaborative approach to learning and group-work, and this emerged as a defining characteristic of the arts-learning environment. Students', teachers' and artist-writers' perceptions of the arts-learning environment differed significantly from their perceptions of the high-stakes learning environment at second level. Students perceived it as different (there were over seventy references to 'difference' (see Appendix 3 Students) to the high-stakes environment, which they perceived as being "all about the points" (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). Teachers perceived arts learning as having wider application across the curriculum, whilst, in line with Beghetto (2013), artist-writers identified "access to their

[students'] imaginations" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5), rather than providing them with information, as the defining characteristic of arts learning (see Figure 5.1).

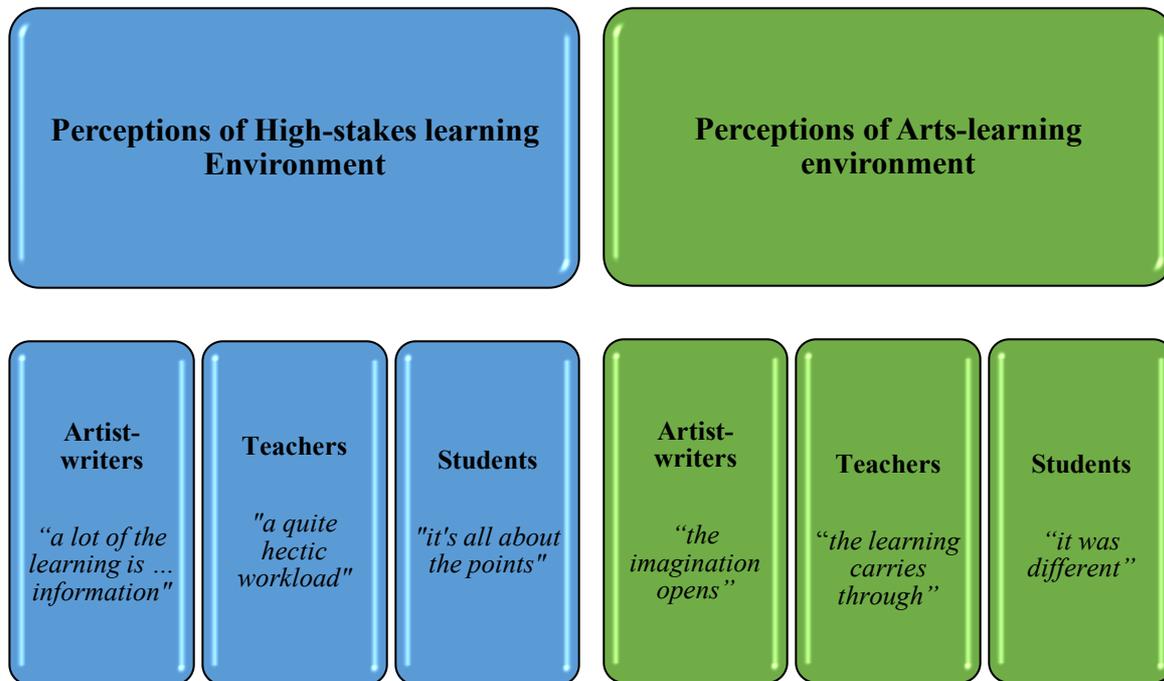


Figure 5.1 Participants' perceptions of high stakes and arts-learning environments

In line with the grounded theory approach, the study acknowledges the perspective of the researcher and the writing itself as interpretive acts and, therefore, the chapter presents an interpretation of findings rather than merely an outline of "acts and facts" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 183).

5.4 Students' perceptions

As previously noted, students' expectations of the arts learning environment were circumscribed by the experience of the high stakes environment at second level. Students, therefore, expected that as part of the creative writing programme they would be carrying

out individual writing tasks and “would be writing in sessions. I thought he would be coming around to us while we were doing it” (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5). They were taken aback that “it was more kinda thinking about it and then writing. Like, the writing was the last thing to do” (Student focus group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). The biggest single difference in the signature pedagogy of artist–writers was that sessions were structured like the traditional creative writing workshop. This dialogical, interactive and collaborative model of learning, with instruction taking the form of hands-on demonstration by the artist-writer, was perceived as differing from students’ classroom experience. Therefore, it involved “more talking than writing” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5), with students working together in small groups, whereas they had “thought we would just be sitting and writing the whole time and we weren’t, we were, like, talking for most of the time” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). The workshop structure also challenged students’ perceptions of writing and the writing process, because “I wasn’t expecting to be working in groups” (Student focus group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Students’ initial expectations tended to be focused on the acquisition of writing skills, rather than on the creative writing process itself, and they reported that “some of the things we were doing, a lot of people already had the skills, so we were just working on developing [them] because they were already amazing” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

Students’ understanding of working with an artist–writer developed over the course of the creative writing programme, and most of the students had little or no previous experience of an arts-learning environment. Students reported that they “knew we were going to be writing stories, but we didn’t know how we were going to be writing them” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis in the original). Reflecting on their experience of the programme two years later, students saw these initial expectations

of the programme as inevitable in that “there is only so much you can know. If you know too much you get a picture of what it could be like and then when it’s not that you’re like ‘what is this?’” (Student Focus Group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). Some students reported an initial reluctance to participate in the programme, admitting that “I didn’t really want to go, but now it’s like ‘oh I’m so glad I did it’ (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). In this regard students’ perceptions were that self-selection for programmes like this is not necessarily the most advisable, because the lack of knowledge of the programme would have meant that they would have missed participating because, as another student admitted “I think at the time I wouldn’t have opted in but I’m glad that I was made to do it” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). It was through the experience of working with the artist–writer that students’ initial expectations that they would not find it useful and that it might be a waste of time were modified:

I kind of expected it not to be as much of a help as it was...I went in thinking that it wasn’t going to be good, that it was going to be a doss class but it wasn’t. So I really enjoyed it (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students’ perceptions of the workshops as being beneficial were tied in with their perceptions of them as also being enjoyable.

5.4.1 The high-stakes environment

The senior cycle was described as “that daunting two-year period where it’s all about the points” (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5), and even those students who enjoyed writing felt that they “didn’t have time because of exams and stuff” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). Within this high-stakes environment (Banks & Smyth, 2015; Mishook & Kornharber, 2006; Au, 2008; Wheelock, Bebell & Haney, 2000; Deasy, 2002) students had a pervasive awareness that “a lot of the schools are grade oriented” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). They expressed a

heightened awareness and anxiety around assessment and time constraints and, in the light of the pressures of these time constraints, their perceptions of their own limitations with regard to activities such as the creative writing programme were clear and honest:

You wouldn't have the time [to participate]... It would be stressful. You wouldn't put all your effort into the work that 'Joan' [the artist-writer] was giving us and then on her part it would look like we're not trying when we just don't have the time and we would be real tired and everything. We wouldn't be able to think properly. I know that sounds real stupid but your mind wouldn't be in the right place (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Therefore, students' perceptions of learning were circumscribed by the inevitable demands on their time within this high-stakes environment, so that, as one student put it, "the best thing [about the programme] was probably learning how to put it together for the exams" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

5.4.2 The curriculum

Students' perception of the way in which the Leaving Certificate is structured encouraged an instrumental approach to the specified curriculum:

I think [creative writing] would be better, personally, as preparation for the Junior Cert because of the way the Leaving Cert is structured. It's mostly reports and newspaper articles and stuff that comes up [in the Leaving Certificate]. There's only usually one or two short stories on it and not many people attempt them because they're generally the hardest ones on it. If people do, the markers are just reading the same thing over and over again so we don't get the marks ('Amanda' student interview: Appendix 5).

These findings are in line with research conducted by Hennessy and McNamara in 2011 into students' perceptions of the "limited potential for creative and aesthetic engagement in the

[Leaving Certificate] classroom” (p. 206). They also reflect current notions of curriculum as noted by numerous scholars including Williams and McDonald (2014) who note “the perceptions of...[the] community regarding the superior value of the traditional academic curriculum” (p. 245). Kelly (1977/2009), amongst others (Sugrue, 2004; Gleeson, 2009; Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin, 2009; The World Bank, 2005; Luke, Woods and Weir, 2013; Keeling, 2006 and Kwiek, 2004) provides strong evidence to show that curriculum is always political.

Because of the dominance of students’ instrumental perceptions of the curriculum and assessment it was necessary for them to be able to make clear links between the creative writing programme and the curriculum in order to provide a context within which to situate the creative writing programme, particularly in the initial stages:

P1: I think it was important that [creative writing] did link in [with the curriculum] because, not particularly for me, but I think there would have been a little bit of uproar with some of the lads in the class... ‘oh why are we doing this?’ ... ‘is this really important?’

P2: Yeah, but because it was necessary, I think, that they didn’t mind it – because it was necessary. Even though it didn’t feel like we were doing something for our Leaving Cert...they knew that it was necessary for the Leaving Cert and I think that’s why, I think they didn’t mind as much. They knew it wasn’t a doss lesson.

P1: It was important. Like, if I went into Biology or something like that now and started doing things completely off the point I’d – we’d all, be asking ‘why are we doing this?’ (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Therefore, students expected, at least in the initial stages, and under the general rubric of ‘getting ideas’, to acquire techniques and strategies to improve their writing skills for the Leaving Certificate.

5.4.3 Creative writing

Students' perceptions of 'creative writing' in the company of a 'writer' were both created by, and based on, their ideas about 'writing'. The expectations of students were based on the traditional model of "vertical instruction...by authorities" (Contu & Wilmot, 2003, p. 294), around the acquisition of writing skills and technique, "because when you are writing the essay for your Leaving Cert, you need to know how to get ideas" (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5). Where these expectations resisted development and persisted, students expressed disappointment with the artist-writer, who was described as not "giving us ideas for our stories, like we could have a picture and build a story from that" (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5). In the majority of cases students' perceptions and expectations shifted as they began to work with the artist-writer, and as student's individual perceptions began to change and develop, particularly as the small groups coalesced and they became more accustomed to the arts-learning environment of the creative writing workshop.

Students' expectations varied, from those who "weren't really expecting much at all" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5) to those who "wish[ed] we had done more writing" (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). All of this meant that students' initial understanding of the programme focused on the act of writing itself, because, as one of the teachers pointed out, "the very title of it prescribes the fact that the outcome has to be a piece of writing" ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). This teacher also pointed out that some students "are very literal thinkers" ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). This was reiterated by one of the artist-writers also suggested that the difficulty for students lay in the particular concept suggested by using the word 'writing':

the word writing is the wrong word because in schools people associate writing with handwriting, and with filling pages, and it's all about the physical act of writing ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

An important part of the learning for students, therefore, was in getting to grips with what Thomson, Hall, Jones and Sefton Green (2012, p. 10) and Shulman (2005) call the "signature pedagogies", which here is meant to indicate those distinctive practices of the artist-writer. Within the study there was a cohort of students for whom these pedagogies remained unsuccessful and who continued to couch the experience solely in instrumental terms:

P1: I thought we would have a story and then he would give us stuff to put into it and help us along the way but we just had to do it ourselves. We got no help...

[I thought] You would have your own story written but then he would come around to you and help you improve it but that didn't happen...

I thought it would be, like, because we were hoping to improve our creative writing but we didn't really get anything out of it apart from learning about new novels.

Nothing that would help with the Leaving Cert (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5).

A small minority of students did not move beyond this level of engagement. This was significant since part of students' developing self-efficacy involves a growing ability to take risks and tolerate ambivalence. Bandura (1977) identified a strong sense of self-efficacy as providing learners with a sense that problems are challenges to be overcome, thus enabling them to recover more quickly from their disappointments. It also supports learners in being able to take the risk of displaying interest and commitment and to take on challenges, despite the possibility of being out of step with others. A low sense of self-efficacy on the other hand gives rise to the opposite response, so that challenges are avoided, and there is no recovery from disappointment. In the case of those students who remained focused on the

acquisition of skills and techniques, this instrumental approach inhibited their ability to participate in the programme, bearing out Dweck's theory that "confidence in their intelligence is a good predictor of their academic achievement *when they are not facing difficulties*" (2000, p. 52, emphasis added).

5.4.4 Students' perceptions of 'product'

Students' expectations of creative writing constituted a particular set of perceptions which were only displaced by engaging with the artist–writer:

P2: ...the first week we came in we didn't start writing stories....

P4: We didn't do any writing for the stories, we just read books....

P4: Yes, we wrote it at home. We didn't really do it in class (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5).

All students perceived that the production of work was important, even when "it was a bit awkward and a bit self-conscious, [and] the finished products weren't really there but, I don't know, we just had really good fun trying to get them organised and get them all set up" (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). The 'product' is here understood as the product of learning, or what students produce in order to demonstrate what they have learned. Students reported that "the best thing was actually seeing the finished product of, like, the whole class" and in "learning how to put it together for the exams" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). However, over time students' perceptions of what they had learned became clearer:

when we had only just learned how to do it and we hadn't practised...our stories were just, like, washing over a little bit. But, when you...keep writing them every week...it kicks in (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

The role of the 'product' (regarded as an artefact when viewed from the point of view of an art form) was important for students on a number of levels. They reported that it maintained

the connection to the curriculum, and it provided evidence of their participation in the creative writing programme, which had a certain cachet within the school and also created a context from within which they could begin to see their own development as writers.

5.4.5 Students' perceptions of arts learning

Students' perceptions of the arts-learning environment were that "it was enjoyable" (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5), although some students described initial feelings of reluctance, admitting that "I didn't really want to go, but now I'm so glad I did it" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). Therefore, students' perceptions were that self-selection by students may not be advisable because "there is only so much you can know" beforehand, even with the teacher's explanations (Student Focus Group (2): Appendix 5). They reported that "You look back on it now and think, oh.....If we knew how much it could benefit us we would put everything into it" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5), whilst another student admitted that "If I was to do it again I would opt in because I know that it's good" (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

This conceptualisation reflects and illustrates the context for students' perceptions of learning, which were inextricably bound up with their experiences within a high-stakes learning environment, and consequently their expectations of learning had more to do with prescription than permission. Alerby, Hagstrom and Westman (2014) conceptualise learning "as a choreography of learning activities" (p. 12), within which the learner is inseparable from their learning environment. It was only through the experience of working with the artist-writer that students were able to move beyond their initial expectations and their doubts were overturned. Sfard (1998) has characterised learning along a continuum from acquisition of 'knowledge' to participation in a learning community. The high-stakes learning environment and the arts-learning environment can, from one perspective, be seen as representing the opposite ends of the learning continuum. However, as Sfard maintains,

the findings of this study would suggest that they co-exist across the continuum, more or less strongly, at different times and in different contexts (1998, pp. 10-12)

Students reported that learning within an arts-learning environment was more open, free and collaborative. The absence of the pressure of standardised assessment was a significant factor in this: students' perceptions were of there being "no right and wrong answers" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Students felt "free to make mistakes and build on them" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5) and the learning experience was active, exploratory and "interactive. We were doing it with 'Joan' and we were getting involved...[and] you get a sense of it yourself" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Students identified the creative potential of English, contrasting it with other school subjects, suggesting that it is "the only subject you can be creative with. All the other subjects are straight up, you just learn it and that's it" (Student focus group (1), Bay School: Appendix 5). Working with the artist-writer led to students' distinguishing between "English as a subject in school, and when 'he' was there, he let you think of English as an art form" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). The artist-writer was perceived as facilitating "a class every week, where we could do something different" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5), with students suggesting that "there was just so much more freedom where you could put your hand to paper and just keep going" (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The perception of freedom linked to working with the artist-writer was similar to the perception of the enjoyment experienced by students in working with the artist-writer, a perception that was shared by students across the four case studies. This contrasted with students' perception of the Leaving Certificate curriculum as being more prescriptive. Students distinguished between being "taught for exams", and the perception that the artist-writer "taught us for the fun of writing, which was really cool" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). This

difference in the experience was illustrated by students as “having a whole week just to do an opening paragraph...[when] usually, it’d be, like, a week to do a short story so that was good” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students reported learning how to critique their own, and others’, work within the creative writing workshop:

it was really nice, every week, to be able to review what you have done so you could say ‘do I like this?’, ‘will this be okay?’, and he would say ‘Oh, yeah, this is good’ and you would get that confidence and you would think ‘oh I should have thought that way the whole time’ (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

This approach was experienced as “definitely different...more interactive. You can bounce ideas off ‘him’ and he will give you ideas” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). According to Hetland et al., (2013), “learning to judge one’s own work and working process, and the work of others in relation to standards in the field[is one of the main] habits of mind” (pp. 5/6) that students can develop through exposure to working in an arts-learning environment. This reflected students’ own perceptions of the arts-learning environment as scaffolding their developing self-efficacy in this area. Having more time to spend on their writing along with having the permission to do things differently, within a group structure that was perceived as being safe and supportive, were recurrent themes across all the case studies.

5.4.6 The arts-learning environment

Students’ perceptions of the arts-learning environment were of its being ‘really different’ to the high-stakes learning environment, being variously described as ‘very’, ‘completely’, ‘totally’, ‘definitely’ and ‘really’ different, and as giving rise to ‘different ideas’, ‘different ways’, ‘different aspects’ and ‘a whole different perspective’ for students. It allowed students to consider “English as an art form” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay

School: Appendix 5), and not just as a subject. This was observed to be attributable to the arts-learning environment established by the artist–writers’ pedagogical approach and also to the structure of the creative writing workshop. In one case study location, the artist–writer began the workshop every week by reading a poem, and students commented that “it was a good idea to start with poems every day because that, kinda like, helped [you]...to get creative...[because] it helps you to get into the class” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Their teacher also remarked that:

they loved [it]... as a teacher...[and] something I shared with my colleagues, it reminded me of the old days when we would say the prayer to settle them down. This now was reading a poem and it settled them down and yet *it settled them down in terms of becoming a group and in another way raised them up in terms of getting them to engage*, to give their opinions, to assess.... evaluate the poem (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Students’ experience was of its being “very open” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5), and “when ‘he’ was teaching us it didn’t feel like learning. It was very relaxed” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). Conversely, students admitted that working with the teacher was associated with the perception that “this must be based on exams so I must be marked on this” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5), pointing to students’ preconceptions based on their experience of the high stakes environment at senior cycle. When interviewed some two years later, students’ reflections on their perceptions of working with an artist–writer went some way to identifying the elements that contributed to this experience of difference. There was the perception that working with the artist-writer “really broadened your mind...[and] *got us concentrating more and ready for fifth year*” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis

added). The artist–writer was also seen as “a professional...[who delivered] constructive criticism” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

The personality of the artist–writer was identified by students as important, particularly the enthusiasm for the subject:

[Her] “bubbly, bubbly personality” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5);

P1: “Bubbly, bubbly, bubbly...he would come in, just a ball of energy, ‘right, this is what we’re doing’, get enthusiastic about it. I think that’s great.

P2: Eccentric. He’s the embodiment of what you think an artist is going to be ...[able to] sympathise.... Definitely his personality was beneficial for the whole course itself” (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Working with the artist–writer contributed to building students’ sense of self-efficacy. This began by addressing students’ fears and misgivings around the basic challenge of writing itself, developing to the stage of students being confident enough to display their writing in public. The artist–writers’ enthusiasm acted as a spur to students’ engagement, so that “once she got enthusiastic...she gave us more faith in our ideas, a little bit, because she was so enthusiastic” (Student focus group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). The role of the creative writing workshop in building students’ self-efficacy, therefore, began with the students’ perception of having ‘permission’ to write about whatever they were interested in, so that “a lot of people wrote stories in here you wouldn’t think would write a story at all” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). Students, reluctant to share their writing in public, reported that having their pieces read aloud by the artist–writer during the workshop changed their perceptions of their own writing:

P1: If ‘he’ read it out, he read it out in a totally different way, even though you wrote it down, it just sounded so much better and you would think ‘oh, that was

actually quite good'. I don't know, it depends how you read it, how it's read. He wasn't rude about it when he read it out. He gives proper constructive criticism.

P2: He wouldn't make you feel bad about writing...I was really afraid of that.

P1: It gives you more confidence to progressing your story and then to read it out yourself, as in the way that he read it (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students' internal policing of themselves with regard to writing emerged as an important theme in the findings. The structure of the creative writing workshop and the nature of the art-learning environment was perceived as conferring the 'permission' to write about what they were interested in, in ways that were more experimental and which allowed and even encouraged mistakes. Students reported moving from the fear of writing to a place where "we all grew more confident towards the end" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5). Students' perceived self-efficacy around writing grew as they worked with the artist-writer and what was perceived as initially "daunting...turned into a whole bonding experience. It was great. It was good fun" (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). Students' observations of the artist-writers' practices and of the ways in which they approached their own work positioned the artist-writers as mentors, modelling the practice and process of writing for students, so that "you could see that people were thinking 'oh well, he can write about something he likes, I can do that too'" (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students described the ways in which their perceptions of writing as an art form broadened and deepened through having the chance to observe professional writers practising their craft:

he used to write a lot of people [characters] speaking from Ireland and he would have all the colloquialisms and I thought that was really interesting because you don't

really think about that a lot. *And you can do that!*...You can see at the beginning when lots of people were writing it was very Americanised. He helped people bring it home to Ireland or bring it to a certain place... (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

As they became more aware of their own attitudes and preconceptions about writing, students observed changes in themselves and in their developing self-efficacy. One student said that “before the workshop I was very rigid in what I thought I could do. I don’t know why that was, but ‘he’ teaching us, that really you can just write anything, was really helpful” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). Similarly, another student described the experience of working with the artist–writer as “a kind of a confidence boost and...makes you feel a little better. And even just talking about my poetry, it’s another way to get it out there” (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).

For those students with a specific interest in writing, the experience of engaging with, and working alongside, an artist–writer gave them an insight into the world of writing, the world of the working writer, and the wider world of the arts:

I think you kinda learn, as well, that with writing, not everyone is going to like your writing... If you are selling stuff you have to be confident in it even if people aren’t going to like it. I thought that was important (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students perceived working with the artist–writers as promoting their engagement, and as a way “to spark the interest” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Students’ perceptions were that “you work differently in the class as well...you are more opinionated” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5). The artist–writer was seen as providing “constructive criticism [and] instead of just saying ‘change this’, she was helping us and giving us ideas about it” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Students reported that the nature of this learning environment motivated them “to spend time working on [y]our essays....It’s like a form of study” (‘Amanda’ student interview: Appendix 5). Reflecting on the experience, students saw that it scaffolded their learning across the English curriculum:

when you start doing creative writing, personal writing and writing descriptive essays, you can change it around. So, like, it gave you the skills to actually know what the difference is between the three and then pick which one you are going to put with each essay (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Interestingly, students’ reflections on working with the artist–writer were remarkably vivid and detailed when re-interviewed two years later, appearing to have been sharpened by time and distance, such that there was a fresh quality to the way students spoke about their experiences, candidly admitting that “We didn’t really realise, like, how good it was” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Students reported an enhanced sense of self-efficacy, and saw the experience as contributing to the development of certain habits of minds:

P1: It was probably, for me, one of the most beneficial things. It just, kind of, clears your head of stuff. With lads, not being able to talk about what’s going on in their heads, writing it down...you clear your thoughts. Because, you have to structure it, how you are going to write it, so it just kind of clears out your mind. Without even having to show it to anyone or how it’s going to affect your school life or your professional life, *just being able to know that it’s alright to write things down* and clearing it out, I think, is something that came out of the creative writing and the workshop (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Students described the artist–writer’s approach as discursive and collaborative, with the artist–writer planting ideas and suggestions, encouraging students to “do your own thinking”

rather than adopting a prescriptive approach, often perceived by students as more of an injunction to “do it this way” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Students found themselves in an arts-learning environment where they experienced the rules and permissions as being different. In particular, working alongside the artist–writer revealed the conventions of the art form (and of English as a subject) and the arts world to students and served to break down students’ preconceptions of artists, the arts world and celebrity culture, rendering them less exotic and more familiar for students:

P1: I think it’s like the permissions thing again. I think a lot of people would think that ‘Oh, nobody from [here] is going to be a major writer’...But, once you see somebody else who’s already done it, you say ‘oh...maybe I want to be that person.’

P2: It kind of does make you realise that the opportunities are sometimes closer than you think and stuff (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Engaging with the artist–writer required of students the willingness to move beyond their comfort zones. This entailed exploring the use of figurative rather than literal forms of writing, learning to shift their perception of, and their attention to, the obvious and the clichéd, and to adopt more imaginative frames of mind:

P1: It was difficult because...it wasn't based on anything ...you knew yourself, it was just basically coming out of what you thought...[you] wanted to put on paper (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Students sometimes found the freedom of the arts-learning environment and the lack of perceived rules to be disconcerting:

P1: I wasn’t sure of what I could or couldn’t do...

P2: Yes [I agree], in general it was hard sometimes to know what she was looking for. It was kind of strange (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

Consequently, students' perceptions of learning, influenced by their experience within a high-stakes environment, ranged from a purely instrumental approach on the part of some, to the development of a greater understanding of the writing process and its rules and imperatives on the part of others and, in some cases, to the development of a writing voice and the exploration of a writing identity and persona. The arts-learning environment, as experienced through participation in the creative writing programme, emerged as a significant influence on students' perceptions of learning (see Figure 5.2).

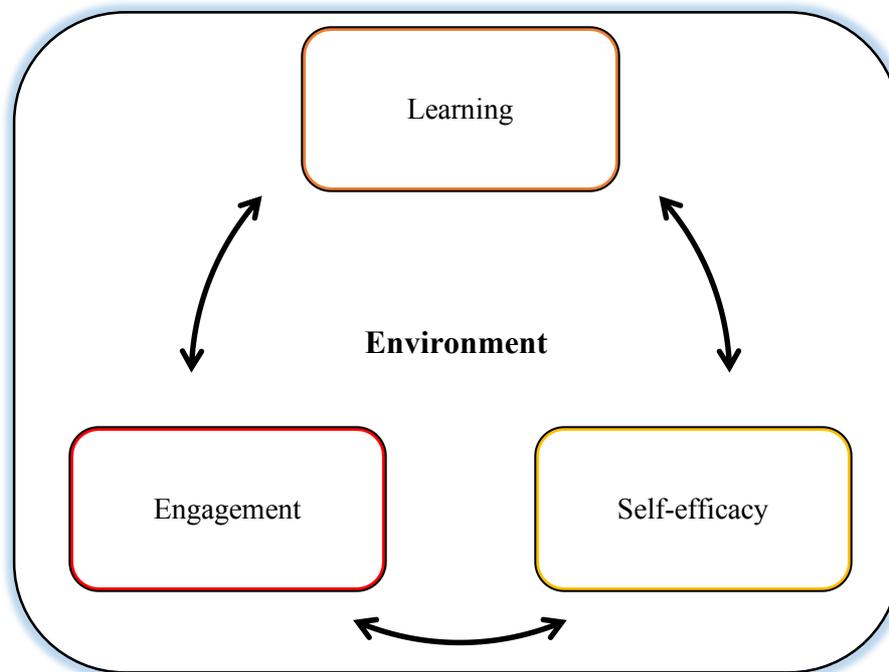


Figure 5.2 Students' perceptions of the learning environment

5.4.7 Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning emerged as a quite distinctive feature of the arts-learning environment. Working with the artist-writer and other students in a collaborative group-work setting, students' understanding of the writing process became more sophisticated and nuanced. Their focus shifted from a preoccupation with getting 'ideas' and the plot line, to

focusing on the craft and the process of the writing itself, indicating a growing sophistication in students' understanding as both readers and writers:

coming up with ideas was easier, because like, we were in a group, but I think the actual writing part was very difficult because everyone obviously has different writing styles. Maybe someone would want to, like, go with a certain character and write in the first-person narrative, but, like, someone else would want to go a different way with it. So I think that was the harder part. Whereas coming up with all of the ideas for the story that was quite easy, because we were getting so many different ideas (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

The interactive and collaborative nature of the learning environment was constantly referred to by students. Their perception was that it was “easier, like, working in a group” (Student Focus Group (1), Park School: Appendix 5), and that “team work” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5) was “more fun” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5), and this perception of its being ‘fun’ to work in an arts-learning environment was referred to by a large number of the participants. Their overall perception was that “the most important bit was to get into groups and work with others, writing your story, meeting new people and communicating more” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Students perceived group-work as facilitating creative and expressive learning through the quality of the personal encounters and communication within a collaborative learning environment. This collaborative learning approach was structured around group-work whereby students were broken into small groups of between four to six students. This created an environment conducive to learning, giving students the opportunity to listen to each other, and to have their ideas taken seriously within a respectful and secure setting. Students perceived group-work as facilitating a learning environment based on equality and mutuality, because through “teamwork...you were getting everyone’s point of view. I think

that helped us” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). This contributed to students’ developing self-efficacy and identity work. Students perceived that “*you learn individuality*. Everybody is different, like. You could see things from a whole different perspective, like, than your best friend even” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis added). The group context enhanced students’ sense of self-efficacy because it was perceived to facilitate and promote engagement, which was particularly significant when it came to receiving and responding to feedback, particularly critical feedback, on their writing. They saw the artist–writer as offering “proper constructive criticism” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5) for *their* consideration and judgement, engaging them in both self- and peer-assessment and dialogue, and by discussing or ‘workshopping’ their own work with them individually and within a group context.

Students identified “bonding” (Student Focus Group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5) and “getting to know people” as a significant function of small group-work, because it involved giving and “get(ting) respect from a person who has probably done more [writing] than you have” (Student focus group (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). It was also seen as being particularly important “to write with people you wouldn’t usually go for...[because] you get to see things from their perspective as opposed to...people that you have something in common with” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Overall, therefore, students’ perception was that group-work provided them with the opportunity for self-expression and a safe place within which to engage in the complex work of becoming more socially and emotionally literate:

P1: I just think the best thing about it was when other people were reading out their stories we gave our criticisms as well. He included us in, saying what things could be done better and what things could be done differently so you are learning from other people’s stories as well.

P2: I just really enjoyed that it was a group thing. No-one felt left out or anything. People weren't bullying other people by saying 'that was rubbish'. It was 'you should write this here'. It was just helpful. I have improved so much....

We all grew more confident towards the end, we were saying 'listen to mine, listen to mine' (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5) (see Figure 5.3).

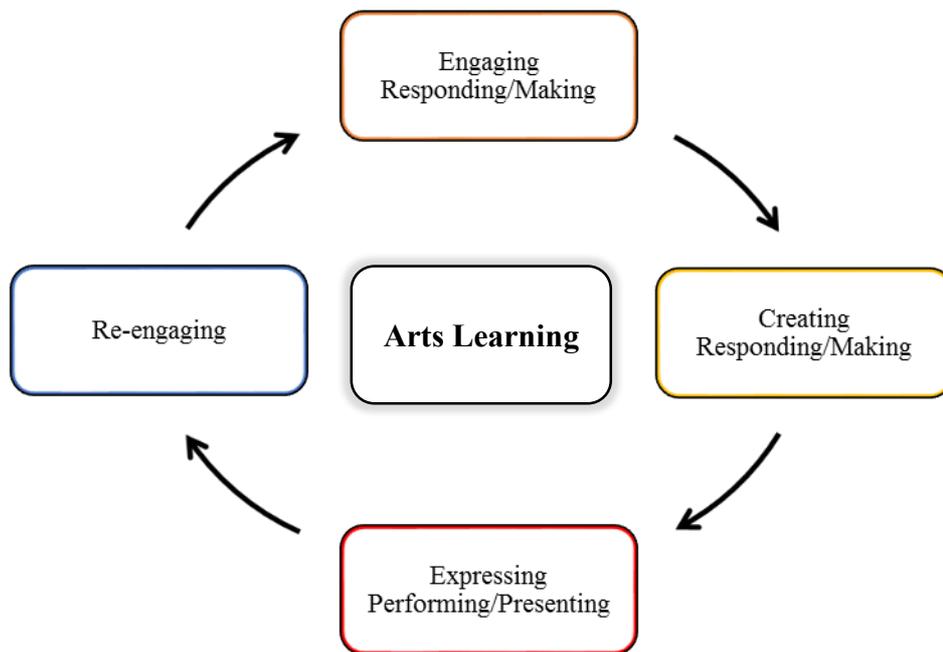


Figure 5.3 Students' perceptions of arts learning

Re-interviewing students two years after their participation in the creative writing workshops it was clear that a significant number had moved beyond their former reactions to their experiences of school to a place of reflection and integration from where they could both identify and empathise with their younger selves. The fact that they were able to bring such remarkable clarity and detail to their recollections of the short time (six weeks) they had spent working with the artist-writer, leads to the conclusion that there is a need to conduct further research with students on the cognitive-affective dimension of the arts-learning experience.

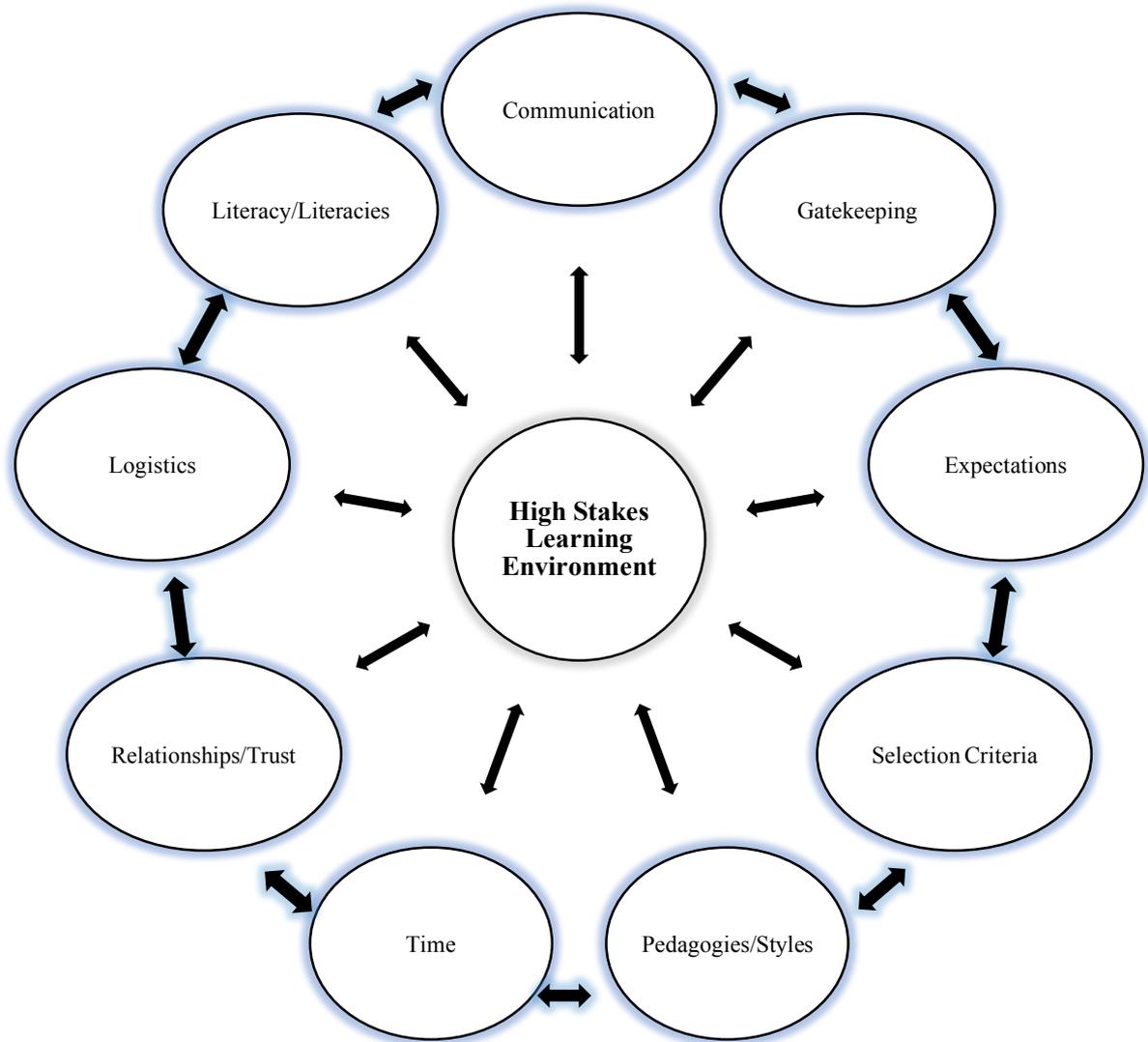


Figure 5.4 Perceptions of the factors affecting the learning environment

5.5 Teachers' perceptions

5.5.1 The high-stakes learning environment

Teachers displayed a nuanced understanding of the influences of the processes of the arts-learning environment on students' learning, whilst also acknowledging the demands of the specified curriculum on students' time and attention. Their perceptions of students' learning were inevitably influenced by the demands of the high-stakes learning environment in which they operated and its "already quite hectic workload" ('Ann' pilot teacher

interview, Bay School: Appendix 5), which does not easily accommodate an arts-based programme (see Figure 5.4). Therefore, in order to create a space within the demands of an already overburdened curriculum, the creative writing programme was generally presented as supporting the English syllabus, and as underpinning and providing creative approaches to students' literacy and language development (an aspect that remained unchanged from the rationale documented by O'Hanlon in 2002).

This rationale underpinning the creative writing programme was perceived as particularly important for "management and senior management in...[addressing] the literacy problem" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Schools generally contextualised creative writing in terms of the national literacy strategy (DES, 2011b), as part of a whole-school approach to literacy and language development, and its contribution was perceived in terms of "the literacy skills that we are developing...not particular to any one subject" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

5.5.2 Time constraints and assessment

The focus on the specified curriculum was directly related to the time constraints it imposed on teachers in preparing students for the Leaving Certificate. Transition year (TY) was perceived by teachers as offering the best opportunity for senior-cycle students to engage with a programme such as the creative writing programme, particularly because the programme lends itself to the modular format adopted by TY:

the writer visiting the transition year class is always a very popular module, every year, for some reason, *because, I think, of their freedom to express [themselves]* ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Time 'poverty' emerged as a determining factor in the provision of arts-learning opportunities within schools. Apart from the pressure on teachers and students to cover the syllabus, this time pressure included the time of day, negotiating class times with other

teachers and school management, as well as determining the most suitable the time of year to run the programme. In all cases “the timing wasn’t great. I don’t know particularly when the best time would be...You wouldn’t want to be doing it the first couple of weeks in September, then if you are into October you are into pre-mocks (‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5). It was observable that although the general perception was that the autumn term offered the best opportunity to schedule the creative writing programme, somewhat alleviating time pressures on both teachers and students, the issue of the school calendar provided one of the biggest obstacles to the running of the creative writing programmes that made up the case studies for the research.

5.5.3 Arts learning: a complex array of learning outcomes

Overall, teachers’ perceptions of students’ engagement in arts learning were positive. Teachers involved in the case studies identified students’ learning as occurring across the cognitive–affective, expressive and technical dimensions of learning. Teachers reported that students were “highly motivated.... [and] really enjoying it” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Teachers observed the technical or skills-based dimension of students’ learning as comprising one dimension of a much more complex array of learning outcomes, including higher-order thinking skills such as literary sensitivity, literary reception and expression, habits of mind and learning dispositions and students’ ability to engage in risk-taking. One teacher who had been involved with the WISS over a long period outlined her perceptions of students’ learning:

Well the learning is creative....They learn how to write better. They learn how to express themselves better in writing. They develop an awareness around the writing process and very specifically character creation, setting, those elements of the story. They learn to be more confident. They learn to be very proud of what they have written...They learn how to work harder at something because he sends them back

to revise things that could be written better. So they learn about that process of writing and editing and re-writing and re-drafting. They learn how to be an audience as well...Some of the braver ones learn how to ask him questions as well ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Another teacher, involved with the WISS for the first time, was equally positive:

they are allowing each other to speak. They are listening to each other. They are participating. Very often you find somebody on the fringe. My observation is that they are all involved in this ...They can see, again, the application to other subjects, that's what is coming across to me and maybe actually one of the things is that I see them smiling walking out the door. And I know students aren't that, not normally, enthusiastic about classroom activities. They are going out looking very happy and I think that's a good sign as well ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

The perception of students' enjoyment and the fact that "there was no sense of fear" ('Olive' teacher interview: Appendix 5) were perceived by teachers as key features of the arts-learning environment, creating "an atmosphere that learning can happen" ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5), as students "relaxed and got into the whole creative side of it" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

It's a win/win for everybody, you know. The students are hearing a different voice, they're learning different techniques, developing their skills there, it's spilling over to everybody in the school community and then on an individual basis, I'm having a nice time because I am watching, observing and learning ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Teachers perceived students as engaging enthusiastically, and "they didn't lose interest" with the teacher reporting that students expressed the view that "it was something that they

were honoured or.... lucky to have been offered” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Some teachers perceived arts learning as supporting and promoting a range of literacies including reading and writing, digital literacy, visual, emotional and social literacies as well as oral language development. It was therefore seen as having application across the curriculum, since “literacy really is so much the base of everything” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5). It was, moreover, perceived as being of interest to a broad range of subject teachers, particularly in the light of the reform of junior cycle (NCCA, 2016a, 2016b), with its focus on modes of assessment and modular courses:

You’re looking at a whole new way of teaching and of working in the classroom and all this stuff that’s coming in now with the key skills of the new Junior Cycle, I saw that working when you were in the classroom. That whole idea of team work, sharing of ideas, of...the different roles that can be found within a group. So, really I think in most subjects, it’s suitable (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Teachers also perceived the artist–writer as modelling how the writer works which they observed as extending the learning into areas of literary concern such as identifying and developing the writing voice:

for their different stories which was a lovely concept he brought in again to our classroom. One or two of the stories he had a difficulty finding a voice, he couldn’t find it for a while and what he did was he allowed himself to sort of read it and say ‘no, no, no, that’s not the voice’ and he went back again until he found the voice (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).

5.5.4 The role of arts learning in promoting self-efficacy

Teachers' perceptions of their students were sometimes extended by their observations of students within the arts-learning environment, with one teacher saying that "I didn't expect them to be so enthusiastic about words... I've observed a different dynamic and energy than in a normal English class. They were very enthusiastic" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The teachers' perception of the reason for this was that it was "something they were interested in....[and] they were given very clear guidelines with an element of support" by the artist-writer, who created a workshop setting within the classroom, "just watching and observing and seeing if anyone needed help" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The pedagogical approach of the artist-writers was perceived as being a significant factor in creating and structuring the arts-learning environment.

5.5.5 Arts learning and risk-taking

Teachers commented on the importance of this workshop-style environment in creating the conditions which enabled students to engage in risk-taking, particularly in terms of expressive learning and the important transfer of learning involved in this for students. The arts-learning environment, based on trust in the structured workshop process and in the artist-writer, was perceived as encouraging self-expression and diminishing students' inhibitions:

they were free to give their own opinions and it wasn't under pressure...they trusted after the first session or two that was not going to happen here, that if they didn't want to contribute, they weren't going to be forced. And when you have that freedom very often people then lose all the inhibitions and they just give whatever

offering they have and that's what happened ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

5.5.6 Arts learning, group-work and time on task

Teachers' perceptions were that students' engagement with the creative writing process meant that they spent considerable time on task and "in group-work.... they focused on the task at hand and that was very interesting for me to observe" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Teachers' perceptions of time on task and how they understood it in the context of their own work were also influenced by working with the artist-writer within an arts-learning environment. In some cases teachers said that it had led to reconceptualising the way they approached their own teaching:

I have also, because of 'him' working in the classroom, changed the way I give work. So I would give them...time to plan and...to draft...to edit, re-draft. [Students produce] a better story, inevitably ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Teachers saw the group-work process as encouraging and supporting the involvement of all the students so that "they were sharing an awful lot, [and] there was no dominance" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5), and, therefore, it was not confined to "the stronger voices" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

5.5.7 Signature pedagogies

Unlike their primary colleagues, second-level teachers are subject specialists and generally receive little or no structured training in arts education either during ITE or CPD, a situation which can be seen to be an outgrowth of the development of second-level teacher education (Coolahan, 1995). Teachers involved in the case studies were keenly aware that their role as gatekeepers, and as authority figures with responsibility for the delivery of the

(specified) curriculum, impacted on their own signature pedagogies. On the other hand, the artist–writers’ pedagogy was perceived as:

a very open process....As a natural consequence of that, the ideas from which they choose or the range of ideas which are incorporated into their writing are extremely broad. They [students] then come with a huge interest and with a passion because they are choosing for themselves rather than a specific task set to a school context. I would have seen that as having had huge value. They [students] are often then able to directly translate [this] into an even more specific task which is set, so the learning carries through (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Teachers were particularly aware of the ways in which the artist–writers’ pedagogical approach gives students ‘permission’ to slow down and to focus on preparing for, and thinking about, the act of writing. As one teacher said, “I think it’s the lead-in, the build-up to it, maybe [that] is the key. That it’s not all ‘look, here’s an idea, go [and] write’” (‘Ann’ pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). Teachers saw this as a form of mentoring, which along with the freedom from assessment “kept the energy up in all the sessions” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Overall, the perception of the artist–writers’ pedagogy by teachers was that it is:

less structured than the work of the teacher. The focus...is bigger....more fluid, it runs from one thing into the next and the things that come up in between can be taken into account as well... [and] the writer’s reading tends to come from published work...real novels (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Teachers felt that they learned from the artist–writers’ approaches, sometimes in as simple a way as the choice of reading (‘real’ books), or in the use of more creative approaches to or ‘permissions’ around the way punctuation or spelling can be ‘played with’, or in introducing more challenging reading material in creative and unpredictable ways.

However, there was also a perception among some of the teachers that students were not engaged in enough writing activities during the sessions with the artist–writer:

The structure, I feel, is too loose for the kinds of students that are coming through because their attention spans are so short...they need to, I think...be more participant in it rather than observers because...an awful lot of the time...They need some element of prescription, I think (‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

For those teachers who perceived the need for a more prescriptive approach, the arts-learning environment was felt to be somewhat unstructured, thus providing an opportunity for disengagement by less motivated students. However, this perception was not widespread.

5.5.8 Transfer of arts learning to other academic subjects

Teachers saw the transfer of the skills acquired through students’ participation in the creative writing programme as ranging widely across subject areas, particularly given the literary (and literacy) and language focus of the WISS. Crucially they also perceived themselves to be learning “things that we use in the classroom subsequently” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5). Teachers saw the creative writing programme as constituting part of the English curriculum, and, therefore, as having application across the whole curriculum, in terms of reading and writing and “feed[ing] in hugely to what we do in English...[since] you want them to be readers, because reading brings an understanding and it brings people into all sorts of areas”, whilst the heightened use of language experienced in working with the artist-writer also feeds “directly into their process of writing as well” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5). Teachers reported that students themselves were also able to make these cross-curricular connections for themselves:

the application they have for all areas of the curriculum, which is something that we, as teachers, will highlight [for them] but I didn’t have to do it in this instance, they

saw it for themselves. So, for me that's real learning" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

5.5.9 The role of students' writing as 'product'

For teachers, a primary role assigned to the writing produced by students during the creative writing workshops was that of being able to observe and 'assess' students' learning through their participation in these workshops. For many teachers this learning is wide-ranging, as outlined earlier in the chapter. However, where the focus is more narrow in terms of the technical aspects of students' writing only, there was a perception on the part of some teachers (and students), particularly those who had not worked with an artist-writer previously, that a successful creative writing programme was one that issued in the production of students' writing. Therefore, an absence of regular written work, along with the slower pace of the workshop/studio learning environment, was a cause of concern for some teachers and students who wondered whether students were gaining those skills that would enable them to 'shape their work':

I still can't see the finished product...because they haven't produced anything at the moment and it's hard to see how he's going to engage with them...to see what input 'he' could have in editing their work and helping them shape their work ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

5.5.10 Teachers' perceptions of the creative writing programme

Teachers' perceptions of the creative writing programme, as both process and product, were tied into the 'rigour' of the demands of the high-stakes learning environment, and to the teachers' own approach to learning and teaching. There was the perception of the need of some students for more direction in their learning in terms of learning intentions and learning outcomes:

Talking about the process of writing is one thing, writing something is a different thing. If they were writing a little bit more every week, maybe the task of getting the work from them wouldn't be as much of a struggle ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

to a perception that it is the openness of the learning involved in the creative writing process that is its particular strength, so that students are:

feeding what they learn from that, very kind of open process, because it is a very open process in our experience here, in to, ultimately, the exam... terribly simple but very wonderful work ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

There was a general perception that students' reading habits have changed, in that "they don't read, and there is a presumption on the writer's part that they read" ('Ann' teacher interview (1), Bay school: Appendix 5), and therefore, students are bringing less in terms of their own resources in reading to their work with the writer. On the other hand, the teacher from Hill School expressed the view that the most important factor in the creative writing process was the learning environment itself, so that "if you can eliminate angst [from the learning environment] you have an atmosphere that learning can happen" ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). These contrasting observations serve to illustrate the range of views of creative writing on the part of teachers in the study.

5.5.11 Links with the curriculum

Explicit links to the curriculum were important for teachers (and for students), particularly as "it's part of the English syllabus for us, we have to teach creative writing" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5). Therefore, in this context, "having the finished product was great...It's something concrete" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5). Explicit links curricular were also important since the creative writing programme and working with the artist-writer creates an extra layer of work for the teacher:

if they are going to do it at all they will have to do it on school time.... [and] effectively I am giving over three of my five periods a week of English to this programme....I have to keep after them and I can see myself giving over more periods when we are finishing up, I can see myself giving up more time to facilitate them in their writing....Even if it is just them typing up their stuff, I still have to take them to the computer room, tell them to log onto the computer and start typing their stuff ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

The perception of more implicit links with the curriculum, in terms of students' learning, is dependent on an understanding and appreciation of the more literary aspects of English as an art form, as well as a subject area, within the curriculum. This dual perspective framed teachers' perceptions of students' learning and also the way in which they interpreted the group dynamic, the pedagogical approach of the artist-writer, and the pace of the creative writing workshop, particularly in terms of the time constraints at second level. Teachers were aware that "as a teacher you tend....to be quite exam focused" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5), but where their pedagogical approach took account of art form or aesthetic learning as well as academic outcomes, teachers' perceptions of students' learning reflected a deep understanding of learning, both in the literary art form and also in those more technical aspects of language learning involved in building up students' skills and techniques. Where teachers perceived both the aesthetic and academic components as important for students' learning, the artist-writer was seen to make a key contribution:

a writer coming in from outside, funnily enough, can get across that whole idea of imagery sometimes better than the *in situ* teacher because they are relaxed into it and they have methods of doing it. They use it in their own work, they use it in other workshops ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

These teachers were able to identify a broad range of applications for creative writing across the different subject areas. This cross-curricular application of creative writing was seen as being linked by the current focus on literacy and the development of students' reading and writing skills. Teachers' perceptions were also influenced by the perceived outcomes of the creative writing programme on students' own creative writing, particularly as it fed in to their performance in their examinations. One teacher was reassured by "another teacher...saying that the feedback she got from the mock exams, particularly on the creative side of it, was tremendous" ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). Therefore, curriculum links and the importance of the product emerged as significant for teachers' perception and appreciation of students' learning, alongside the perception and appreciation of the more implicit and process-oriented nature of arts learning and the role of the artist-writer in scaffolding this learning environment for students. A key part of this was the nature of the teacher-artist relationship or partnership which emerged as significant in shaping the arts-learning environment.

5.5.12 The relationship between teacher and artist-writer

Teachers' perceptions of the importance of establishing a good working relationship with the artist-writer ranged from those teachers who perceived the relationship as "essential to the process" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5), to those that displayed more ambivalence. This was due in part to a lack of knowledge of the WISS. Some teachers "knew very little about the actual programme. It was all new to me really" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). This can also be the result of the way schools function, in that the individual who organises the creative writing programme may not actually be the one working with the artist-writer. This can mean that there is an information deficit, as well as a lack of understanding of the programme: As one teacher admitted:

I learned from the experience, number one I can't just put somebody [else] in to work with an artist when I'm the one [organising it]... and number two I hadn't laid down proper parameters [with the artist] ('Olive' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

This meant that some teachers found that they "didn't really know a lot about it, just that it was a Writer in Residence programme" ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5), and another teacher admitted that "when I was offered the experience I really had no expectations of what it was about" ('Deirdre' teacher interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The fact that some teachers also had very little prior communication with the artist-writer was significant, with one teacher reporting that "I haven't discussed with the writer what exactly [will happen], I didn't know if it was my place to do that" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5). The importance of prior communication between the teacher and artist-writer was established from the outset of the WIR programme (back in 2000) in order to explore expectations, establish mutual understanding, and develop agreed learning intentions and learning outcomes for the creative writing programme. The study revealed that in some cases teachers had not anticipated the different pedagogical approaches employed by the artist-writer in the classroom, which resulted in somewhat of "a dilemma" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5), for teachers and their being unclear as to how to approach the artist-writer in to clarify things. In some cases the view was that the artist-writer "was in charge":

I felt that I was there to be just another person in the room, as in the person that they would feed everything back to because... 'he' was in charge of this. 'He' was the facilitator ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

A lack of understating between the teacher and the artist-writer can lead to the emergence of real difficulties in implementing the programme, as illustrated by one teacher's previous experience of an artist who had worked with a school for six years but:

left...after six years....when I left [on sabbatical because] she found herself sitting in the staff room day after day and teachers didn't engage with her because...they weren't sure exactly what she did....I was doing all that work and they hadn't the time to do it. So after six years she says 'I'm not doing this anymore' [and] that was partly my fault ('Olive' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

This experience also illustrates the importance of whole school involvement and management support. However, where the relationship between the teacher and the artist-writer is established, teachers were able to derive real benefits from working with the artist-writer around their own professional development and pedagogical approach:

There is a learning for the teacher as well...[and] it has changed how we have approached creative writing ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

A rich teacher/artist-writer relationship, based on the development of a strong working relationship between the teacher and artist-writer, provides further evidence for Shulman's (2005) suggestion that "The comparative study of signature pedagogies across professions can offer alternative approaches for improving professional education that might otherwise not be considered" (p. 58).

5.5.13 The artist-writer as a flexible, adaptable professional

Teachers perceived the artist-writers' greatest assets as being their flexibility and their willingness and ability to adapt to the demands of the second-level environment and the needs and interests of the students. Where these elements were in place teachers' perceptions were extremely positive, with one teacher relating that the "process here has just been so successful since we started five or six years ago. It really is quite astounding what has been produced and how we have been able to work on it year on year" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Where teachers felt comfortable and confident in working with an artist–writer, their perceptions were of bringing in a ‘professional’ and “a specialist...They [students] like the idea of meeting a real writer, somebody that’s not dead!” (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). The teacher’s perception was that:

we have great confidence in each other. I can walk in and I know I’m not interrupting or I can interject or I can say nothing. If I say nothing ‘he’ knows I’m not in the corner sulking or I’m not correcting tests over in the corner...We understand each other very well and it’s great (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Where teachers reported that the presence of the artist–writer in the classroom enhanced students’ learning experience, there was no perception of intrusion. Where the teacher/artist–writer relationship was more developed, the students’ learning tended to be richer and varied.

Where there was a lack of mutual understanding, teachers’ anxiety levels were greater and artist–writers received less teacher feedback. Students, however, tended to produce work in both cases but in cases where the teacher and the artist–writer had a more developed understanding, there was significant growth in understanding for the teacher who was, in turn, better able to scaffold students’ learning within an arts-learning environment.

5.5.14 Conclusion

Teachers’ perceptions of the creative writing programme as both process and product were tied in to the ‘rigour’ of the demands of the high-stakes learning environment. Teachers’ approaches to learning and teaching were, therefore, diverse. They ranged from the need for agreed learning outcomes:

Talking about the process of writing is one thing, writing something is a different thing. If they were writing a little bit more every week, maybe the task of getting

the work from them wouldn't be as much of a struggle ('Ann' teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5):

to an openness to the arts-learning process, which was perceived as:

feeding what they learn from that, very kind of open process, because it is a very open process in our experience here, in to, ultimately, the exam... terribly simple but very wonderful work ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Teachers voiced concern regarding a perceived decline in students' reading habits, vocabulary and linguistic ability, stating that:

they don't read....the majority of them don't read....[so perhaps] if they were given some kind of homework ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5):

whilst students' relief at not having to be concerned about assessment was perceived as the key feature contributing to students' learning, because:

if they were worried about me going around checking their copybook, suddenly you bring worry into it, so if you can eliminate angst you have an atmosphere that learning can happen ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

This contrasting set of observations serves to illustrate some of the concerns, breadth, complexity and professional perspectives of the teachers involved in the study, and points to a need for more focused follow-up research to be conducted with and by teachers.

5.6 Artist-writers' perceptions

5.6.1 Artist-writers' perceptions of their signature pedagogy

The creative writing workshop framework is different from the usual class structure. It is designed around a group-work format in order to encourage collaboration and dialogue between the students themselves and between students and the artist-writer. The creative

writing workshop structure is perceived as encouraging students to develop their own ideas and to harness their imaginations, an aspect of the artist–writers’ approach that was also referred to by teachers (see Appendix 3). Artist-writers’ perceptions of the creative writing workshop is that it affords students the opportunity to participate in a community of learners:

I don’t think of them as classes. I would prefer the word ‘workshop’. We are all in this together. They are given stories, they each use their own imagination, it’s not a difficult thing. It’s certainly not a ‘class’. It’s a workshop, it’s getting ideas. We throw out ideas in the beginning and they take it from there. It works! (‘Zoe’ artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

Artist–writers also perceived the collaborative learning environment as helping students to begin to engage in writing, to committing themselves to the page, and to engaging with the idea that “when you make art you take a risk” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Therefore, the learning intentions of the artist–writer within the workshops focused on students’ developing particular habits of mind and learning dispositions, such as patience, control, care and concentration, as well as a deepening knowledge of the craft of writing:

The fact that you have to order your words and choose your words carefully and justify the phrase you use and where you might write it down. There is control there. You have to learn patience of course. The concentration we spoke about this morning, the concentration of forgetting the world for a few hours, it’s just this one thing, this one job that you have to do right. You have to take care (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Artist–writers’ aims and objectives for students were focused on conveying the importance of expending effort and engaging with excellence, and in developing these habits and dispositions:

But also...by example because by beginning with the poetry, you present them with something excellent to begin with. This is an example of something that's interesting and fun and enjoyable and maybe hard, you know, and so also to learn that hard isn't necessarily bad...I don't tell them at the end 'now the moral of the story is hard is good' but...they have learnt that. And...it does move them into this space where excellence is the bar, excellence is the standard. I think that's a good thing to do ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

This was equally the case where the focus was on learning through the arts and delivering particular subject content through the medium of creative writing:

We are giving quite a sophisticated, challenging, complex approach to these [development education] issues. I'd rather get them to write something quick and fast in response to that and move on...If I tried to get one person to work on that poem and develop that poem, and work on it line by line, it not only becomes laboured and potentially it doesn't even get any better, but possibly even the theme starts to feel laboured...I think it's important...[to] just get the balance between developing them as creative writers, as imaginative writers, as being articulate in speech and in writing. *Finding a voice in speech and in writing and...marrying that with becoming more aware of themselves and others as people, as citizens in a global context. If those two things are going together, I think it's working* ('Will' artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Artist-writers' perceptions were that "it's not a class in the normal sense" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5), and 'teaching' was perceived as perhaps "too big a word. I would like it [the learning] to sink in by osmosis almost" ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). Artist-writers saw themselves as "coming at it slant" ('Will' artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). Therefore, a

significant aspect of the signature pedagogy of the artist–writer was their focus on an arts-learning environment where the focus was on “trying to teach the kids that it’s not such a bad thing to daydream and [that] to embrace the artistic side of things is not necessarily a bad thing. So, trying to introduce kids to that other world” (‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). The focus for the artist–writers was always on writing and ‘story’, on the crafting of the writing and on “How are we going to....how is this going to make a story?” I’m always thinking about the story. So I’m thinking as a writer not as a teacher” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Therefore, their focus was not so much on motivating students to improve their literacy skills, nor were they focused on assessing students’ work in those terms. The artist–writers’ focus was rather on supporting students’ aesthetic and expressive learning, and scaffolding their engagement with the writing process as they learned how to fashion their ‘stories’ and produce pieces of writing, and learnt to “step outside their own experience...and think about the reader... [particularly] because they are at that stage in their lives where they are very self-absorbed” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Therefore, the focus of the artist–writer within the creative writing workshop was firmly on crafting the writing and on the ‘story’ being fashioned by the individual student.

Artist–writers used various devices, including poems, stories, objects and games, in order to move students “out of their everyday lives and...into this....more creative zone” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5), because “what we are trying to do is fire children up” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). The aim was to move students into experiencing both the craft and the ‘graft’ involved in the writing process and this was perceived by artist-writers as eventuating in specific learning for students:

They [students] have a notion that it's all about inspiration...it's all about a great story...And they...don't quite grasp how much work there is involved in writing – that it is like any other skill that you want to develop...If you are putting on a school play for example, you have to rehearse, rehearse and rehearse....And there's an awful lot of that in writing as well...an awful lot of graft...if they don't have that experience of having to write it, and then have it looked over, and then having to re-draft it and then having it looked over again, having to proof it, they get a slightly skewed idea of what, you know, of what writing is ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Therefore, the pedagogies of artist–writers were based on, and arose out of, their experience as working writers. This was what artist–writers believed they could pass on to students:

And there is that wonderful moment where you have participated in engaging with the imagination of the writer so that you discover it. You never forget that...what you don't forget is your participation in unravelling it or decoding it or whatever ('Will' artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Teachers also recognised the value of this mentoring role. However, there were particular challenges involved in doing this work within the high-stakes environment at upper second level, of which artist–writers were keenly aware.

5.6.2 Artist–writers' perceptions of the high-stakes environment: Time

Artist–writers were aware of the implications of the high-stakes environment at second level for both teachers and students. Time pressure for students, teachers and schools emerged as a common thread running through all of the feedback, including that of artist–writers who referred to the fact that “timetabling was definitely the biggest problem we had and that had to do with the time of year we that were doing it and that couldn't be helped” ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

The perception of the pressure felt by students and teachers with regard to time and the common issues around the scheduling of projects were shared by all the artist–writers involved in the study. Many identified similar issues to those identified by teachers around “the logistics, the difficulties and the practicalities of actually how to do it [make the time], which sometimes can be very, very real, you know” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). This meant that artist–writers appreciated and understood the importance attaching to the products of the creative writing workshops for both teachers and students, in terms of expectations and assessment of students’ skills and knowledge, referred to previously.

However, artist–writers were also aware of the artificiality of asking students “to write a story in seven weeks. It takes me six months to write a short story, six months! So we haven’t given it time to percolate” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). This highlighted the tension, for teachers, students and artist–writers, between the rationale for, and the expectations of, the creative writing workshop. The rationale was generally seen as giving students the opportunity to engage in the creative writing process in the company of an experienced artist–writer. The expectations of the creative writing workshop, however, were that students were expected, and were expecting, to produce finished pieces of writing:

Interestingly, one of the things he [the artist–writer] often says to them [students] is ‘you will have six or seven weeks to do this, I’d never do this in six weeks’ and you are standing there as a teacher thinking ‘oh don’t say that to them, please’...because you want them to have it done in their six or seven weeks (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Teachers and artist–writers were aware of the dissonance and the mixed messages involved in this approach. They were equally aware that it was inevitable given the demands of the

high-stakes environment as it is currently structured. These demands also impacted on student selection for the creative writing programme.

5.6.3 Student selection

Artist-writers' understanding of the second-level environment was also in evidence when it came to the ways in which students were selected to participate in the workshops. All the artist-writers perceived real value in working with non-voluntary groups of students, where selection was based on an existing class structure and was led by the teacher, e.g. a TY group. For artist-writers the structure of the second-level environment dictated this approach:

I do think we are working within an education system...I feel I am coming in to a group that exists and I'll work with that group...The articulate, interested, keen ones will be able to flourish in that atmosphere and anyone...who needs to be challenged can be challenged but they are not going to get in the way ('Will' artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Artist-writers' perceptions of the value of this approach developed as their understanding and experience of the environment, and of the needs of students, increased. There was a general perception of the importance of equality of access to arts learning for students:

in my early days if I had my way...I would have said to the teacher 'give me the best...that really want to write'...I would have thought 'you know that person doesn't want to be here, let them go to a different class'. But I have come around now to thinking everybody can get something out of this ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

Artist-writers perceived class-based selection of students as providing more equitable access for a broader range of students (something which is borne out by the earlier testimony of the students themselves). Student self-selection was perceived as favouring those who

were already successful and/or already had more access to cultural activities. One of the artist–writers, who was conducting concurrent programmes (one of which was outside the study), remarked that:

a lot of them [self-selecting students not included in the study] were already succeeding. That’s why they were there... I felt the school was supporting them of course as themselves...but it was also about...reinforcing success...which is great, nothing wrong with that. Whereas with the girls, with Park [included in the study], because it happened to be a cross-section of kids, a lot of them coming from, I would think, very mixed...backgrounds and mixed ability and some of them not very academic...for them it was more of an opening up experience and maybe they thought about language and literature in a way that they wouldn’t have done otherwise (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

This perception reinforced, and is reinforced by, the perceptions of students, referred to in the previous section, who admitted when interviewed two years after the project that they might not have opted for the programme, because “we didn't really realise, like, how good it was” (Student focus group (2), Park School: Appendix 5), but were very “glad” that they had been “made to do it” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). Both of these groups of students were in classes that were selected by the school to participate in the project.

Participating artist–writers’ perceptions of working with students at second level were informed by their previous experience. Therefore, they were aware that “the teenage thing can be quite difficult...[because] there could be awful things going on in their lives which you have no idea about” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Artist–writers were aware from working with teenagers that “students can be kind of like switched off, afraid of being imaginative, afraid of peer pressure...[afraid] to be too articulate, to be too

interested, to be too energised” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School; Appendix 5). This led to an openness on the part of artist-writers around their expectations of both the students and the environment. One artist–writer’s perception was that “expectations are foolish. I think there has to be, and a lot of artists have it, a humility on the side of the artist to...say, ‘I’m working with human beings”” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). This was echoed by another artist–writer who spoke about his awareness that “you are dealing with feelings and human beings, young human beings” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (2), Hill School; Appendix 5). The development of an understanding of the students, their learning environment and the demands of the curriculum was perceived to be important by artist–writers.

5.6.4 Curriculum and pedagogy

Respect for the demands of the environment and the curriculum, when working at second level, was seen as essential by all artist–writers and they were “always conscious...of what the aims of the classroom are” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). However, possessing an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum itself was not perceived as being essential, and artist–writers were clear that they were not playing the role of teacher. They saw their focus and pedagogical approach as being quite different, and it was this difference which characterised their contribution to students’ learning:

what a writer brings...is...a breath of fresh air because they are not restricted to the curriculum and they are not bound by it. They can be a bit off the wall, a bit whacky and I think that’s really good (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).

Artist–writers described the writing workshop as employing ‘different kinds of conventions’ and having different operating rules, so that:

They [students] suddenly start to realise you can play with the language, you are writing to tell the story but you can also make the language...richer, exciting, more

interesting, more colourful and they really enjoy that when they get to see that they can add stuff in, they can start putting in colours and descriptions. Not great big long descriptive passages or anything but they can make the thing come alive a bit by making the language more exciting. Sharper!...We can make up words...we've just made it up so we can spell it any way we like. They find it so liberating that you can just write down 'weeeaaawwww' [makes sound] and you can spell it any way you like, really ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

This difference was remarked on repeatedly by students and teachers alike (see Appendix 3).

Artist-writers' pedagogies are shaped by the needs of the particular group of students with whom they are working at any given time and also by the nature of the project itself, e.g. a focus on the short story, or exploring development education issues through the medium of creative writing. Artist-writers' pedagogies were based on the needs of the particular group of students, the focus of the project and the experience they had gained in working in schools in their particular art form "because I know roughly how it goes, at what stage they'll be at...And it always comes right. *You always have something at the end of it...*[and that] experience brings confidence" ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis added). This experience was echoed by another artist-writer who said that "everybody in this class will give me something. They always do, even the one that you lost faith in, interestingly" ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

Artist-writers were conscious of the teachers, as much as of the students, and described their experiences of "projects where experienced teachers have said to me 'I've been teaching for x number of years but I never thought of doing it like that' " ('Jan' artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), or "she [the teacher] seems to be saying 'I like what you're

doing, I want to implement it myself” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Therefore, artist–writers perceived their pedagogy as not only being contingent on, and able to be responsive to, the specific classroom context and the particular group of students, but also needing to be aware of, and responsive to, the individual teacher. The relationship with the teacher was a significant factor in determining the quality of the arts-learning environment. As one artist–writer said, “I can’t specifically say what I’m going to do until I see what I am working with” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). In this way artist–writers’ perceptions of the learning environment displayed both an understanding of, and a pragmatic approach towards, the challenges involved in creating an arts-learning environment within the parameters of the second-level classroom.

5.6.5 Harnessing the affective domain for learning

The creation of this arts-learning environment was perceived as having both simple and complex dimensions. The simpler issues had to do with such things as forms of address, with students being “allowed to call me [by my first name]” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), and simple changes in the physical environment such as “no schoolbags!” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). Changing the physical layout of the space was perceived by artist–writers as essential in terms of creating a more dynamic interactive workshop/studio or theatre style learning environment:

if at all possible I change the space because if they are sitting in tables and rows, it’s very hard for us to go where we need to go creatively...because [changing] it automatically changes their perception, automatically opens them to ‘this is something different’ because education is [physically] really passive a lot of the time (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).

Therefore, artist–writers’ perceptions of the conditions required to facilitate arts learning were based on the creation of a workshop-based learning environment, in which students

would perceive themselves as doing something ‘different’ from what they did in the classroom environment. As one artist-writer put it:

I want to offer them an alternative to what they get in their normal class. I want them to have an experience that is school-based, and slots into what the schools do but is different (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

The structure of the creative writing workshop was perceived as being contingent on the participation of students, and on their “getting on with it” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). In this regard, there was a perception by artist–writers of the role of the affective domain in arts learning:

Art is usually an expression of an emotional experience. You are giving them a vehicle by which to funnel the madness that’s going on in their heads...So you give these teenagers a chance to talk in a way that doesn’t compromise their personal space. A story is a vehicle by which they can say anything, or a song or a poem or a slam poem...They are protected by the function of the vehicle (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).

The artist–writers’ perception was that the creative writing process privileged the affective domain, requiring the student to “get right inside your story and right inside your characters [and] feel, feel, feel” (‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). As such, arts learning was perceived by artist–writers as being a cognitive–affective process that was dependent on scaffolding the student’s ability to take risks and to grow in trust; the experience of coming into a school as a writer-in-residence was seen as demanding a high degree of trust from students, both in the artist–writer and in the creative writing process itself:

In a sense it’s strange, coming in as a writer-in-residence. You come into a school and you are introduced by the teacher and you are immediately asking them to bare

their souls in writing and trust in you with their thoughts and feelings (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Therefore artist–writers perceived arts learning as “allowing an emotional response...[which enabled students to deal] with the[ir] feelings of anger, sadness, despair, rage, guilt?” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). In this way it was perceived as contributing to developing students’ social and emotional literacies because “It’s in our culture you see, [that you] don’t show off, don’t be a know all, don’t put your hand up first... We hold our affections in...our thoughts in...I would like to fix that ... [emotional] close-down” (‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). Therefore, the affective dimension of arts learning was perceived by artist-writers as enabling students to engage in risk-taking and to promote students’ self-efficacy, which “is why it’s not a luxury” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).

Artist–writers considered this heightened awareness of the sensitivities accompanying the creation of an arts-learning environment as important precisely “because you are dealing with feelings” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). Artist–writers were aware of needing to hard work in order to establish the trust of students, because “It’s new territory every time because the kids have never seen it [or you before]” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). There was also the further perception on the part of artist-writers of the need to re-establish this relationship at the beginning of every session. The perception was that students entered into “a contract and an agreement”, with you as the artist-writer, which one described as implying that “I’m (the artist–writer) not going to underestimate your (the student’s) intelligence and you don’t underestimate my imagination” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). This was reiterated by another artist–writer who said that “they make a kind of contract with you...they buy in very quickly into what it is you’re offering... And that then applies also

to what they are doing in their writing” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Where this bond was established the artist–writer perceived that “they trust me, they trust the process, they trust themselves and they are getting on with it” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). This learning environment was perceived as being created through a more collaborative workshop, less instruction-based, pedagogical style and approach.

5.6.6 The importance of oracy

Group-work was seen as promoting collaborative learning and there was a clear perception among the artist–writers of the value of both collaborative learning and group-work. This was evident in their feedback and from observing the way in which they structured the arts-learning environment, with group-work being one of the main approaches employed by the artist–writers. It was seen as supporting students’ learning, and promoting student participation and interaction, specifically through a dialogical approach to learning, particularly in having students to talk to each other:

the group is great because they learn from each other. You can overhear them arguing about something. I don’t mean arguing in a negative sense but just teasing something out...they make progress much more quickly because they are working in groups because they challenge each other and say ‘no you can’t do it that way because that wouldn’t work for this so let’s try that’ (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

This perception was common across all the artist–writers:

If you go into a class and everybody is sitting [facing] the same way, thinking ‘gosh will I be okay?’, ‘will I be as good as the others?’, ‘I’m nervous’. Put them in a group! They will share what I am asking them to do...You can see them getting animated. They are helping one another and they are coming up with their ideas and

they don't feel alone...and they are not afraid to say things out ('Zoe' artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

Artist-writers had a clear perception of the role and value of oracy in the creative writing process (see Appendix 3 Artist & Teacher), and it was seen as an important spur, and precursor, to their writing. This perception was related to the perception that it is oracy that is the key to creative writing and to arts learning and that:

the value of oral work in creative writing is underestimated. I have found that there is a huge amount of creativity in oral work...*freeing them up to talk is very important* ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Artist-writers' perception of the effectiveness of oral work was based on experience: "Because it works! I've done it before" ('Zoe' artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). The importance of this dialogical approach to learning was another defining characteristic of the arts-learning environment, and distinguishes the creative writing workshop from a more transmission-based model common at upper second level. One artist-writer described what happens in the creative writing workshop as:

Them talking to each other is what happens. I am only standing there saying 'you are allowed to do this'. I give them a few pointers. There is a certain amount of input that I can give them, I can say 'this is what you have to do as a writer, you have to think about narrator, you have to think about character, you have to think about shape', really what I'm saying is 'you're allowed to talk to each other' and that's what gets them going. They get so involved with each other and with trying to make the story work among themselves ('Joan' artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Equally important, in the perception of the artist-writers, was that students were "learning to listen" ('Jan' artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), because, in the view of one artist-

writer, “teenagers, [and] people who listen to stories develop a higher sense of oracy and literacy. They are better able to speak” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Artist–writers (and teachers) identified improved communication skills as the overall aim of the creative writing workshop, particularly since “communication...is lacking to say the least” (‘Ivan’ artist-writer interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). There was also a perception that increased levels of oracy contributed to increased student self-efficacy, through developing their sense of “security, self-worth, confidence, presence in the world” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Artist–writers saw being able to speak as the gateway to literacy and learning (see Appendix 3), “because if you can’t say it, you can’t empower yourself to have it happen” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). For the artist-writer the creative writing workshops are about students learning through the experience of talking (and listening) and interacting with each other, and the role of the artist–writer is to support this learning.

Artist–writers’ perceptions were that because of curricular changes, “North and South we are seeing talking and listening skills acknowledged” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), and this points to the need for, and provides the space within the curriculum, for greater provision of arts-learning opportunities for students. This perception was also reflected in the earlier feedback from teachers.

Artist–writers saw group-work and collaborative learning as important in building students’ self-efficacy, in acting as a bulwark against the competitive environment at second level, which they saw as effectively, and actually, silencing students. For them, the challenge was to help students to articulate their ideas and feelings, without the fear of being wrong, judged or ridiculed. Artist-writers suggested that arts learning can support students because it “gets to that place beyond the fear...They are not being graded and they forget about it” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), because of “the freedom from the

curriculum, I think” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), they have moved into “this more creative zone” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

The creative writing workshop was also seen as important in contributing to, and building, students’ literacy skills:

Even at this age, transition year age, you can have kids who almost can’t write...who have terrible, terrible grammar, who are actually afraid to put pen to paper. They are afraid of a blank page. They are afraid of words. No matter how much I stand there and tell them there’s going to be no judgment, no comparisons, no competitiveness, it’s not about being correct or right or wrong, that being creative is exploratory and we are making something new happen, despite all of that reassurance I can see that some will be still so afraid of...of...committing themselves, of articulating whatever it is they are thinking or feeling on the page. And so that’s something I feel is the greatest challenge (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Collaborative learning and group-work emerged as part of the signature pedagogy of artist-writers’ practice. Artist-writers also perceived teachers’ anxieties around this less structured approach noting that “teachers are kind of anxious about it” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5), partly because of the danger that some students will not spend sufficient time on task. On the other hand, artist-writers’ perception of the importance of the students’ writing, and having a finished product or artefact at the end of the process, were very much in line with teachers.

5.6.7 The role of process and ‘product’ in students’ learning

Artist-writers, primarily, wanted students to write, and to create “a product that is correct and as good as it can be” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). There was general agreement that it was important for students “to see their stories in print” (‘Zoe’ artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5), in order to embody the

student's experience of the creative writing process, to concretise it. It was also important in helping students to experience the skill and hard work involved in the process of writing, something which can only be learnt by producing a piece of writing. As practising writers themselves, artist-writers were particularly sensitive to the challenges involved in the process of writing and to the importance of seeing their work formally presented:

I want them to see their stories in print...with all that work, all that thinking and all that imagination, it shouldn't go to waste. There should be evidence, 'these are my stories that I wrote when I was in secondary school'. I think that's important...Having a physical thing ('Zoe' artist-writer interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

Secondly, artist-writers saw the act of writing as both process and product, a process to be experienced and a product to be created, thus fulfilling the expectation of students and teachers and helping students become more articulate, in "finding a voice in speech and in writing" ('Will' artist-writer interview (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). Artist-writers perceived this as contributing to students' self-efficacy and identity work:

When a young person writes a poem, a story or a song which reflects their experience, their awareness and their understanding and their caring about an issue like hunger, then as a writer, I think, as a writer, maybe this is where I can help them articulate that. It's one thing having those thoughts and feelings, it's another thing to shape it or form it. Whether it's a letter or a song, or a prayer, or a poem or a story, developing a voice, that we can actually articulate...and be able to creatively, critically think our way through things and then to articulate it in some kind of a way. That's the first thing ('Will' artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Thirdly, artist-writers' felt that it was important for students to be engaged in the craft and the graft of the writing process, because "there is an awful lot of graft" in drafting, editing

and redrafting their work, and in learning to critique their own work and the work of others ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5). The experience of producing pieces of writing was seen as helping students to see what was possible, and as a way of challenging them and pushing them "beyond the school essay" ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). As one artist-writer commented:

I am an editor myself and a publisher and [so] I am very focused on the product...I want there to be a product that is correct and as good as it can be...It's important for me, but it's also important for them ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

Artist-writers were very clear that their focus was on the quality of students' writing rather than on the quantity:

I want the absolute best work. I want a line from all of them, even if it's only one line that makes me go 'ohhh'. I read out one story that won a prize last year...I'm proud of that story because I kept saying to her 'don't lose your nerve now, nothing happens [in the story so], be true to your theme and be brave' and she stayed brave, nothing happened and her metaphor paid dividends ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

Artist-writers' perceptions of the importance of students' developing their own writing voice and identity, and the basic skills of drafting and editing, whilst differing in some respects from the concerns of teachers and students, paralleled their concern with, and interest in, the finished piece of writing as product or artefact. The study highlighted the need for teachers and artist-writers to agree a shared set of learning intentions in advance of the programme, and revealed this as an area requiring development. Any agreed learning intentions need to be broad and flexible enough to adapt to the needs and interests of the

students, the particular demands of the second-level learning environment and the approach chosen by the artist–writer. Artist-writers involved in the study were very aware of this:

[It's] something that should be decided in advance of a residency, whether we are going to do this freely...I would find it very difficult not to have an end in view...I find it helpful to have a framework and to know that I have to get it done within this time...And I don't think I could work in a completely free way, I would find it frustrating, I would say 'what's the point of this?' I would want there to be an outcome ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5).

This raised the issue of the importance of the relationship between the artist–writer and the teacher.

5.6.8 The partnership between the artist–writer and the teacher

For the artist–writer, their relationship with the teacher was seen as a critical factor in their ability to work with students. It was described as being “the thing” in terms of success or failure for the artist–writer ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis). The relationship and “interaction with the teacher...[is quite specific and constitutes] its own little world” ('Caroline' artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Artist–writers displayed a heightened awareness that in entering the classroom they were entering into the teacher's “universe...[which] they (the teachers) are spending a lot of time managing [and] the teacher knows more about this class than you do” and that demands respect ('Jan' artist-writer interview: Appendix 5). Artist-writers acknowledged that “The teacher is very important because she minds them and encourages them to go on, even goads them to go on. I do need a good teacher by my side, an enthusiastic one” ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

Where there was a relationship established with the artist-writer, the teacher “will already have done some of the ground work anyway” ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview,

Bay School: Appendix 5), and “if teachers...have been given enough notification...they are often there at that lovely middle ground of paving the way for you” (‘Caroline’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5).

The relationship is subtle and all the more important because of that subtlety: if the teacher isn’t behind you, you feel uneasy all the time. You feel you’re on uncertain ground...It’s not so much that the teacher needs to intervene much or...that there are particular things that you want the teacher to do. All you want to know is that the teacher is supporting you. And once you feel you are not working against the teacher then everything is easy after that (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Good communication between the teacher and the artist–writer, in terms of understanding, interest and learning outcomes was seen essential:

It’s important for me that the teacher cares, where there is a mutual interest. So I am lucky here with ‘Charlie’ in that...we are both writers so we immediately talk in the language of imagination, and discovery, and explanation, and metaphor and he knows what I mean (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

However, artist–writers reported that “a lot of teachers are not confident about writing” (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: appendix 5), and artist-writers were very aware of this when they entered the classroom. Establishing a mutually respectful relationship with the teacher was seen as a defining feature of the successful arts-learning environment:

An ideal session has a teacher who is...deeply interested, really wanting to be involved in this and really wanting to learn from it themselves and really wanting to...support the children and the writer and be part of the whole process, both observe it and join in on it. *That is actually the secret to it all working*, even with all the

schoolbags on the floor and the bad acoustic and all the rest of it ('Joan' artist-writer interview (2), Park School: Appendix 5, emphasis added).

The quality of the partnership between the teacher and the artist–writer was perceived to be the foundation upon which the establishment of the arts-learning environment depended in order to be successful for students' learning.

5.7 Analysis of perceptions of learning

5.7.1 The influence of the high-stakes environment on students' perceptions of learning

The second-level school and classroom environment was perceived by all the participants in the study as being a high-stakes learning environment. This was particularly the case at senior cycle where “a test is high-stakes when its results are used to make important decisions that affect students” (Au, 2007, p. 258). This was further complicated by the needs of students, often requiring “pitching to three different levels all of the time” ('Bernadette' teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5). The World Bank (2005) policy statement on secondary education noted the “policy peculiarities” which inhere within the aims of modern second-level education in “being at the same time both terminal and preparatory, compulsory and post-compulsory, uniform and diverse” (p. xix). Teachers, in particular, were aware of the discontinuity between attending to the socialisation of students into a community, whilst also supporting their acquisition of knowledge within the various areas of the specified curriculum, and also promoting their personal development and self-actualisation. Students also identified these mixed messages, particularly in being “defined in what you can do by three numbers on a page...[so that] you have to realise that the world works that way” (Student Focus Group (2): Appendix 5). In problematising the

taken-for-granted aims of schools, Egan (1997) identifies “the homogenization of children” (p. 11) as an inevitable function of schools, whether in the passing on of culture or the reproduction/“transmission” of privilege (Bourdieu, 1986/2011, p. 90). The attempt to accommodate what Egan identified as “incompatible” aims (1997, p. 10) within this high-stakes environment leaves little room for non-academic (or non-propositional forms of knowledge) learning, and raises the question of the function of schools and education:

Given society’s demand for high scores on tests that measure academic achievement rather than creative use of knowledge – emphasising recall of knowledge at the expense of its creative use, perhaps schools are merely carrying out their intended mission? (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995, p. 268)

The issue of the function of education is commonly couched in the language of accountability, in order to justify privileging “policy objectives over individual learning objectives” (Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin, 2009, p. 27). Williams and McDonald (2014) locate the argument for the current model of second-level education in the commonly held perception of the superiority of the traditional academic approach. These traditional notions of education are deeply historically embedded, being ultimately concerned with the nature of democracy (Carr, 1998). This has the effect of creating a learning environment based on a “standardised, graduated curriculum...recurrent grading and the ritualised competition for scarce rewards” (Dunne, 2010, pp. 6–7).

5.7.2 Time constraints and the specified curriculum

Since the majority of students in the study were studying at senior cycle (see Table 4.1), their expectations were dictated by the ‘traditional’ curriculum and, as identified by Dumont, Instance and Benavides (2013), they needed to “perceive stable links between specific actions and achievement” (p. 5). Students needed to understand “why are we doing this?” (Student focus group (2), Bay School: Appendix 5), whilst for teachers, “honouring

the curriculum [‘the formal activities for which the timetable of the school allocates specific periods of teaching time’ Kelly, 1997/2009, p. 7] is really important because there isn’t time to do it otherwise” (‘Olive’ teacher interview: Appendix 5). This, as one teacher explained, was due to the daunting and highly pressurised workload at senior cycle, logistical issues such as timetabling, student selection and finding space within the school for the artist–writer to work with the students (see Figure 5.4). There was also the perception that classes given to the creative writing workshop were classes lost to other subject areas, with the potential to create more work for teachers already feeling “hassled” (‘Ann’ pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). Teachers were also aware of the stress levels that these time constraints imposed on students (Bandura, 1977, p. 198), and on themselves.

5.7.3 An instrumental focus on assessment and ‘points’

Despite the stated aim of the senior-cycle curriculum, to encourage risk-taking and self-reflexive practices on the part of students (NCCA, 2009, p. 24), students’ perceptions were of an instrumental curriculum focused on the reproduction of propositional knowledge, which Gleeson (2009) describes as “still...common currency within the second-level curriculum” (p. 99). Standardised assessment, based on being able to reproduce what students termed the “sample answer...[which] they... mark you against” (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5), a practice described by Bruner (1996) as “probably the most widely adhered to line of folk pedagogy in practice today” (p. 55), was a dominant theme emerging from students’ perceptions of learning at senior cycle. Students displayed a particular perception of “the way the Leaving Certificate is structured” (‘Amanda’ student interview: Appendix 5), referring to the grading or ‘points’ system for the terminal examination, which acts as the gateway to tertiary education in Ireland. In the general perception of students it was considered difficult to gain high marks in arts subjects such as

music or visual art or for anything that strayed outside the parameters of propositional knowledge, in this high-stakes examination.

Making the link with the curriculum was more important for some students than others, but the pressure of assessment meant that it was important for all students that they “value the subject and have a clear sense of (its) purpose” (Dumont, Instance & Benavides, 2013, p. 5). Students, therefore, did not find it easy to justify devoting time to a creative writing programme, particularly if it was not perceived to be connected or in some way relevant to the curriculum.

5.7.4 Group dynamics and student engagement

Dweck (2000) conceptualises students’ developing self-efficacy in terms of their having either a “fixed” or a “malleable” (p. 20) orientation towards their own intelligence and learning ability. A fixed orientation sees intelligence and ability as predetermined, whilst a malleable orientation views intelligence and ability as an individual ongoing construction. A malleable learning style is seen as being more resilient in helping students to deal with ambiguity, risk and challenge, whilst a fixed learning style runs the risk of students’ remaining within their comfort zones, in that they may be too afraid of failure to stray outside it and take on new or greater challenges. This leads Dweck to also problematize the idea of ‘confidence’, suggesting that it can be an unreliable barometer of student self-efficacy, particularly if the student’s confidence is manifested by reinforcing what is easily within that learner’s comfort zone. Genuine self-efficacy is achieved, according to Dweck, when students take the risk of stepping beyond their comfort zones. In line with Dweck (p. 41), the study identified a group dynamic that inhibited risk-taking and group participation in one of the case study locations. This dynamic was later explained when it emerged that the group had an extended shared history, which included a strong competitive ethos. In the

longitudinal feedback, gathered two years subsequently, students explained their reluctance to take the risk of sharing ideas and working collaboratively:

you wouldn't talk about your ideas [outside class]...because there was, between all of us, the 'oh no, you're not having my idea!'...so nobody really wanted to read their answers out in class until we were all forced to because it was all 'oh if you're looking for a story, you're going to take mine' ('Amanda' student interview: Appendix 5).

Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin (2009) have identified the influence of “competitive individualism...[and the] preoccupation with summative assessment leading to an undue focus on the attainment of examination results” (p. 38) within the hidden curriculum at second level in Ireland. Although there was no formal assessment process for the creative writing programme (something which emerged as one of the key differences affecting students' perception of learning within the collaborative learning environment), some students continued to operate out of this fixed orientation, thus highlighting a specific instance of the influence of the high-stakes environment on students' perceptions of learning.

5.7.5 Arts knowledge and arts literacy

There was a general lack of knowledge of arts in education among teachers and schools at second level (this included knowledge of arts-in-education programmes available to schools and/or a lack of knowledge of arts-in-education theory); little or no financial support outside their own resources for those schools that wished to undertake arts-based learning initiatives and a lack of professional development in arts-in-education for teachers at second level. This meant that whilst the researcher herself met with openness, trust and goodwill on the part of teachers and schools, teachers' expectations of having a writer in the classroom were complex, diverse, and somewhat diffuse. The creative writing programme

tended to be conceptualised in one of three ways by teachers and schools. It was seen as involving the artist-writer in (a) conducting creative writing workshops with the students, (b) ‘teaching’ students writing skills and techniques or (c) visiting the school/classroom to speak about their work. The teachers and schools in the study fell somewhere between the first two with the expectation that artist-writers would conduct creative writing workshops with students through which students would acquire particular writing skills and techniques.

Where teachers, especially teachers who had been involved with the WISS previously, understood that the artist-writer would conduct creative writing workshops with students, the expectations were much clearer:

if you have a poet or a writer that comes into the school...It’s almost like bringing Google Image alive or bringing You Tube alive. Suddenly there’s a ‘writer’...Not all writers are good communicators or educators...but if you can get a writer who also has that gift of relating to young people and being able to enthuse them...it’s a great thing (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Some teachers who were new to the WISS also grasped this aspect of the programme, as well as seeing it as a way for students to gain expressive learning skills and to develop their oral language skills. One teacher was clear that “my expectation is that they will gain confidence and be able to express themselves. I think that’s the foundation stone for writing later on” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). However, some teachers who were accessing the programme for the first time expressed more ambivalence. They tended to conceptualise it in terms of classes in which the artist-writer would teach students writing skills and techniques, which students would then practise during the class. As one teacher said, “I knew very little...I presumed that the writer, because of the fact that they were published authors...would have valuable information that they could pass on, in

terms of techniques, to the kids” (‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

All of the teachers had clear ideas as to why they thought students’ participation in a creative writing programme was a good idea. One teacher was concerned about the “very small percentage of the school population who read very consistently” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5) and another teacher reported observing a “real fall in the students’ language skills” (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5). Teachers gave other practical reasons, such as the artist–writer’s presence and the creative writing programme being “important as part of our profile for the school” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview, appendix 5). This was also reflected in the teacher’s perception of the importance of “having the finished product...[as] something concrete” (‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5).

The range of perceptions highlighted the need for greater knowledge of arts learning and arts education among teachers and schools, both during ITE and by way of CPD. It also underlined Goodlad’s (1992) warning that “the arts...[need to] be protected by firm overall curricular requirements, just as mathematics and English are now protected, or they will fall by the wayside” (p. 200). The lack of knowledge and training of teachers in arts in education, particularly at second level, meant that teachers did not have a conceptual framework within which to think about arts learning. Therefore, they “couldn’t see how the process was going to work out” (‘Ann’ pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). This inability to conceptualise the creative writing programme, or to anticipate the differing pedagogical approaches of the artist–writer and the creative writing workshop, can contribute to a sense of frustration and of ‘feeling hassled’ on the part of some teachers:

Again it’s me having to give them the time because I’m squeezing what I need to do into shorter time for them. I know it’s only short-term...but still it creates pressure

where there shouldn't be pressure...you are feeling hassled. It's not that you resent it; it's just that it's another job for you to do. It's yet another thing added on to your already quite hectic workload. I am looking forward to when it's finished, but even when 'he' stops coming that doesn't mean that my job is finished ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5).

Teachers who had previous experience of the programme and of working with an artist-writer had the advantage of having a more developed understanding, so that:

the writer visiting the transition-year class is always a very popular module, every year...because, I think, of their freedom to express and we have had some great successes over the years out of it ('Charlie' teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5).

Another teacher reported that students:

come with a huge interest and with a passion because they are choosing for themselves rather than [having to do] a specific task set to a school context. I would have seen that as having had huge value. They are often then able to directly translate into an even more specific task which is set, so the learning carries through ('Patricia' teacher interview, appendix 5).

Teachers who had worked with the WISS previously displayed greater understanding of the creative writing process and the work of the artist-writer, as well as more confidence in students' ability to learn by means of the process.

5.7.6 Signature pedagogies and processes

The signature pedagogies of artist-writers identified in the study included the development of a collaborative learning environment and the cultivation of a trusting relationship with students and teachers. Signature pedagogies, according to Shulman (2005), are those styles of thinking, understanding and practice employed by those who

teach in any profession. They operate at the cognitive, affective and kinesthetic levels and are the outward expression of the practitioner's unconscious competence, signifying their "habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of the hand" (p. 59). Although the creative writing programme was not assessed, students received ongoing feedback, using think-aloud protocols, and continuous assessment of written work by the artist-writer and peer assessment. The artist-writers' pedagogies, which were based on the conventions of the creative writing workshop, were characterised by a greater freedom and openness than was usual in the classroom. This structure and the conventions of the workshop/studio learning environment were (and are) designed to build students' self-efficacy through scaffolding their ability to engage in intellectual and emotional risk-taking. This was particularly the case in terms of expressive learning, as well as the aesthetic and cognitive dimensions of students' learning. In the case of the artist-writers who took part in the study, their signature pedagogies displayed a number of key characteristics including a collaborative approach to learning through group-work, the development of a trusting environment, open feedback systems whereby the students work was discussed and a direct response was given by both the artist-writer and the group during the workshop (a regular feature of creative writing workshops), and the encouragement of risk-taking on the part of the student in terms of oral and written expression.

Although these features emerged as defining characteristics of the artist-writers' pedagogy, they tended to be less well understood by, and therefore less visible to (Hall, Thomson, & Russell, 2007), students and teachers, particularly in the initial stages of the creative writing programme. Because the learning was applied directly by students within the creative writing workshop, it also scaffolded students' kinesthetic learning, described by one artist-writer as learning "by osmosis" ('Ivan' pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5). This approach was also mentioned by one of the teachers who described the

way in which “They [students] begin to understand, almost through osmosis...once...they’re free of the angst of ‘what is the word?’ or ‘I have to understand this line’” (‘Charlie’ teacher interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). In some instances, however, this resulted in teachers being unclear as to whether, or what, learning was taking place, particularly because “I haven’t seen any of the kids’ work yet, I would love to see it...I do know that some of them aren’t producing anything so that’s a huge issue” (‘Bernadette’ teacher interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5).

This was linked to students’ and teachers’ expectations that students would be receiving direct instruction on writing skills and techniques, and the parallel expectation that students would be producing work and/or homework both during the workshops with the artist–writer and in preparation for these workshops. Both students’ and teachers’ expectations were influenced by the fact that the creative writing programme was classified and/or perceived as being part of either English and/or literacy. It was also pointed out by both teachers and artist–writers that the terms ‘writer-in-residence’ and ‘writing’ give rise to particular expectations because “it’s the Writers-in-Residence programme, the very title of it prescribes the fact that the outcome has to be a piece of writing” (‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). As one of the artist-writers commented “the word writing is the wrong word because in schools people associate writing with handwriting, and with filling pages, and it’s all about the physical act of writing” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

The other defining feature of the artist–writers’ pedagogy was the importance placed on the act of making and the artist–writers’ perceptions of the significance of the finished product or artefact for students and for the artist–writers themselves.

5.7.7 Studio thinking in a workshop environment

The study found that language and expression were foregrounded within the workshop/studio environment, firstly in students being given the freedom to engage in dialogue and discussion with each other and with the artist–writer, and secondly in their freedom to engage in collaborative learning. This was particularly significant in terms of the way students policed themselves in terms of what they considered permissible behaviour and content. This included the more-writerly issues concerning acceptable topics, genres, use of language or engagement with the rules of grammar and how these might be modified, e.g. by the use of colloquial language, slang or phonetic spelling, and the more open and relaxed workshop conventions, whereby students addressed the artist–writer by her or his first name, for example. The usual classroom routines were suspended for the duration of the workshop and this was reflected in students’ perceptions of possibility, unpredictability, freedom and enjoyment, and the elevated noise levels which are a feature of the workshop environment.

Within the creative writing workshop or studio learning environment the learning as described by Hetland et al., (2013) takes the form of applied learning. Students are actively engaged in making art and the knowledge gained (generally through demonstration) is applied immediately. This differs from the classroom environment where students are used to receiving propositional knowledge for retrieval at some later stage. In the workshop/studio environment information is provided by way of demonstration for application in writing or painting, dance, music or drama. Rather than being engaged in reading about or listening to instructions or in carrying out technical exercises, students are engaged in developing works of art in a learning environment which includes creating, critically reflecting on and dialoguing about the writing process, hence the elevated noise levels. The artist–writer continually circulates among the students prompting these

discussions and reflections. From the point of view of the study, the creative writing programmes which are most successful are those programmes where the teacher understands and facilitates a learning environment which displays:

a different ‘feel’ than classrooms in many other disciplines. The space is set up to promote work-flow...[e.g. space, time, language...and routines] that contribute to creating a studio culture to support the learning (Hetland et al., 2013, p. 15).

The classroom is thus reconfigured as a workshop space in which students have the freedom to move about, where desks and chairs are moved/removed and students work together in groups, facilitating the collaborative learning approach favoured by the artist–writers. The pace of the workshop is also slower, and this is linked to the observational and reflective nature of the practice involved in making art, as well as the freedom from assessment, which leads to reduced anxiety about outcomes on the part of (most) students.

Within this workshop environment, students are introduced to what Hetland et al., (2013) term studio thinking. Studio thinking encourages the development of students’ learning dispositions around observation, expression, exploration, and the student’s engagement with less familiar forms of learning. It also entails, by its very nature, a better understanding of the world of the arts (p. 7). The teachers who engaged most easily with the development of a workshop/studio learning environment were those who had been involved in a previous arts programme or who had a background and/or interest in a particular artistic or cultural practice, e.g. drama or writing. Crucially, the development of the workshop/studio learning environment was also influenced by the particular arts-based pedagogies of the artist–writer. Shulman (2005) described these as the signature pedagogies or “the particular forms of teaching that characterize each profession” (p. 53).

5.7.8 Perceptions of the partnership between the teacher and the artist–writer

The relationship between the teacher and the artist–writer has been observed to be vital to establishing a successful teacher/artist–writer partnership. The success of this partnership/relationship determines the quality of the arts-learning environment. Artist–writers identified the ‘importance’ of working with supportive teachers, particularly because of their relationship with, and knowledge of, their students, which “is *very important* because she minds them and encourages them to go on” (‘Ivan’ pilot artist-writer interview, Bay School: Appendix 5, emphasis added). Without this relationship it was considered difficult to establish this learning environment because “if the teacher isn’t behind you, you feel uneasy all the time. You feel you’re on uncertain ground. *So it’s really important*” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5; emphasis added). The artist–writers’ perception was that it was “*important* for me that the teacher cares, [and] there is a mutual interest” (‘Will’ artist-writer interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5, emphasis added). Artist–writers reported that the teacher’s support directly affected the quality of their work with students, and receiving feedback from a supportive teacher enhanced the work of the artist–writer by drawing more out of them, and “probably bring[ing] me up a level I would think...in what I’m doing” (‘Joan’ artist-writer interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Teachers also perceived the relationship with the artist–writer as being “essential to the process...[particularly as students] would have seen that I’m quite relaxed and comfortable in the class with ‘him’ as well. When they see that it brings them with you, it does, yes” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5). Because of “the dynamic” created by the relationship between the teacher and the artist–writer for students (‘Jan’ artist-writer interview: Appendix 5), teachers perceived the creative writing programme to work best when the teacher and the artist–writer “understand each other very well” (‘Charlie’ teacher

interview (1), Hill School: Appendix 5). This was particularly the case where the relationship was well established and “created an understanding between himself [the artist-writer] and ourselves as teachers...and it has changed the process slightly...because that trust and openness is there” (‘Patricia’ teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Recent DES Research (2016) on the quality and importance of the teacher artist partnership amplifies the findings of this study:

The teacher and artist also spoke of the confidence their relationship afforded them to slow down the artistic process, to let go of the need to produce a product and to challenge the children in their creativity. In a different situation, and without the support of each other, they felt they would have experienced pressure to move on quickly and produce results. Instead, the children were facilitated to re-think, re-imagine, re-invent and progress artistic ideas to create work of a much higher standard than originally envisaged (Kenny & Morrissey, 2016, p. 24).

Both teachers and artist–writers were clear that the relationship was particular to each setting and could not be predetermined or presumed, as it depended on the individual teacher and artist–writer (see Appendix 3 Teacher & Artist). Setting up a clear line of communication from the outset was seen as essential, “rather than coming in four weeks into the project and [the artist-writer] coming to me asking has anyone given me anything at all” (‘Ann’ teacher interview (2), Bay School: Appendix 5). Where the teacher and artist–writer established a good working relationship, teachers reported:

It’s a pleasure. It’s actually something to look forward to...I’m learning as well and that’s what should happen in a classroom...It’s a win/win for everybody (‘Deirdre’ teacher interview (1), Park School: Appendix 5).

Our process here has just been so successful since we started five or six years ago. It really is quite astounding what has been produced and how we have been able to work on it year on year. We would view it as...embedded in the school and very much...an integral part now...[of] our English curriculum...Part of the reason it has worked is because of the relationship we have been able to establish with the writer ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

Where that relationship was not as well established, the experience was more diffuse for teachers with a minority reporting that the experience was somewhat onerous and they were "looking forward to when it's finished" ('Ann' pilot teacher interview, Bay School: Appendix 5), because "it has been a lot of work" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (1), Grove School: Appendix 5). Establishing a viable working relationship between teacher and artist-writer emerged as a major influencing factor in determining the nature of an arts-learning environment.

5.7.9 Process and 'product' and 'when is art?'

Whilst much has been written about the importance of the learning process, artist-writers, teachers and students all pointed to the importance of the product of the creative writing process which issued in the pieces of writing created/produced by students. Students participating in the four creative writing programmes included in the study produced over 74,000 words between them. Many were collaborative pieces, including a complete novella (see Appendix 1). Creating/producing these pieces of writing allowed students to experiment with self-expression and to engage in the craft of writing alongside a professional writer. It also gave them the experience of presenting and/or performing their work in front of others, and thus supported students' academic, expressive and cognitive-affective modes of learning.

In line with Benson (1979) the study adopts Nelson Goodman's (1978) socially engaged perspective on art and art-making which, rather than focusing on "what is art?" or 'what constitutes (good) art?' rather enquires "when is art" or 'when does art happen?', (pp. 66/67). This is in order to provide a perspective from which to conceptualise the significance of the students' writing/art-making, since Goodman's formulation provides a way of conceptualising the pieces of work created/produced by students as art objects or artefacts. Adopting Goodman's idea of art as another legitimate form of meaning-making, the study proposes that it is students' participation in the symbolic process of art-making, rather than their quest for highly developed aesthetic forms, which is of most significance both within and across the groups of students involved in the study. As one artist-writer has suggested, the finished product or piece of writing is important for students precisely because it "serves to validate their participation in the process" (D. Lordan, personal communication, 9.5.2012). The finished products in the form of students' writing or artefacts are seen as embodying their participation in the process of art-making. This view also serves to reveal the false dichotomy between the process and the product, in that "the process is the product and the product is the process" (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 113). The role of students' writing as product/artefact is considered in the next section.

5.7.10 Perceptions of students' writing as boundary object

Having finished pieces of writing to display/present/perform emerged as an important feature of the creative writing process for students, teachers and artist-writers alike. For teachers it was particularly important to have some "concrete" work to display at the end of the creative writing programme, in light of the time invested by students, and the fact that "classes are gone" ('Bernadette' teacher interview (2), Grove School: Appendix 5). Teachers' perceptions of whether, and how well, students were engaging with the process and of what students were learning, particularly in terms of writing technique, depended on

and were influenced by the work produced by students. In two of the case study locations, students' writing became the focus of end-of-year displays/events. Supporting students in learning to write and present their work was perceived by teachers as building students' self-efficacy because "to get them to that level really does give them a notch up" ('Patricia' teacher interview: Appendix 5).

The general perception of the importance that students, teachers and artist-writers attached to students' completed pieces of writing meant that the writing emerged as a boundary object, or product. In Star's (2010) view a boundary object is something which has enough "interpretive flexibility" within a shared environment to encapsulate a range of meanings because "boundary objects are a sort of arrangement that allow different groups to work together without consensus" (p. 602). Through positioning the writing as a boundary object, teachers, students and artist-writers could arrive at a shared experience, understanding and agreement with regard to the learning outcomes of the creative writing process. This shared understanding created the conditions which underpinned students' art-form learning both in, and through, the art form, because it was able to accommodate, albeit to different degrees, students' introduction to what Carr (2010) described as the complex nature of the art form, in its representational (what was written), expressive (how it was written) and formal features (the form in which it was written) (p. 4), as well as attending to the technical requirements (description, comprehension, composition) of English as an academic subject. One teacher illustrated this by describing how "students learn how to ask...questions that you would only ask a writer, that you wouldn't ask of a teacher" ('Patricia' teacher interview, appendix 5). This finding is in line with Gardner, Winner and Kircher's (1975) view that this age group is capable of a "more complex and cognitive view of art" (p. 65).

Students expected to be involved in writing and in producing written work, as they would in any other class. Seeing their work in print at the end of the programme gave rise to a sense of achievement and being able to present it to their peers or others was important to them. Students liked getting to see and hear each other's work (see Appendix 3 Students):

the best thing was actually seeing the finished product of the whole class. How well we all worked and how well the stories came out (Student focus group (pilot), Bay School: Appendix 5).

Sharing their work in this way was often the first experience for the students in being involved in a public presentation of their own work. This was even the case for those students who enjoyed engaging in writing, but who admitted that they “wouldn't say it out loud that much” (Student focus group (2), Hill School: Appendix 5). The work produced by students as part of the creative writing programme functioned for each of the participant groups – students, teachers and artist-writers – as a means of understanding and meaning-making, whilst also broadening students' perception of art, the artist, art-making and the art world. Therefore, in the context of the creative writing programme, art ‘happened’ through students' active participation in the process of creating/producing writing.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Innocence is the privilege of those who move in their field of activity like fish in water
(Bourdieu, 1986/2011, p. 92).

6.1 Arts learning

The study, based in the literary arts, proposes a theory of arts learning as a specific form of learning possessing cognitive/affective, expressive and aesthetic dimensions. Learning occurs both in, and through, the art form, and possesses identifiable and distinct signature pedagogies, learning intentions and learning outcomes. Arts learning fosters student engagement because it is (a) expressive (b) collaborative (c) dialogical and (d) applied. It is (1) a cognitive/affective process that is both (2) participatory and (3) immediate for the student. These aspects of arts learning (4) enhance students' self-efficacy and (5) implicate it in the formation of identity. The findings suggest that (6) the collaborative nature of arts learning also lowers the competitive orientation of the classroom, whilst (7) the creative aspect validates students' participation in the learning process through the making of a product or artefact.

Arts learning can have a positive influence on students' engagement in learning. Arts learning is understood as a cognitive/affective process, involved in enhancing students' self-efficacy, and where students' self-efficacy is fostered, engagement in learning increases exponentially:

Individualized structures that lower the competitive orientation of a classroom are more likely than traditional, competitive structures to increase students' self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 2002, p. 121).

Arts learning is also implicated in the formation of identity, which Sfard and Prusack (2005) suggest conceptualising as the ongoing construction of a narrative about the self such that “learning may be thought of as closing the gap between *actual identity* and *designated identity*, two sets of reifying significant stories about the learner that are also endorsed by the learner” (p. 14, emphasis in original).

Arts learning supports, and is in turn supported by, a collaborative learning environment. This involves cooperative learning strategies, such as group work and open feedback mechanisms, particularly think-aloud protocols, which are a feature of artists’ (and many teachers’) pedagogies. Therefore, arts learning (in the literary arts) is fundamentally dialogical and participatory in nature. Arts learning is also a form of applied learning, in that artists’ signature pedagogies invariably involve demonstrating art form skills and techniques for immediate application by students within a workshop or studio-learning environment. This form of participatory and immediate learning scaffolds students’ critical engagement with their subject matter, at both the cognitive/affective and technical levels, that is both by conceptualising and emoting, which are so fundamental to arts learning, and by actively engaging students in the art-making process.

In the initial stages this collaborative and dialogical workshop/studio-learning environment, focused on active learning, can confound both students and teachers, by seeming less familiar than the learning environment they are accustomed to experiencing within the second-level classroom. Both teachers and artist-writers stated that the development of a well-functioning arts-learning environment at second level is dependent both on engaging students and on establishing a good working relationship between the teacher and the artist-writer in the classroom. This depends on mutual understanding through the negotiation of professional identities (Kenny & Morrissey, 2016), and an

appreciation of the various pedagogical understandings and approaches in play for both the artist-writer and the teacher.

6.2 Pedagogy

The signature pedagogy of the artist within the arts-learning environment differs from that of the teacher. Of most significance is the fact that artist-writers are not involved in the formal assessment of students' work, and therefore the relationship with students is more relaxed and less subject to time constraints and/or authority issues. Artist-writers working collaboratively alongside students, work within a learning environment that seeks to promote active or hands-on learning in the making/producing of art. The workshop/studio environment promotes dialogical learning and open feedback to and from students. As many of the students in this study remarked, there was the sense that there are no right or wrong answers when working with the artist-writer, rather there are different ways of approaching and understanding subjects and ideas. In this regard students learned that those seemingly immutable rules, such as those pertaining to punctuation and spelling, could be made to allow for much more flexibility and poetic licence. Artist-writers do not prescribe or 'correct' students' homework in the usual sense. The aim of the artist-writer and the arts-learning environment, established by artist-writer, is to champion the imagination, so that "when old and familiar things are made new in experience, there is imagination" (Dewey, 1934, p. 278). Artist-writers are quite conscious that they do not possess the skills and the training of the teacher and that their function as an artist-writer is to maintain a focus on art-form learning:

The governing principle here is that the artist does not have to go outside of their practice and 'become a teacher'. Instead they provide a sustained exposure to

contemporary art practices and theories for the pupils, presenting modes of performance work (Fay, 6 October, 2016).

For the artist-writer, the focus is on the story being told through the art form, and in this case, students' stories are workshopped (read, analysed, critiqued and edited) in the traditional manner by the whole group. In this way, the artists-writer's pedagogies encourage risk-taking, in terms of expressive learning, the acceptance of criticism and the presentation and/or performance of work by students. The findings of the study are borne out by recent work by Hall and Thompson (2017), who identified:

a repertoire of nineteen practices that were rooted in...artists' approaches including: ...use of artefacts....use of 'the texts of our lives'....different classroom discourse patterns...the creation of a rich narrative environmentalignment with disciplinary expectations...the valorisation of collective endeavour...managing behaviour differently....flexibility in pacing (pp. 132-136).

This is in line with Shulman's suggestion "the comparative study of signature pedagogies across professions can offer alternative approaches for improving professional education that might otherwise not be considered" (Shulman, 2005, p. 58).

6.3 Arts provision

Second-level arts provision in Ireland is less than adequate. Where provision exists, it is not necessarily fit for purpose, as Jordan's (2015) study on the visual arts demonstrates, whilst other art forms, such as dance (Tanham, 2015), which is regarded as part of the second-level PE curriculum does not feature at all in the *CSO subject statistics for Leaving Certificate 2015* (see Table 2.1). Whilst English as a subject has a high status within the curriculum, the literary arts themselves (which are the subject of this study) are also nested within the English syllabus, where the pressures of standardised assessment can lead to

students being more focused on the technical rather than the aesthetic aspects of art-form learning (Hennessy & McNamara, 2011).

As the opening epigram on innocence suggests, the composition of the curriculum is always already politicised so that “whether and how the arts are integrated into curricula may be tied to issues of power, cultural practices, and personal and political dispositions” (Gadsden, 2008, p. 52). Gleeson (2009), Gleeson and Ó Donnabháin (2009) and O’Sullivan (2005) have all drawn attention to this aspect of the curriculum in recent times in Ireland. Eisner (1974, 1985, 1998, 2002b, 2004, 2005), and Dewey before him (1934), have long argued that the core justification for the arts has to do with valuing the learning in arts disciplines in and for themselves (Hetland & Winner, 2004). Therefore, the future of arts education and arts in education requires, as Goodlad (1992) has suggested, moving beyond advocacy towards embedding an arts-provision model in national curricular policy at second level. This entails engaging seriously with the challenges of establishing national standards in arts education and developing appropriate methods of assessment, including tools for assessing expressive learning (Dorn et al., 2004), performance, habits of mind and learning dispositions. Assessment for learning in and through the arts requires the development of specific AfL tools for assessing arts learning, beginning with the five art forms currently recognised within the curriculum, namely literature, drama, dance, visual arts and music, and then extending these art forms to encompass the hybrid forms now emerging, “created and defined by youth themselves” (Gadsden, 2008, p. 52). This is necessary in order to engage with what Underwood & Farrington-Flint (2015) have designated the “net generation...students [who] are connecting, exchanging and creating in new ways, which appear quite unfamiliar to many parents and teachers” (pp. 2-3). This is also in line with international thinking, policy and research which recommends that governments “give Arts Education a permanent central place in the educational curriculum, funded appropriately,

and staffed by teachers of appropriate quality and skill” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 18), and urging governments to pay more attention to the arts in education.

6.4 Embedded arts provision

The study aims to provide a rationale for the concept of embedded arts provision within the curriculum at second level, similar to that of languages, maths and science, proposing that a model of embedded arts education provision at second level is necessary because “arts in education can only flourish within a curriculum model of embedded arts” (Harland et al., 2000, p. 3). The study argues that the high-stakes model of assessment currently in use at senior cycle in Ireland has a bearing on the absence of such provision. The findings of the study suggest that there is a perception, particularly among students (and their parents (Williams & McDonald, 2014), that it is difficult to obtain high marks in arts subjects in the Leaving Certificate (Jordan, 2015). Even a cursory review of Leaving Certificate results, which acts as the entry point for access to tertiary education in Ireland, indicates that the results for the two art forms examined, visual art and music (2014-2016) tended to cluster around the lower Bs and Cs at higher level, thus making arts subjects a less attractive option for students (see Table 6.1). The numbers taking an arts subject at Leaving Certificate ordinary level are even more disquieting, ranging from 0.8 of one percent in Music to 4.5 per cent in Art between 2013 and 2015 (Table 2.2).

In this regard, students’ perceptions reflect Efland’s (2004a) description of the arts as “ill-structured domains” of learning (p. 756), whereby learning depends more on the students’ (and the examiners’) individual interpretation and less on the reproduction of propositional knowledge, which at least has the advantage of being either correct or incorrect. This serves to enact a cycle in which the lack of uptake of arts subjects at upper second level leads to the continued scarcity of provision in those subjects, whilst also

reinforcing the lack of status of the arts within the second-level curriculum for students, parents and teachers (Williams & McDonald, 2014).

The issue of assessment and the need to develop appropriate methods of assessment in the arts, to include the expressive, technical, and cognitive/affective aspects of students' learning, whilst lying beyond the scope of this study, requires further and more focused research.

Table 6.1 Leaving Certificate results in Art 2014-2016. Source: State Examinations Commission 2016

| Level | Year | Total | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | B3 | C1 | C2 | C3 | D1 |
|--------|------|-------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Higher | 2014 | 7,723 | 0.80 | 4.00 | 7.70 | 11.70 | 14.10 | 14.50 | 13.90 | 12.50 | 9.80 |
| | 2015 | 7,840 | 1.10 | 3.80 | 8.00 | 11.20 | 13.60 | 14.60 | 14.30 | 13.20 | 9.60 |
| | 2016 | 7,789 | 1.30 | 3.90 | 8.10 | 11.70 | 14.20 | 14.20 | 14.80 | 12.60 | 9.40 |
| Ord. | 2014 | 2,110 | 0.20 | 1.20 | 4.10 | 7.30 | 11.00 | 15.60 | 15.80 | 14.40 | 11.00 |
| | 2015 | 2,045 | 0.10 | 1.10 | 3.10 | 7.00 | 10.50 | 15.20 | 17.60 | 15.90 | 11.10 |
| | 2016 | 1,965 | 0.40 | 1.50 | 3.50 | 6.90 | 10.30 | 15.50 | 15.50 | 17.10 | |

Percentage breakdown of candidates by grade awarded in each subject

Leaving Certificate results in Music 2014-2016. Source: State Examinations Commission 2016

| Level | Year | Total | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | B3 | C1 | C2 | C3 | D1 |
|--------|------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Higher | 2014 | 5,926 | 2.90 | 11.70 | 17.30 | 19.00 | 17.10 | 12.70 | 8.50 | 5.50 | 2.90 |
| | 2015 | 5,866 | 3.80 | 10.40 | 16.60 | 18.70 | 18.10 | 13.70 | 8.30 | 5.10 | 2.70 |
| | 2016 | 6,046 | 4.00 | 11.80 | 17.60 | 18.70 | 14.70 | 13.10 | 9.30 | 5.30 | 2.70 |
| Ord. | 2014 | 506 | 0.40 | 2.60 | 5.70 | 17.20 | 19.00 | 14.20 | 15.60 | 9.50 | 4.70 |
| | 2015 | 459 | 1.10 | 3.30 | 9.80 | 15.70 | 17.20 | 14.40 | 12.20 | 8.10 | 7.20 |
| | 2016 | 551 | 0.90 | 2.50 | 7.60 | 9.60 | 16.50 | 14.00 | 13.40 | 12.30 | 7.80 |

Percentage breakdown of candidates by grade awarded in each subject

6.5 Student writing as boundary object

The study also proposes a mechanism for negotiating the boundaries between, and the demands of, the specified, enacted and experienced levels of the curriculum at work in the second-level classroom. This would be achieved by considering the work produced by students, in this case their writing, as constituting a boundary object or objects, which:

both inhabit several intersecting worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them. . . . [They are] both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393).

From a social constructivist perspective, the arts, like everything else, are a social construction and, it is argued that the work produced by students' engagement in arts learning is likewise constructed by the participants, in light of "what[ever] socially constructed sense of the world...the learner, teacher, and researcher bring to the study and teaching of the arts?" (Gadsden, 2008, pp. 42-43).

It is further proposed that whether as the product or artefact/art object, or both, students' writing can and does function as a boundary object, whose meaning and significance can be shared by students, teachers and artist-writers alike, once it is based on a shared understanding of its personal, curricular and creative possibilities. Thus, students' writing as boundary object not only satisfies requirements across the curriculum, but it also embodies the students' participation in the process of making art. In this way, it becomes an object endowed with aesthetic qualities, performing its function as an artefact, as being something made by human beings. Finally, taking up Nelson Goodman's (1978) suggestion that it is more fruitful to enquire "when is art?", rather than "what is art", provides a more

useful starting point for the consideration of students' work as both boundary object and as art:

My answer is that just as an object may be a symbol – for instance, a sample – at certain times and under certain circumstances and not at others, so an object may be a work of art at some times and not at others. Indeed, just by virtue of functioning as a symbol in a certain way does an object become, while so functioning, a work of art (Goodman, 1978, p. 67).

For the teacher, the work provides evidence of students' developing technique and sophistication in description, comprehension and composition, which are direct demands of the curriculum. For the artist–writer, students are gaining art-form knowledge and technique, particularly in being able to immediately apply the learning in their own writing. For students, their participation in the creative writing process is embodied in, and by, creating/producing and presenting their own pieces of writing.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Continuing Professional Development and Initial Teacher Education

In the light of the study's findings there is a need to develop shared pedagogical approaches at second level in the manner of the current teacher–artist partnership CPD model at primary level (Kenny & Morrissey, 2016). This model of training is based in the development of the teacher artist partnership as the basis for delivering quality arts education and arts in education across the curriculum. Teachers and artists both train and work together in the classroom to develop models of arts education practice that draw on both skill sets and provide a rich arts learning environment for the students. According to Burton, Horowitz and Abeles (2000), “in most settings where transfer from the arts has been

investigated, improved teacher expertise has been found” (p. 230). Therefore, there is a real need to implement second-level teacher (and artist) CPD and ITE in arts-in-education. It would be beneficial and strategic to work with arts subject teachers, arts specialists, artists, and arts and cultural organisations to devise strategies and to manage resources to implement this enhanced arts provision at second level. In line with the *Arts-in-Education Charter* (DES/DAHG, 2013, p. 6), second-level schools require appropriate support to create and adapt arts-in-education policies. There is also the need to support those artists who wish to practise in the field of arts-in-education and to develop effective models of training for and with them. This needs to be complemented by the recruitment and training of more teachers with specific expertise in the arts (Harland, 2000), and in line with the UNESCO Road Map (2006), to facilitate the training of more teachers in the theory and practice of arts education (p. 21).

6.6.2 Further research with students

Further and expanded research with students, along the lines of the current study, is required to begin to identify the affordances offered by arts learning to students at second level. More research at the level of the experienced curriculum in terms of student engagement and the development of students’ self-efficacy through the modes of learning offered to them by engaging in arts learning is needed. Students need to be actively encouraged and supported to take up arts subjects at second level and more research is required to better understand the influences and factors affecting students’ subject choices, particularly at senior cycle. The effects of the new junior cycle (NCCA, 2016a, 2016b) also provide rich territory in which to begin a longitudinal study of student engagement in the arts, which can now be facilitated through the junior cycle. However, students also need to be encouraged and enabled to continue to take arts subjects through to senior cycle, and PE, dance, literature (notwithstanding its presence within the English Syllabus) and drama

should be given equal status to visual art and music within the specified curriculum (Harland, 2000). It is interesting to note that the study's findings mapped directly onto the key skills identified as being intrinsic to senior cycle. This suggests that arts learning, its affordances and pedagogical approaches, as well as the specific art form learning involved areas, such as the literary arts, can enhance students' learning at senior cycle, through the development of habits of mind and learning dispositions and the development of aesthetic sensibilities and attitudes and a general sense of "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1977b).

6.6.3 Developing appropriate methods of assessment

The issue of assessment and the need to develop appropriate methods of assessment in the arts, to include the expressive, technical, and cognitive/affective aspects of students' learning, whilst lying beyond the scope of this study, requires further and more focused research. There is a need to address anti-assessment sentiment, on the one hand whilst simultaneously addressing the "subjective myth" (Herpin & Washington, 2012, vi) that the subjective nature of the arts implies that they cannot be assessed objectively. The arts' and cultural communities and artists' understandings of, and concerns around assessment, could be addressed through the provision of focused CPD, particularly around formative assessment and AfL, whilst focused CPD for educational professionals could address the theoretical, aesthetic and technical aspects of learning in the arts. Only by addressing the concerns and broadening the understanding and knowledge base of both artists and teachers, can new frameworks for the assessment for arts learning, including expressive learning, be developed.

These frameworks could in turn, be based on current AfL frameworks, some of which have already been built into the junior-cycle and which take a process-based view of learning, one which seeks to uncover habits of mind and thinking dispositions of the student, rather than the recovery of subject-specific content. Literary art learning and learning

through the arts cannot be assessed using the current model of standardised assessment, based on the reproduction of declarative and procedural knowledge/content.

Therefore, there is a need to illustrate and document the benefits of engaging in arts learning at second level and to be proactive in addressing these assessment challenges. Above all, there is a need to develop national standards for arts learning, standards which are grounded in authentic artistic practice (Booth, 2009). This will require training in understanding the difference between students' knowledge in an artform and their skill in an artform, and developing appropriate rubrics and assessment tools for assessing aesthetic learning. Therefore, according to Herpin and Washington (2012) the development of a successful assessment framework for "student learning in the arts" will require the provision of funding and time, particularly in the realm of CPD.

6.6.4 Further areas of research

There is a need for a meta-analysis of existing research on arts education/arts in education in Ireland, which could provide a useful overview of existing attitudes, beliefs and understandings of both the arts and of creativity (Beghetto, 2010) and their perceived relationship to education. A comprehensive summary of research to date would also help to identify gaps in the research (Hetland & Winner, 2004), and could be useful in planning future research directions and projects.

Further classroom-based studies need to be conducted alongside teachers and artists engaged in arts in education practice in the classroom to identify pedagogical and structural issues, as well as issues of form and process and the content of classroom instruction.

The methodological question "how should the arts be studied in classrooms?" (Gadsden, 2008, p. 40) needs to be addressed, alongside further research on the learning and teaching requirements of different groups of students e.g. students with hearing or vision impairment, those on the autistic spectrum, ESL students, and students with impaired

mobility or other special needs. Given the current focus on early years education, and the focus of this study which is on senior cycle students at second level, age and arts participation is another factor that would benefit from further exploration.

The influence of gender on arts participation would also benefit from more specific research, specifically in relation to arts learning and subject choice at second level. The latest research on arts participation by children and young people in Ireland conducted by Smyth (2016), and based on information mined from the GUI longitudinal study, provides information on “the highly gendered nature of children’s participation in arts and culture...with girls much more likely to participate than boys from as young an age as three” (Smyth, 2016, Forward). Indications are that this gendering carries through into subject choice at second level and, therefore, more focused research on students’ perceptions of the arts is indicated, again particularly in terms of the disparity in terms of gender across all socio-economic groups (Smyth, 2016, p. 54).

Finally, the study has shown that the nature of the learning environment is a critical factor in arts learning at second level. Therefore, it would be useful to explore the influences of the learning environment on students’ perceptions of learning in more depth. The factors influencing the nature of the teacher artist partnership at second level also requires more focused research, with attention on shared, as well as differing, pedagogical approaches and how they shape (or indeed might shape) the learning environment.

Similarly, the students’ relationship with the artist–writer would benefit from more focused study in order to gain a better insight into the pedagogies employed by the artist-writer, and more specifically how these pedagogies can result in restructuring the classroom into an arts learning environment. It would also be useful to explore the nature of the students’ relationship with the artist-writer as it evolves over time and how (and whether) this relationship, in turn, influences the restructuring of the learning environment.

6.6.5 Conclusion

What did I know, what did I know
Of love's austere and lonely offices?
(Hayden, 1966/1985).

The study provides a rich set of findings which will need to be unpicked over time and which point to several further research possibilities. The new Junior Cycle Framework offers exciting possibilities for in-depth longitudinal research that could inform the future of arts education and arts-in-education practice and provision, nationally and internationally. What clearly emerged from the study's findings, however, and what was perceived by the students themselves, was that the socially engaged arts-in-education practice of the artist-writers involved in the four case studies was based in their passion for their artform, and their desire to share that passion and the inevitable link, as they experienced it, between life and art.

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