

**Teacher as Artist: An Exploration of Teaching Visual Art and Artmaking in a Primary  
School**

Michael McEvoy, BEd

School of Arts Education and Movement, D.C.U.

Master of Arts

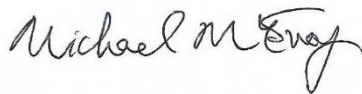
Dr. Michael Flannery & Dr Regina Murphy

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## Declaration

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ID No.: 13412962

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## **List of Abbreviations**

TAA	Teacher As Artist
PT	Primary Teacher
PTS	Primary Teacher Specialist
PTA	Primary Teacher Artist
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation



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## Abstract

*Teacher as Artist: An Exploration of Teaching Visual Art and Artmaking in a Primary School, Michael McEvoy*

Creativity in its many forms is a central component of contemporary arts and education policy in Ireland. At a curricular level, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is currently in the process of reviewing the Primary School Curriculum published in 1999 and has highlighted creativity and creative pedagogy as fundamental principles in delivering the vision of the new Primary Curriculum Framework (2023). While the current primary visual arts education curriculum suggests four possible starting points for teaching visual arts, none of these involve the primary teacher creating artwork or engaging with the creative process. This exploratory case study presents a newly designed approach to the teaching of visual arts: Teacher as Artist Approach (TAA) and investigates its efficacy. The study documents the implementation of the TAA the approach over a six-week period comprising one pilot lesson and five consecutive lessons, in a medium sized, mixed-gender, rural, Irish school. Twenty-five children, whose ages ranged from seven to nine years old, together with their teacher-as-artist (TAA) participated in this study. Research methods comprised qualitative approaches including thematic analysis of children's artwork as well as pre- and post- TAA implementation semi-structured interviews. Other data sources included the teacher's reflection notes and related artwork produced as part of his emergent professional identity as a Teacher as Artist.

Data analysis and findings reveal that engagement with the TAA approach improved expressive abilities and skills in terms of technique, repertoire and artistic self-expression for the pupils. Data also evidenced growth in the children's understanding of the creative process, their attitudes towards visual arts, and their appreciation of themselves as artists. Concurrent creative practice, and related reflection, enabled professional growth and development in the researcher's understanding of the creative process and his role as a teacher-as-artist (TAA). Recommendations draw attention to the importance of increased teacher modelling and co-learning of artistic processes alongside children when teaching visual arts. Further studies into the TAA approach are also recommended. The study also emphasises that teachers with specialist interest and expertise in visual arts explore the TAA approach and support other teachers to incorporate elements of TAA into their practice. Notwithstanding the limitations of this exploratory case study research, the conclusions and contributions of this research will be of value to primary school teachers, teaching artists, curriculum developers and teacher visual arts educators.

*Key Words: Teacher as Artist, Creative Process, Expressive Abilities, Primary Education, Visual Arts, Pedagogy*

## Chapter One: Introduction

As a primary school teacher and practising visual artist, I have first-hand experience of the value of teaching visual arts, and the challenges that are associated with teaching it within the context of the current Irish education system. Whilst a number of these issues pertaining to visual arts education within this context require further research, one of the matters that poses the greatest concern for me is that overall, I feel that the artwork created by pupils could be of a better quality. Whilst there are several factors that influence the quality of artwork at primary school level, I feel that a huge factor for this is the efficacy of the traditional approach that is set out by the 1999 curriculum document. It is also important to note that there is a significant contrast between that which the curriculum approach aspires to achieve and that which occurs in reality. Issues relating to over-prescription, over-direction over-integration and teacher avoidance present themselves strongly in research that exists in this approach to teaching visual arts (DES, 2005; INTO, 2009; Ní Bhroin, 2012)

Whilst this approach has many positive elements to it, I feel that there are some areas that require development and change, most notably the role of the primary teacher in visual arts. Currently there is no expectation or even recommendation for primary teachers to engage in their own creative or artistic practice in primary visual arts. I feel that this is a missed opportunity that is not being made use of in the teaching of visual arts in Ireland and perhaps further afield.

This piece of research is influenced by issues pertaining to the conflict of identity that I have experienced as a teacher of the visual arts education within the mainstream class setting in the Irish education system: The pressures and demands of being a class teacher and teaching art in line with curriculum guidance versus the passion for to facilitate for a meaningful visual arts education programme for pupils. It has been guided by my own professional desire to reconcile my identity both as artist and primary teacher: To

accommodate my desire to incorporate and share my own practice into classroom pedagogy as a means of learning in visual arts for pupils and teacher alike. My study strives to present an opportunity for primary teachers to engage with pupils in a community of practice and attain meaningful curricular experiences.

To resolve this problem, this research proposes a new approach to the teaching of visual arts education which is underpinned both by the values of the curriculum together with studio ways of thinking. Whilst this research is small in scale, it is significant in a time of influential curriculum change within the Irish education system.

## Background

There is a wealth of research that debates what a visual arts curriculum should entail to ensure for a quality visual arts education for pupils (Duncum, 2010; Eisner, 1974; Gude, 2007; Lanier, 1984; Walling, 2001). Whilst opinions regarding curricular content vary, there is a consensus that visual arts education requires a structure that involves the following: creating art, learning technical skills, art appreciation and learning about the history of and production of art.

### *Irish primary school visual arts education curriculum*

The Irish primary school revised curriculum was launched almost a quarter of a century ago (NCCA, 1999c) and overall, this was welcomed by education professionals at primary level as being a significant development in the history of Irish education (Irish National Teachers' Organisation, 2000). The curriculum was professionally developed with a phased approach and visual arts was included as one of the subjects in the first phase of the implementation of this revised curriculum.

The curriculum is underpinned by the principle that the “child must be the designer” and have personal input into all art created (NCCA, 1999a, p. 12). In essence, children simply

will not progress in their art making if they are subject to adults imposing their artistic will upon them (Barnes, 1990). Whilst this is a principle that is supported by a wealth of research (Gentle, 1988; Matthews, 1999; Morgan, 1995), and explicitly outlined in the curriculum (NCCA, 1999b), we see that in reality this principle is not being applied to all teaching in Ireland. Research indicates that children's artwork in primary school can be overly prescriptive and lesson focus often concerns product as opposed to process (DES, 2005; INTO, 2009). This is widely recognised as poor practice (Gibson, 2020; Huzjak & Krajnc, 2017).

The curriculum is divided into six strands: drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction, and fabric and fibre (NCCA, 1999b). Within each of these strands, strand units consist of creating artwork in each of those strand areas/media and looking and responding to artwork. The curriculum guides teachers to begin art lessons and activities with one of the four following starting points or stimuli: working from children's experience and imagination, using materials and tools as stimulus, working from observation and curiosity, and using the work of artists and craftspeople as stimulus. The table below explains the implementation of the four starting points in the classroom.

Table 1

*Starting points in 1999 Visual Arts Education Curriculum (NCCA, 1999b)*

Starting Point:	Implementation:
<i>Materials and tools</i>	Pupils experience the handling and manipulating of materials/tools so they can become more confident at working with them and use it as a stimulus to create a piece of artwork.
<i>Pupil's own experience and imagination</i>	Pupils create a piece of artwork using their own imagination and previous experiences as a prompt. This should be supported by working from observation.
<i>Observations and curiosity</i>	Pupils' art presented with object(s) as a starting point whereby they observe the properties and characteristics of objects and their interplay with each other and with the background and create a piece of artwork based on this.
<i>Other artist's work</i>	Pupils should be exposed to a wide range of artworks from varying periods, styles and movements. In appreciating these pieces of art they develop an ability to read them and in turn are inspired to create their own artwork. It is important to not that their own work should not be a direct imitation.

The curriculum document and teacher guidelines document both have no mention of the concept of the teacher sharing their own artwork with the children (NCCA, 1999a, 1999b). The current main visual arts education curriculum document (NCCA, 1999b) is supported by the visual arts education teacher guidelines, a document that offers exemplars and illustrations for lessons in each strand in a non-prescriptive way (NCCA, 1999a). This concept of providing teachers with practical exemplars is quite rare in occurrence on a worldwide level, with most visual arts curricula only outlining the attainment targets for each curriculum level (Ní Bhroin, 2012).

A key difference between the current Irish primary visual arts education curriculum and its predecessor is that the focus shifted from *arts and crafts* to *the visual arts*. This new *visual arts* curriculum included the previously unexplored area of aesthetic education whereby the pupil is a receiver of art (INTO, 2009). This is provided for by the balance between facilitation for expressive activities, within the *making art* strand, and the opportunities provided for pupils to observe and respond to works of art in varying media, styles, and contexts, within the *looking and responding* strand (NCCA, 1999b). This curriculum also places a huge emphasis on the development of the pupil's imagination through the principle of the pupil having a hugely substantial personal input into all pieces of art that are created (Ní Bhroin, 2012). As such, this curriculum is seen to recommend that “the process of making is as valuable as the final product” (NCCA, 1999a). For this reason, this research seeks to explore the creative process with children in the classroom through the implementation of the Teacher as Artist approach including its modelling, making, thinking aloud, and inviting children's questioning.

The current Irish visual arts education curriculum is child-centred with the child taking the role of an active agent in their learning (Pardjono, 2016), driven by their natural sense of wonder and curiosity, and using their prior knowledge as a foundation from which they can build and develop their learning and understanding (NCCA, 1999c). Once more, whilst this is emphasised in the espoused curriculum, research on the ground shows that this is not materialising to its full extent with visual arts lessons being overly prescriptive and with a focus on product in some cases (DES, 2005; INTO, 2009). Harden & Crosby (2000) describe child-centred learning as putting the focus on the pupils' learning and approaching learning in terms of what pupils do to achieve this, rather than what the teacher does. This definition highlights the principle of the pupil 'doing'.



Lea, Stephenson, & Troy (2003) summarise some of the research on child-centred learning to include the followings common principles:

Table 2

*Principles common to child-centred learning (Lea, Stephenson & Troy, 2003, p. 322)*

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Principles common to child-centred learning
The reliance on active rather than passive learning
An emphasis on deep learning and understanding
Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the pupil
An increased sense of autonomy in the learner
An interdependence between teacher and learner
Mutual respect within the learner teacher relationship
A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process

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These principles are ones that encapsulate the TAA approach. Within this approach, pupils learn actively through engaging with the creative process and the decisions that come to the fore as part of this process. Children are encouraged to question both the teacher's artwork and their own artwork to gain a deeper understanding. They are given more choices in terms of the content of their artwork, and the materials and resources they have access to in the creation of their artwork: This increases their autonomy and furthermore instils a sense of responsibility and accountability within them with regards to their artmaking. The role of the teacher as artist (TAA) realigns the dynamics of the art lesson and shows an interdependence between the teacher and pupils, while promoting a respect of both parties as a learner and artist.

Some of the principles outlined above are features that are evident in the visual arts education curriculum in theory (NCCA, 1999a). The curriculum emphasises active learning. It furthermore promotes child autonomy and the importance of deeper learning; however, we see that in practice, these dimensions are not being met when we consider the prescriptive

nature of lessons (DES 2005; INTO, 2009). From a pupil perspective, this style of learning appears to positive towards pupils as when pupils who were engaging with the new curriculum were asked what they liked doing most in school, they were unanimous in stating that visual arts was one of their two favourite subjects in school (DES, 2005).

The Aistear framework is used by primary teachers in the junior half of Irish primary schools alongside the 1999 curriculum to support the children through exploring and thinking (National Council for Curriculum & Assessment NCCA, 2009a). Whilst the primary teacher enables the pupil to explore their creativity, it is important to note that like the 1999 curriculum, Aistear is child-led, with the teacher maintaining a facilitative stance, providing opportunities for learning (National Council for Curriculum & Assessment NCCA, 2009b). The framework notes the role of the teacher as being mainly observational, joining in with play activities on occasion, but not directing/forcing activities. This contrasts greatly not only with the TAA approach, but also with a wealth of research that underpins the TAA approach, which argues that a visual arts educator's own artistic experiences and practice is of central importance in their work as educator (Andrews, 2004; Barnes, 1990; Hausman, 1967; Kim & McDonough, 2011; Loughran, 2002; Loughran & Berry, 2005; Pringle, 2010).

#### *Concerns regarding the teaching of visual arts education in Irish primary schools*

The phased implementation of the new Irish primary curriculum was supported by two bodies: the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and School Development Planning Service (SDPS). Their respective responsibilities were to mediate the new curriculum for Irish primary teachers and make professional development possible to enable effective implementation of this revised curriculum in schools, and to assist planning therein (DES, 2005).

As part of this implementation, teachers attended two days in-service training in visual arts. Studies show that participating teachers felt that the training was of a good quality overall in terms of the instruction received (Cleary, 2010; DES, 2005), however, upon further investigation, into one research survey, it became apparent that participating teacher's felt that the quantity of in-service training provided fell short of what they needed. "Almost half of the teachers found their in-service inadequate in preparing them for the implementation of the revised curriculum. Further training, of the same high standard as that already received, is what these teachers felt was necessary" (Gallagher, 2006, p. 25). Teacher training was described as compacted and condensed and research shows that teachers would have welcomed continuous professional development opportunities on an on-going needs basis (O'Connell, 2006). This was a viewpoint that was echoed through the INTO's Consultative Conference on Education at the time (INTO, 2006).

The inspectorate revealed that the strand, *looking and responding*, was not being sufficiently catered for in most classes (DES, 2005). Ní Bhroin (2012) pinpoints that the challenge here is for teachers to effectively use works of art as stimuli for pupils to make their own artwork as well as to facilitate the development of their understanding and appreciation of the artistic work. Whilst the curriculum is strong in its broad, exploratory, process-based nature, its implementation lacks a focus on observing and responding to art (INTO, 2009). This aspect of the creative process is one that has been investigated largely on an international level and is an integral part of the studio thinking framework (Hetland et al., 2015).

It is reported that assessment stands as an area of significant confusion and concern for teachers within the context of the 1999 curriculum as it has been regarded to as "out of bounds" and an "anathema to the philosophy of visual arts" (DES, 2005, p. 125). The inspectorate also noted that in almost two-thirds of Irish classrooms, the main assessment tool

being used was teacher observation, however, most of these observations remained unrecorded. In the one fifth of classrooms where pupil portfolios were found to be in use, the inspectorate found that their use was sporadic and limited. This was found to be the case despite the teacher guidelines highlighting that assessment plays an integral part in the teaching and learning of visual arts education (NCCA, 1999a).

The current visual arts education curriculum provides four varying starting points which act as stimuli for the development of a visual arts lesson as outlined above. Research shows that many teachers in Ireland veer towards an over-dependency on working from children's experience and imagination as a starting point for lessons (Flannery, 2010). Flannery highlights that because of this, the other three suggested starting points can be sidelined by teachers in visual arts. The Inspectorate review (DES, 2005) highlighted that only one third of teachers reported that pupils in their classes had opportunities to see artists, craftspeople or designers working in their environment. This reported also highlighted that just under ten percent of teacher identified their own knowledge/confidence in visual arts as a teacher as being a challenge to them in teaching visual arts. This is despite the curriculum stating that the teacher takes the role of facilitator, not that of a professional artist (NCCA, 1999a).

What is worth noting also is that the teacher's artwork or the teacher's creation of artwork is not mentioned as a suggested or possible starting point for visual arts activities. In this sense, the teacher is not expected to create their own artwork in the classroom, but by contrast, pupils are expected to engage with the creative process without the teacher modelling such process explicitly. This advice contrasts studies that show that in teaching and learning, effective modelling improves the quality of learning (Kim & McDonough, 2011; Loughran & Berry, 2005; Loughran, 2002). Under a more specific lens, in visual arts education, research also promotes the use of modelling as a valuable part of the facilitation of

learning (Cole, 2012; Hetland et al., 2015; Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, & Abghari, 2004; Tomljenovic, 2015). Moreover, Palmer (2007) emphasises that “good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (p.10) because “we are drawn to a body of knowledge [that] shed[s] light on our identity as well as on the world” (p. 26). For the primary teacher, this means sharing their own artistic identity and their own engagement with the creative process. The Department of Education and Skills (2012) emphasises the importance of “skilled professional artists of all disciplines working for and with schools in the making, receiving and interpreting of a wide range of arts experiences” (p. 10), despite reports that this presents logistical problems for schools (INTO, 2009). I am proposing that the TAA approach could bridge this gap in visual arts education in Ireland.

Whilst there is no advocacy for teacher modelling and art making in the 1999 visual arts education curriculum (NCCA 1999a), we see that the concept of teacher modelling as part of the approach to learning is evident in the 1999 English language curriculum (National Council for Curriculum & Assessment NCCA, 1999d), as well as the new primary language curriculum (National Council for Curriculum & Assessment NCCA, 2019). It is also evident in the areas of music (NCCA, 1999e) and drama (NCCA, 1999f). The curriculum as a whole does not specifically advocate for teacher modelling, it does promote the concept of learning through guided activity (NCCA, 1999c).

#### Defining teacher and artist

Young (2013) reminds us that the search for meaning within identity is universal. This is true most especially in the case of the visual arts educators who identify both as artist and as educator (Daichendt, 2010 & 2009; Thornton, 2011). In the Irish context, the teacher has been described as having “frontline responsibility for providing a broad and balanced arts education for the children in his/her care” (Morrissey, 2013, p. 41). It is widely accepted that the teacher provides for a learning environment and tries to build a rapport with pupils,

developing a sense of belonging (Chickering & Gamson, 1989; Ramsden, 2003; Torff & Sessions, 2005). However, it is also very important for them to have an educator who not only is confident in their own artistic competence, but furthermore, uses their artistic practice to inform their teaching methodologies (Graham & Goetz Zwirn, 2010). This is practice that is encouraged by the Department of Education and Skills (DES, 2012).

Thornton (2003) encapsulates the meaning of TAA as a person who both makes and teaches art. This dual practice is recognised by numerous researchers as having a strong correlation between a good visual arts teacher and being also active as an artist (Hetland et al., 2015; Wilson, 2008). Eisner (1979) extends this viewpoint in his promotion of what he describes as artistic teaching because:

teachers who function artistically in the classroom not only provide children with important sources of artistic experiences, they also provide a climate that welcomes exploration and risk taking and cultivates the disposition to play. To be able to play with ideas is to feel free to throw them into new combinations, to experiment, and even to 'fail' (p. 160).

Sullivan (2010) argues that the facilitative stance adopted by visual arts teachers is to allow for a blending of logic and consistency with imagined potentials where reason and sensation are very much compatible. Primary teachers who also identify as artists (Primary teacher-artist) are comfortable with creative epistemologies (Hall, 2010). Creative epistemologies have three core requirements: being novel, being valuable and being intentional (Boden, 2004; Gaut, 2010; Sánchez-Dorado, 2020; Sternberg & Lubart, 1999). Hall argues that teachers who identify as artist bring these requirements into play also, and that this is a positive thing.

At this juncture, one can see that the blending of the identity of teacher and the identity of artist are complementary to one another in the identity of TAA and can inspire the child to take risks and engage with the creative process meaningfully. This is an identity that

Adams (2005) describes as being strong by its very own nature: the “strength of the artist teacher lies in the fact that it unites a duality in practices, the liberated artistic practitioner with the teacher in a single concept” (p. 24). This observation is supported by Anderson (1981) who explains that in realising the contradistinction between the roles of the artist and the teacher of art, it must be remembered that the roles of both are not separate entities, rather, there is a great deal of interdisciplinary fusion. Whilst there are distinct differences between both of these roles, it must be remembered that they are also complementary to one another, and that these distinctions between both identities/roles offer a great deal to the pupils’ learning (Daichendt, 2009)

In this research, to avoid confusion in relation to these entities, I will use specific terminology to refer to these different identities to avoid ambiguity. The *primary teacher* (PT) refers to a mainstream teacher in the context of the Irish primary school system who teaches visual arts but has no specialist knowledge of the field and does not identify as an artist. Whilst they have no specialist insight and whilst they may not identify as an artist, they are still fully qualified to teach the full range of subjects within the Irish curriculum, including the visual arts education curriculum as they have completed their teaching qualification. Some research argues that there are some hidden strengths related to a generalist teacher teaching art (Holt, 1997), however Ní Bhroin (2012) highlights that whilst there may be some positives, these will not compensate for a lack of foundational knowledge and “hands-on” (p. 52) experience in visual arts.

The *primary teacher-specialist* (PTS) refers to the primary school teachers who have undertaken a specialist study in visual arts at undergraduate or postgraduate level. Like the PT, the PTS describes someone who is fully qualified to teach visual arts at primary level in Ireland, however, they have a more in-depth experience into visual arts education having completed a specialist course. This is due to the more generous contact hours they receive in

visual arts education as well as the smaller group numbers within workshops (Ní Bhroin & Cleary, 2018). In the Irish context, it is important to note that a majority of prospective pupil teachers have not studied visual arts at second level (Cleary, 2010; Kevlihan, 2007). On an international level, research shows that trends are of a similar nature and that furthermore, there are issues in PT education related to an apparent lack of basic skills and experience in art making on the teacher's behalf which leads to low levels of confidence and competence in visual arts (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Chapman, 2005).

The *primary teacher-artist* (PTA) refers to those who are qualified to teach the primary visual arts education curriculum in Ireland and who also identify themselves as being as artist as well as a teacher. The PTA may or may not have had specialist training at undergraduate or postgraduate level in visual arts education. A *practising artist* refers to someone who identifies as an artist and creates at least one piece of artwork per year outside of their work/academic obligations. The *teacher as artist approach* (TAA) is the approach that I am advocating for whereby the teacher engages with the creative process in creating their own artwork and the discourse that surrounds this process in the presence of the pupils in the classroom.

#### Research purpose

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to gauge the level of efficacy of the TAA approach as a starting point for visual arts activities or lessons in the context of primary school education. As such, this research's purpose is driven by the need for curriculum development and implementation. In line with this, this study's purpose is to offer an insight into a new approach that is proposed to expand on and improve the current approach outlined in the 1999 curriculum (NCCA, 1999a). This exploratory case study offers an insight into the proposal of a new approach to visual arts education; the TAA approach. This approach is underpinned by the studio thinking framework and is rooted in the concept of the teacher



being in role as artist, engaging with the creative process in the classroom context. This study outlines the TAA approach and analyses its efficacy with relation to pupils' abilities and of both the pupil's and teacher's understanding of the creative process. This study is driven by my desire to identify whether this approach will improve the teaching of visual arts education within its context. This approach was designed to both complement and improve the teaching of visual arts education with the current curriculum.

#### Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to evaluate the efficacy of the Teacher-As-Artist Approach for teaching visual arts in the primary classroom.

Research shows that whilst the 1999 education curriculum was welcomed with open arms as a moment of great educational development in Ireland (INTO, 2000), however, there are contrasts to be seen between the espoused curriculum and the teaching and learning that is taking place in classrooms in Ireland (DES, 2005; INTO, 2006). More specifically, in visual arts education, the PTs have shown a tendency towards over-depending on only one of the starting points for visual arts activities: Working from children's experience and imagination (Flannery, 2010). This presents as a huge issue of concern as other starting points are being neglected. Research shows that over 35% of PTs in Ireland admitted that they hardly ever or never use the work of an artist or craftsperson as a stimulus (DES, 2005). The same research shows that over 77% of teachers reported having hardly ever or never had an artist in residence in schools and over 78% of teachers stated that they hardly ever or never used ICT to teach about how artist work within their environments. This overwhelming lack of observation of artists on the pupil's behalf greatly contradicts what Hetland et. al (2015) see as being crucial to effective visual arts education.

In *Studio Thinking*, Hetland et. al (2015) highlight the importance of creating a studio culture and modelling approaches, processes and attitudes stands as an integral factor in the studio structure. In line with this, my research is proposing that the teacher should model their own artmaking as a starting point to visual art activities and lessons. This Teacher-As-Artist (TAA) approach complements and expands on the current visual arts education curriculum. This approach is grounded in studio thinking research that promotes the discovery of what excellent visual arts teachers teach, how they teach and what children learn in their classes (Hetland et al., 2015). The TAA approach involves the teacher modelling the creative process to pupils and sharing about their own artist work with pupils. This involves the teacher creating their own artwork in front of the pupils. This process is characterised by a number of steps that model the creative process of artmaking for the pupils.

#### *TAA approach*

My project centres around one particular approach to the teaching of visual arts education in primary schools: The teacher-as-artist approach. The teacher-as-artist approach is characterised by the class teacher working as an artist with the class group. Whilst this approach holds similarities to the concept of the *artist-teacher* (Daichendt, 2009), it must be noted that the *artist-teacher* approach involves the integration of artistic experiences into the classroom and involves a philosophy of teaching based upon artistic practice (Dainchendt, 2009). The teacher-as-artist (TAA) approach outlines a specific characteristics to which a PT can use to approach the teaching of visual arts, and furthermore, whilst the TAA approach facilitates for PTSs and PTAs, it also it something that can be utilised by PTs which is not catered for by the concept of the artist teacher (Hoekstra, 2015).The TAA creates their own artwork in the classroom in the presence of the pupils. This approach is underpinned by a number of components that have been outlined below.

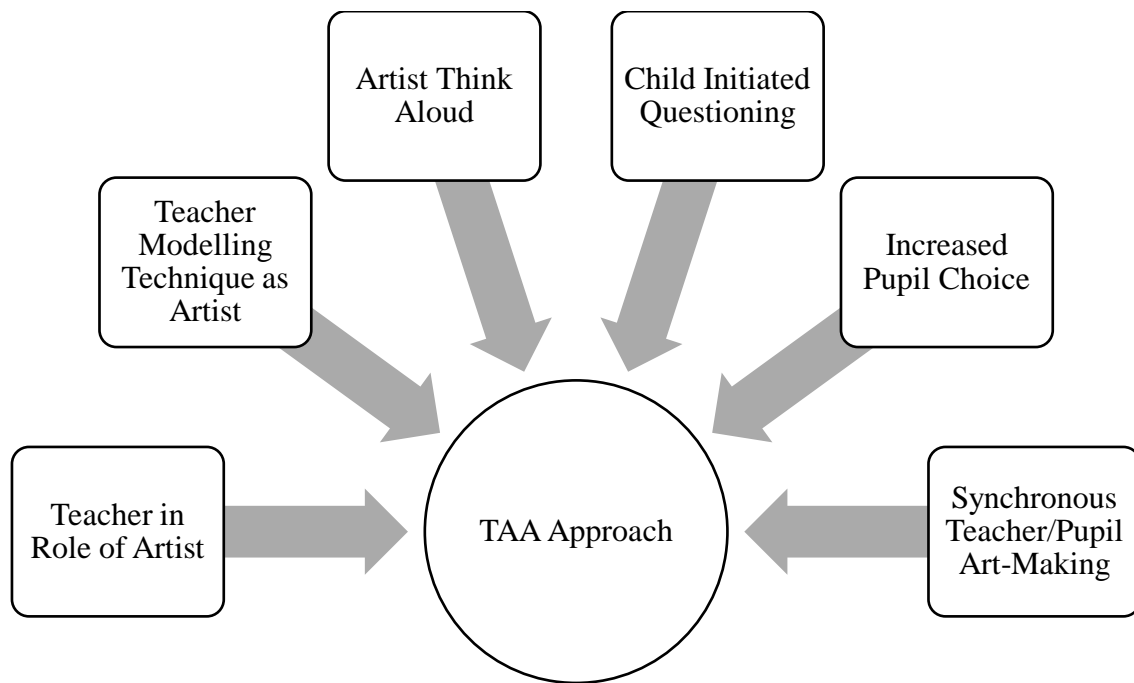


Figure 1

#### *Components of Teacher As Artist Approach*

For the purpose of this research, a series of (TAA) visual arts lessons will be planned, taught and evaluated in keeping with the Irish primary school visual arts education curriculum guidelines, specifications and standards (NCCA, 1999b). This exploratory case study evaluates the efficacy of the TAA approach in relation two of the four main concepts that underpin the 1999 curriculum assessment recommendations (NCCA, 1999b). This study focused on the following two:

1. expressive abilities and skills
2. disposition towards visual arts (NCCA, 1999b)

Assessment under these two areas in the context of this exploratory case study will be outlined in further detail later.

My project aims to evaluate the efficacy of a TAA approach for teaching visual arts in the primary classroom to improve my own practice and share about the efficacy of this

alternative approach with other teachers. As part of this TAA approach, I will create my own artwork in front of the class.

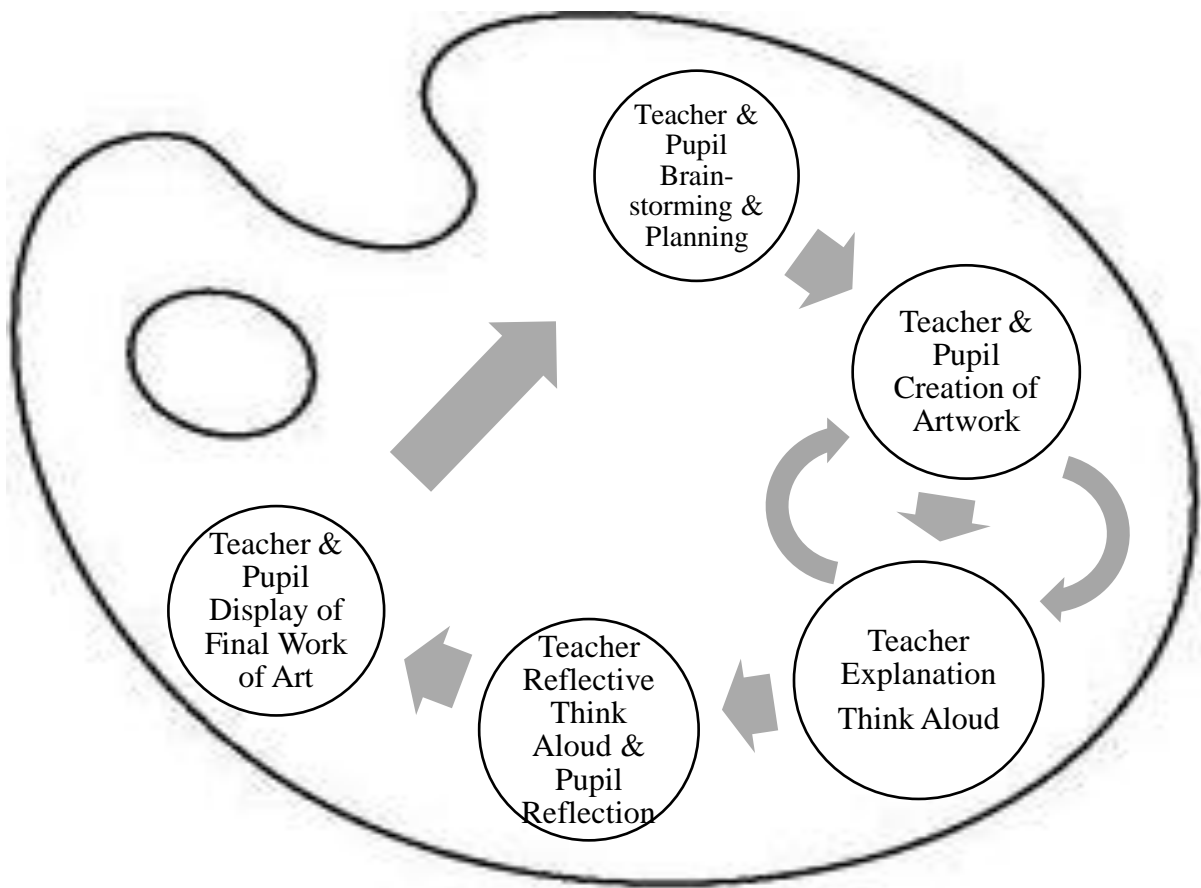


Figure 2

*The stages of the TAA approach.*

The proposed starting point that is the TAA approach consists of five stages as highlighted in Figure 1 above. The initial stage of this approach involves the PT's initial brainstorming, designing, and planning of the artwork in front of the pupils. The current visual arts education curriculum promotes the pupil's planning of their own artwork (NCCA, 1999b). At this stage of the approach, the PT engages in a think aloud, a strategy often used to monitor comprehension (Baumann, Seifert-Kessel, & Jones, 1992) to demonstrate their planning of their own artwork. The PT informs pupils of the criteria of the artwork expected

and the teacher begins to brainstorm using think aloud strategy to model the generation and development of ideas. The teacher uses sketches to assist in this modelling of planning also.

The next two stages of the TAA approach are intertwined. They involve the teacher creating the artwork in front of the pupils, and whilst doing so, using the think aloud strategy to highlight the choices that are facing them, as artist. In doing so, they are emphasising the different options that the TAA could choose and reflecting upon potential advantages and disadvantages of the varying options. This explicit modelling scaffolds the child towards making their own decisions which is emphasised as being of great importance (Barnes, 1990). Upon deciding, they explain why they have chosen this option. This explicit modelling of the creative process is advocated under the studio thinking framework (Hetland et al., 2015). During this step, children are observing and being guided by four of the studio habits of mind that this framework advocates for (Hetland et al., 2015): developing craft in terms of techniques modelling, understanding art worlds and how artists interact in a community, envisioning the next step for the work of art in progress during the creative process and observing visual contexts at a closer level.

The TAA will justify the decisions being made using the think aloud strategy so as to allow for the piece of art to advance. Should the teacher realise that they have made a mistake at a later stage in the creative process or should then wish they had done something differently, this is also to be modelled to the pupils to highlight the studio habit of mind that is engaging and persisting (Hetland et al., 2015). The stages of the creation of the artwork and the explanatory think aloud are ones that are repeated numerous times throughout the TAA approach within the creative process. Using think aloud is advocated for because of its instantaneous nature whereby thoughts or opinions are voiced during the process meaning there is no problems resulting from retrospective thinking (Yoshida, 2008) and also, it reveals more details of thinking and complexity of the reader's thoughts (Afflerback, 2000).

The penultimate stage of the TAA approach involves the teacher modelling their own reflecting and self-critiquing of their own artwork and the decisions they made throughout the creative process. This is in line with one of the integral studio habits of mind from the studio thinking framework (Hetland et al., 2015): Reflection. This habit is subdivided into two categories; questioning and explaining which involves learning to talk with others about one's work, and evaluating, which entails judging one's work in relation to the work of others or the standard in the field. These are both modelled by the teacher in the TAA approach so as to encourage pupils to engage in their own reflection. The final stage of the TAA approach can be, but doesn't necessarily have to be, modelled simultaneously with the penultimate stage. The final stage of the TAA approach is when the finished project is presented to the pupils. The teacher will allow the children time to ask questions where possible. It is important to note that the teacher may not necessarily be finished their artwork at the same time as the children, however, this can be shown to them at a later stage.

It is important to note that as part of the pupil-centred, facilitative stance of the TAA, the PT is engaging in a co-participative approach and Jeffrey & Craft (2004) explain that this encourages the "creative teaching of the teacher and the creative learning of the learner" (p. 86) as well as encouraging the learner to explore in their learning. Through this creative teaching and creative learning, it is not only the child that is learning - a reflective teacher also learns from the child's learning of art both in terms of pedagogy and also in terms of their developing artistry. LeBlanc, Davidson, Ryu, & Irwin (2015) highlight that "we can use art to teach and understand the potential in human beings; however, we also... understand that art is also a teacher" (p. 371).

#### *Traditional approach in comparison to teacher as artist approach*

The TAA approach involved the PT working as artist both as a starting point for the visual arts education lesson, and during the lesson whilst conferencing/discussing artwork

with pupils. It can be applied to all visual arts education lessons and similarly, lessons can be altered to incorporate this approach as their starting point. The table below outlines the main similarities and differences between the traditional approach to the structure of visual arts lessons and the lessons structured under the TAA approach. In Appendix C, there is an explanation of the traditional approach as outlined in current curricular exemplars and how it would vary to the TAA approach. Appendix C offers an insight into one of the exemplar lessons from the teacher guidelines.

Table 3

*Comparison of Traditional Approach and TAA Approach*

	Traditional approach	TAA Approach
<i>Starting Points</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials and tools</li> <li>• Observation and curiosity</li> <li>• Experience and imagination</li> <li>• Work by other professional artists</li> </ul>	Teacher as artist
<i>Lesson Introduction:</i>	Class discussion of stimulus	Teacher as artist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modelling technique</li> <li>• Thinking aloud</li> <li>• Creative decisions making</li> </ul> Children’s questioning
<i>Lesson Development:</i>	Facilitation of an art making response.	Whole class synchronous art making with teacher as artist including increased children’s choice and voice in art making.
<i>Lesson Conclusion:</i>	Whole class discussion and self-evaluation of work	Whole class discussion and self-evaluation of work

## Research question and sub-questions

As mentioned above, the aim of this exploratory case study is to gauge the potential of the TAA approach as a starting point for visual arts activities or lessons in the context of primary school education. One main underlying research question will serve to guide this effort:

*How does the TAA approach potentially impact the teaching of visual arts in the primary school?*

In order to explore this question in detail, I will be focusing on the following, more specific sub-questions:

- 1. How does the TAA approach potentially affect children's expressive abilities and skills?*
- 2. How does the TAA approach potentially alter children's understanding of the creative process in visual arts?*
- 3. How does the TAA approach potentially alter the teacher/ researcher's understanding of the creative process in visual arts?*

To explore these three questions, I researched, designed and planned for a series of five visual arts lessons underpinned by the TAA approach. The design of these lessons was supported by an initial pilot TAA approach lesson. This involved the primary school teacher/researcher working as artist in front of the pupils using an approach that is interactive, explicitly modelled and in advocacy of the studio thinking framework.

There is a great deal of research into the benefits of the input of the artist practitioner in contexts such as artist-in-residence (Froude, 2005; Paris & O'Neill, 2018) teacher-artist partnership (Kenny & Morrissey, 2016; Wolf, 2008) and visiting teaching artist (Holdhus & Espeland, 2013). However, there is little research available in the context of the TAA



approach, whereby it is the insider class teacher as opposed to an external visitor who models the creative process and shares their work. This study hypothesises that the TAA approach will expand children's expressive abilities and skills as well as developing their dispositions towards visual arts as a result of experiencing their class teacher create art in class and be happy to have his work critiqued.

#### Research positionality

“Simply acknowledging that one's views are not inevitable—that one's positionality can bias one's epistemology—is itself a leap for many people, one that can help make us more open to the world's possibilities” (Takacs, 2003, p. 28). Holmes (2020) highlights that positionality can affect the totality of the research process and furthermore advocates for an open and honest disclosure of positionality. As a primary school teacher within the Irish education system, my professional qualification lies in the area of children's education.

That said, I have engaged in a specialist course at undergraduate level in visual arts education and furthermore, I identify both as teacher, as an artist. I advocate strongly for the teaching of visual arts and I think that teacher activeness and commitment to the encouragement of creativity is key to the implementation of a visual arts programme. I believe that a PT needs to engage with pupils during a visual arts lesson in a way that shows their respect not only for visual arts, but for the creative process and all pupils' creative decisions. My passion for and special interest in the visual arts stems from my youth. Having this specialist interest in the visual arts means that my positionality leaves me in favour of meaningful arts education for pupils whereby the teacher is active in creating a non-prescriptive, choice based, motivated environment in which pupils can engage with both the visual arts and the creative process with autonomy and creativity. I think that the supportive environment in which visual arts education takes place allows for pupils to develop self-

confidence and self-esteem, when visual arts are engaged with in a serious manner, as a subject in its own right.

Moreover, as someone who is comfortable with their own competence in the area of visual arts, I feel comfortable working both as artist, and as teacher, and furthermore recognise the value of my specialist knowledge and interest in the visual arts to my teaching of same. I have both formal and informal experiences as an artist; Having undertaken a minor specialism in visual arts at undergraduate level as well as having attended a variety of workshops, I initiated the Creative Schools programme in the school I work in (Creative Ireland, 2022), I have set up and run a weekly studio environment after school visual arts class for students in my school and I have also entered a variety of competitions in varying media of the visual arts, winning at both regional and national level. I think that all pupils should have the opportunity to witness their teacher engaging with the creative process from start to finish, so as to encourage children to understand and respect this process and in turn, the visual arts as a whole. Having engaged in visual art making in a studio scenario, I understand from the learner's perspective the benefits of this meaningful, effective learning environment to pupils of visual arts. I believe that meaningful visual arts education plays an integral part in a pupil's holistic development, aiding their social and emotional development as well as assisting in developing thinking skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking.

As well as identifying as both teacher and artist, through my current academic work I am developing another facet of my identity, in identifying myself as a researcher in this area. I had five years experience teaching when I began the field research element of this work and I had been mainstream class teacher to the participants in this study for four months prior to implementation of this field research element. This researcher aspect of my identity allows me to ask questions regarding practice and pedagogy in the area of visual arts and

furthermore to use various tools both artistic and otherwise to come to answers/solutions to these questions. This element of my identity is complementary to my identity both as teacher and as artist as it facilitates for professional and personal development in these areas.

This background detail has been included to situate myself in the study and illustrate my identity both as PT, artist and researcher: identifying both as PTA and PTS, which underpins the study and impacts the area under investigation. Peshkin (1988) maintains that it is better that researchers are aware of their subjectivity and the role this takes in research rather than assuming that it can be disregarded altogether. I acknowledge that being aware of my subjectivity involves knowing the qualities I possess that will enrich the research whilst simultaneously being conscious of the ideas and beliefs I possess that could possibly result in the distortion of the data being presented.

#### Organisation of thesis

This introduction stands as the first of five chapters in this thesis and its aim was to offer the reader an overview of context of how this research arose as well as in insight into how this research relates to issues that are prominent in the world of arts education during this influential time of curriculum change. This chapter has highlighted the issues of concern, most notably in the areas of approaches to visual arts pedagogy, and the PT's confidence in visual arts education both within Ireland and as revealed on a more international level. Moreover, it has offered an insight into the core elements that underpin the proposed TAA approach.

Chapter two presents the review of the literature relevant to this research. This is organised into four main sections. The initial section relates to agency, voice and choice in visual arts education and their implications for PTs. The second section explores the concepts of control, freedom and assistance, and expresses a variety of perspectives as to where the

appropriate balance between these concepts lies in the context of primary visual arts education. The third section addresses the studio thinking framework, mantle of the expert and the TAA approach. Finally, the last section investigates the teaching strategies of modelling, think aloud and questioning in the context of visual arts education.

The third chapter offers insight into the design of this research project. It explains the justification for using an exploratory case study which has shaped this piece of qualitative research and furthermore elaborates on the context of the participants involved in this study. Following this, it provides an outline of the procedures followed throughout the process of this research project. It also gives a clear portrayal of the research methods involved in this project and the ethical considerations that were required to allow for this project to be undertaken.

Chapter four of this study introduces the reader to the findings of this research and discusses the underlying themes and perspectives that arose because of thematic analysis through engaging with this research design. This research used multiple methods and is arts-based both in its arts-based methods and in my own creative practice that has been associated with answering research questions through the means of visual arts.

The final chapter of this project acts as conclusion to the project. Through discussion of and reflection upon the findings, it highlights any limitations to this project and moreover, it offers recommendations both for visual arts education practices and for further studies.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Philosopher and Professor, Maxine Greene, uses the words ‘awakening’ to describe the impact that the arts have on our imagination, our ability to notice and care about what is happening in the world and even on our sense of urgency and power to change (Davis, 2008). For PTs, this poses a great responsibility to inspire pupils in the visual arts, to fulfil this awakening to the best of the PT’s abilities. Pressfield (2002) informs us that “the best and only thing that one artist can do for another is to serve as an example and an inspiration” (p. 20), however, in the context of the Irish primary school, PTs do not have to be specialised in the area of visual arts; by contrast, the National Council for Curriculum & Assessment – Teacher Guidelines (NCCA, 1999a) suggest that the PT needs to have an understanding of children’s visual imagery and some practical experiences in the processes of artmaking.

This generalist, yet child-centred and facilitative approach to the visual arts that is recommended by the Irish primary school visual arts curriculum is in keeping with Pressfield’s emphasis on learning from the example of artists because the work of an artist or designer is mentioned as one of the four potential starting points for visual arts lessons. That said, when considering the latter, it is important to note that research has shown that this means of stimulus that is promoted in the espoused curriculum is not being implemented to the extent it was intended (DES, 2005; INTO, 2010).

This literature review chapter examines issues surrounding belonging, confidence and self-belief in the area of visual arts education, the role of agency, voice and choice in effective visual arts education, the importance of control, freedom and assistance in the teaching of visual arts, the concept of studio thinking and how it informs visual arts education, and issues pertaining to the use of modelling and PT demonstration as an effective teaching strategy in the teaching of visual arts.

## Belonging, confidence and self-belief

Visual arts education provides a catalyst for the development of social and emotional self-confidence (Hetland et al., 2015). In this sense, it is apparent that pupils must know that the teacher values their contribution and capability, and this outlook is one that is supported by (Barnes, 1990) who specifies that in a situation contrary to that presented by Hetland et al., (2015) that:

predetermined, teacher-directed ways of working can have the effect of undermining children's self-confidence and independence of thought. Instead of becoming used to making their own artistic decisions, the security they derive is gained from 'getting things right in the teacher's eyes'. They become dependent, rewarding to teach maybe, but miss out on the very individuality which creative work is meant to encourage (p. 31).

As such, PTs need to ensure that the facilitation for the increase in a child's artistic self-confidence and self-belief, through creative practice, is central to their pedagogies. For PTs, one of their primary goals is for the development of the pupil's confidence both generally, and in their artistry. Oğuz (2010) adds to this in explaining that supportive environments encourage pupils and increase their self-confidence, so that they love themselves and can be happy. Furthermore, support and security are recognised as being key factors that affect pupil's commitment to learning and their sense of identity as learners (Burnard & Swann, 2010). The Inspectorate review (DES, 2005) showed that over twenty percent of PTs list an increase of pupil self-confidence and self-belief as being a result of the implementation of the current curriculum. This reflects positively on the 1999 visual arts education curriculum at its introductory phase. For effective visual arts education to occur, children need to feel supported, however, as mentioned by Burnard and Swann (2010), they also require a feeling of safety and Malchiodi (1998) promotes this safety from the perspective of the pupil physically feeling as safe as possible in order to allow for the security they need within the physical room layout, however, safety can be viewed from a more psychological perspective

and this angle is of the same level of importance, if not of more importance as the need for providing a psychologically safe space (Hunt & West, 2006).

### *Supportive learning environment and belonging*

Pupils cannot engage in meaningful visual arts learning if they feel unsafe in a social, emotional, or psychological level and furthermore, an environment must have a non-repressive atmosphere (Nickerson, 1999). When analysing the contrary of the word *repression*, it appears pupils need a level of freedom to engage in their artistry. This is a viewpoint that is supported by the work of Dewey (1938) and it highlights the emotional needs of the child as a learner. Dewey clarifies that if these emotional needs are not met, the child cannot reach their full potential as a learner. In this sense, it is clear that an environment needs to be supportive, and this is reflected in the current Irish visual arts education curriculum which states that supportiveness should underpin the atmosphere in the visual arts classroom (NCCA, 1999a).

Furthermore, when we zone in on the area of visual arts education, how can an environment be maximally supportive of visual arts education if this environment is being catered for by a generalist PT: The concerning issue of the generalist PT as visual arts teacher is one that has been highlighted in a wealth of research (Alexander, Rose, & Woodhead, 1992; Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Garvis and Pendergast, 2011a; Hallam, Gupta, & Lee, 2008; McCoubrey, 2000;). As such, it presents a substantially significant challenge to PTs who truly strive to facilitate a meaningful visual arts education programme to ensure that an environment is supportive on a creative and expressive level. Moreover, Burnard and Swann (2010) clarify that a sense of security and belonging is necessary for a pupil to function and gain confidence and self-belief in visual arts. The visual arts also provide belonging to members of communities within this environment. This is explained by Titsworth, McKenna,

Mazer, & Quinlan (2013) who advise that the sense of liberation that visual art provides to PTs and pupils is central to the ways of belonging and being in the school environment.

### *Self-confidence and self-belief*

As such, the interrelationship between a pupil's self-confidence and self-belief in their artistry and creative practice is dependent on the environment in which they find themselves, which is facilitated for by the PT. The current visual arts education curriculum teacher guidelines emphasise the importance of the learning environment in increasing pupil's self-confidence (NCCA, 1999a). If this environment allows for the building of self-confidence and self-belief and in turn, a meaningful creative practice, then the artistry that takes place could in turn increase the pupil's belonging to the school environment and the school's artistic culture in its own right.

“A young person in training as an artist would begin with an apprenticeship with a master. Along with being educated in the skills and techniques of the craft, he would seek to encounter the underlying spirit and feeling” (Hausman, 1967, p. 13). This highlights that historically, visual arts education has involved much more than mere skill or technique, but by contrast, pupils learned about the values that underpin the underlying spirit of the artist identity. Research by Thornton (2011) puts this underlying spirit into a more modern perspective, rooted in the conflicts of current education systems in saying that the artistic, creative, educational freedom desired by many PTs needs to be echoed in the way they teach and in the manner in which they create learning environments in which both PTs and pupils can embrace these values. Thornton elaborates on this in arguing that PTs need to understand these values to maximise effective visual arts learning for pupils. Furthermore, he clarifies that there is a need for the PT to fight for the implementation of their artistic practices and pedagogies, to facilitate the development of confident art pupils in their class, regardless of the restrictions that the education system can impose on creative practice.



### *Teacher self-confidence and classroom practice*

In visual arts education, “self-belief is vital to becoming an effective artist or teacher” (Thornton, 2011, p. 35). Garvis & Pendergast (2011) concur with this viewpoint in arguing that teacher self-efficacy beliefs act as a critical motivational construct for PTs teaching in the classroom. There are some signs of positivity with regards to teacher self-efficacy in the context of Irish visual arts education at primary level. In their curriculum review, the DES (2005) reports that the implementation of this curriculum had led to an increase in some PTs’ self-confidence in the visual arts. Whilst this is encouraging, it is important to note that less than ten percent of PTs stated this, showing significant room for improvement, as another section of the same report notes that almost ten percent of PTs cited a lack of confidence in their own abilities as being a significant challenge in their teaching of visual arts. Research suggests that when PTs lack self-efficacy and belief in their teaching of art, they have no confidence or interest in teaching art (Cox, 1992). The specific use of language here shows the importance of a PTs’ self-belief as artist; in competence, skill and underlying spirit, and also as generalist teacher; in experience with children’s learning, school structures, and children’s holistic development.

PTs need to ensure that they create environments for pupils where their artistic self-belief can be cultivated and encouraged, however, this is something that will be a much more challenging task if said PTs lack self-belief. (Collins A. , 2016; Garvis, 2009b; Garvis & Lemon, 2013; Garvis, Twigg, & Pendergast, 2011b). Freire (1970) shares his belief that there is no such thing as a neutral educational process as PTs bring their own backgrounds, values and beliefs into the creative, educational environment they create for pupils, and they subconsciously share these in their various forms of communication with pupils. Furthermore, it is argued that the PT can bring “baggage” to the pupils in the environment they teach in (Gibson, 2003). This mind-set is one that is shared by Price (2007) who warns

against framing art programmes by PT's perceptions of what art is, its function and value to us on an individual level and on a wider level, and why it should be taught to pupils in visual arts classrooms. PTs' beliefs significantly influence classroom practice and furthermore, there is a wealth of research that finds that teacher beliefs have a complex, correlational, link with pupil outcomes (Hofer, 2002; Olafson & Schraw, 2006; Pajares, 1992). Visual arts educators need to be cautious as to what perceptions and values they pass onto the pupils they teach.

Research favours the promotion of an adaptive, educational environment which is one that can foster creativity (Loi & Dillon, 2006). PTs need to ensure that environments facilitate the creative process as it is clear that "in order for creative autonomy to be fostered, teachers and pupils need to be able to identify when creativity emerges and know how it should be nurtured and supported" (Zimmerman, 2009, p. 392) and this makes it clear that direct instruction of creativity is not a plausible, pedagogical notion; on the contrary, pupils need to explore and experience environments that are nurturing towards their creativity. It is interesting to note that for imagination, and in turn creativity to flourish, staff must provide an environment that fosters creative expression (Agee & Welch, 1989). Moreover, pupils' creative impulses are squashed in "convergent [restrictive] thinking environments where rejection, criticism, failure or pressure to conform will often result in a 'shut down', in order to protect their creative integrity" (Nilson, 2011, p. 138). A PT therefore needs to ensure that the learning environment is not overly convergent and is also adaptive so as to cultivate creativity. It is interesting to hear that Bloomfield & Childs (2013) note that children adjust and react to their immediate environment and as such, it becomes clear that the learning environment should not be static, but by contrast it should adjust to suit the needs of the pupil, and furthermore, the pupil is encouraged towards creative practice.

*Belonging, social interaction and dispositions towards visual art*

As highlighted above, if pupils are to develop confidence in their own artistry, they need to be part of a space in which they belong, which is centred strongly around visual arts. Pupils' aesthetic potential is innate and natural, but it must be cultivated through significant social and verbal interactions (Lim, 2004). This shows that a central element to the PT's creation of an arts education environment is the social aspect. The aesthetic development of a pupil is more so a process of a social or cultural nature. This aesthetic development has been described as not being a fully natural or biological maturation, but by contrast to this, children's social interactions significantly influence their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Pupils learn from each other, they learn about themselves, they learn from their teachers and their teachers learn from them (Mulcahey, 2004). Learning through art is a social activity, not an isolated, individual activity. The ideology of the aesthetic development of learning is a key principle of the current visual arts education curriculum and the concept of learning through social interaction is reflected greatly in this curriculum also, where there is a huge emphasis on discussion both with the PT and with the other pupils, and where the exploration and use of the language of learning plays a central role in the child's development (NCCA, 1999a).

In the context of art education, there is sometimes a conflict between this need for social interaction within the learning environment and the more traditional structures and systems in place in schools. The research of Gude (2007) presents the importance of the visual artist in this learning experience and furthers the concept of art as social activity by emphasising that visual artists create social spaces – temporary and permanent opportunities for people to connect and interact with each other. In the creation of an artistic learning environment that promotes the artistic practice of the pupils, PTs need to be reminiscent of the fact that the education system, whether it be intentionally or not, and whether it be

sufficient or not, provides the structure and discipline that society requires (Feinburg & Soltis, 2004).

In line with this, PTs need to be considerate of creative practice that is promoted in classrooms and indeed, more importantly need to be cautious of what inherent values and dispositions are being taught to pupils about attitudes towards the visual arts and the place for the visual arts both in the school and in the wider society. MacGiollari (2010) says that “our artistic faculty is integral not merely to the development of society but to human nature, and offers the observation that in Ireland today art has become separated from ordinary people. Creativity has instead been redirected towards making life easier through technology and so art has lost its primacy in daily discourse” (p. 43). It is because of this that PTAs and PTSs, feel the need to promote art to pupils, but in a way that is enjoyable, authentic, accessible and relatable to the lives of pupils and in doing so they attempt to ensure that the creative practice they engage in and feel confident at in school transfers to their lives in a wider sense. PTs need to ensure that pupils see art as something that is present everywhere as opposed to something that is divorced from everyday life.

The TAA approach promotes a safe, secure studio environment whereby pupils can feel confident and build on their self-belief, most specifically in visual arts.

#### Agency, voice and choice

While it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of the increasing of self-confidence, it also needs to be highlighted that “an art activity needs to be offered as a composition of a few creative activities with ample spaces to work, appropriate tools and materials, sufficient time and need to be in line with the child’s individual needs, abilities, and skills so that the child can make a choice on the activity he apt to work on” (Oğuz, 2010, p. 3006). This highlights the importance of offering the child a choice and while PTs in the context of visual

arts education need to provide opportunities for the pupil's own agency and control over their learning, the nature of education and learning in itself demands that PTs offer pupils some kind of model/instruction/example so as to further their existing knowledge or understanding (Murphey, Prober, & Gonzales, 2010). Kramer (2001) describes visual arts as being menaced by two sides; primeval chaos and stereotyped order, and claims that it is essential for us, as visual arts educators, to strike an appropriate balance between provision for learning, and development and ensuring that pupils have agency and control over their learning. PTs need to allow for the pupil's voice to be heard (Hooks, 2014) but Barnes admits that "it is not easy to find a good balance between over-directing children's art and simply leaving them to do as they please. There are many teachers who have tried to avoid structuring art and found out later that their children needed much clearer guidelines" (p. 31). In this regard, teaching needs to allow for the pupils to develop their artwork, but not restrict them such that the work pupils are creating is an expression of what they think and feel. For a PT, striking an appropriate balance between these two demands poses a huge challenge in itself, one that is amplified if said teacher in question has no specialist interest or experience in the arts.

Barnes (1990) states that "in a field where there are no 'right' answers, individuals learn that art can be a celebration of diversity, a celebration of individuality for its own sake" (p. 16). As a celebration of diversity of pupils and of their own personal, unique individuality, it is clear that one standard approach or option will not work for them all in their engagement with the creative process. There is also value in being confronted by new and different materials (Barnes, 1990). Barnes' viewpoint promotes the concept of engaging and experimenting with new materials as part of the creative process of learning. The current visual arts education curriculum in Ireland reflects this in emphasising exploring and experimenting with the expressive potentials of varying materials, tools and media. Flynn (2019) quotes the renowned words of Pablo Picasso who explained to journalists that "I do

not seek – I find” and this resonates with the concept of experimenting and engaging within the creative process. Research promotes this concept of experimenting and choosing what materials to engage with (Barnes, 1990) and argues that if visual arts educators and pupils pay attention to the mute nuances as they tentatively and playfully emerge in their own artwork, the pupils’ sense of who they are and who they may choose to become may be strengthened by valuing their developing choice-making (Price, 2007).

### *Choice-based approaches*

Encouraging pupil’s choice making offers pupils real choices for responding to their own ideas and interests through the making of art in a “choice-based approach” (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018; Thompson, 2015). Here, the importance of children’s voice in their own creative practice is highlighted to ensure that their creative practice authentically belongs to them, and affords them a sense of agency over their artistry. Barnes agrees with this concept and questions: “which one of us has the right to impose our own literal vision on children’s imaginative eyes?” (p. 42). His argument on this topic is simple; children will not progress in their artmaking by having PTs force adult concepts, or opinions regarding decisions in their artmaking, on them. If child autonomy is to be encouraged in visual arts education, it must be noted that PTs need to teach pupils to look carefully, instead of over directing them to avoid reducing them to only a fraction of their expressive power and energy (Barnes, 1990). Such cultivation of pupil autonomy is classified as pupils having and accepting the ability to ‘not know’ and learning to improvise (Northumbria University, 2009). While this is a meaningful, worthwhile process, pupils need time to develop it (Hall, 2010). In essence, PTs need to ensure that they are facilitating pupils’ autonomy through promoting a choice-making approach, whilst being continually aware of the natural tendency to over-direct them. Ultimately, children’s artwork must be free from what is described as “direct, external control” (MacGiollari, 2010, p. 44).

Aesthetics is defined as understanding the nature of art through a range of concepts (Lankfield, 1992) and this concept can be elaborated on, explaining that “aesthetics, like all philosophical enquiry is based on wonder” (Mulcahey, 2004, p. 11). For a pupil to engage meaningfully with this sense of wonder as part of their creative process, they need to be offered choices that are in some way related to their world. Learning begins with a person’s human sense, which is their understanding of the world that has been built through their varying experiences (Donaldson, 1978). This is an idea that is supported by Mulcahey who argues that if what is presented to children is distant or irrelevant to their human sense, it will be minimally available or accessible to them. In this way, art should be viewed as in some way reflecting experiences.

The arts often share a valuing of personal narrative in the creation of art in which the pupil’s personal views, feelings, understandings and visualisations of the world are valued as knowledge (Thornton, 2011). The current visual arts education curriculum in Ireland was developed in cognisance of this as it states that arts activities and experiences help the child to make sense of the world; to question, to speculate and to find solutions; to deal with feelings and to respond to creative experience (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 1999b). As such, the arts value our identity and experiential views and attitudes as this is what fuels development in our artistry. This shows that whilst the creative process is very constructivist and social in nature, it is also very personal and autonomous, and this is something that some research encourages in arguing that “personal ‘rules’ in art making needs to be encouraged in each pupil, thus allowing individual style and virtuosity” (Nilson et al., 2013, p. 2-3). In this light, without autonomy and individuality, art would be mundane.

#### *Over-prescription, over-reliance, and over-conformity*

PTs unknowingly limit the possibilities for perceiving by allowing only two sense organs to be used. As Goodman (1987) states: “the eyes and the ears are overworked in

schools as the other senses are neglected” (p. 117). In this sense, PTs need to encourage and promote activities and learning opportunities that appeal to more than just children’s eyes and ears and enable them to engage at a more practical, hands-on level. Another issue relating to the autonomy of the pupil is that when environments override children’s autonomy and creativity, children become reliant on others for coming up with solutions and answers (Fox & Schirrmacher, 2012). As such, PTs need to facilitate children to work with a certain sense of independence and not an over-reliance on the teacher because this in turn reduces the creativity. Barnes (1990) shares this opinion in explaining that attempts to tidy up drawings for pupils or to draw for them is no way helpful, but in fact may be counterproductive as it will inevitably erode motivation.

It is understandable for PTs to desire to continue helping even when there is a risk of over-helping when the pupils are struggling. However, pupils need to become aware of taking risks and seeing mistakes as positive so they can build resilience and use this experience to break through to new understanding (Burnard & Swann, 2010). By fighting battles for children, PTs are doing them no favours in the long run. Learning also involves challenge and struggle, which can be manageable and productive if the purpose of the opportunity for learning is worth struggling for (Burnard & Swann, 2010). In this sense, the challenge/struggle is very much a part of their learning process which a PT cannot determine for them in a creative process that is authentic and meaningful. In attempting to help/fix a piece of art for a child, PTs are subconsciously showing that there is a specific product that they want from the piece of art, which is unfair. As Hollands (2004) suggests, “What the artist/teacher and pupil have in common is the necessity to enter an empty space; not one filled with targets, visual aids and materials, but the void where ideas are not yet formed” (p. 71). Here, Hollands draws attention to the “empty space” which challenges them to throw away any prior expectations and allow the creative process to ensue.



On a similar note, it's clear children should not be allowed gain an over-reliance on fellow pupils. Although the creative process is social in nature, a PT must never let a child copy anything (Lowenfield, 1957). Non-conformity is something that should be supported in visual arts education, and this is something teachers need to ensure in their classrooms in not allowing popularity or social status affect a pupil's artistic choices (Amabile, 1989).

Mulcahey continues on this point in expressing that young people have both the capacity and willingness to engage in the philosophical enquiry of aesthetics “until their sense of wonder is deadened by socialization, education or some combination of the two. They reach a plateau in their sense of wonder and their willingness to wonder” (p. 11). PTs need to fight against this plateauing to refrain as much as possible from limiting a child's ability to and willingness to perceive and learn artistically. The means by which this can be achieved is through an encouragement of the cultivation of choice and autonomy in PT pedagogies. PTs should use uniqueness as a measure for assessing the value of art (Read, 1943).

The TAA approach maximises pupil voice where possible through giving them a range of choices both in the materials they use and in their artwork.

Control, freedom and assistance

The concept of classroom management is one of the most important issues for a PT to reflect on in any educational setting (Yilmaz & Çavaş, 2008). Classroom management can be demarcated as a series of tools or procedures that a PT uses to facilitate for an organised class for learning (Laslett & Smith, 2002). PTs with effective classroom management should:

focus on developing self-regulation of learning, not just short run behavioural compliance; develop and work through personal teacher– pupil relationships rather than impersonal bureaucracies; be[come] a caring socializer rather than a remote authority figure; emphasize ethics and ideals rather than rules and sanctions; emphasize cueing before the fact rather than nagging after the fact (Brophy, 2007, p. 1).

This insight poses many questions to PTs who are developing their classroom management, on emotional, professional and ethical levels. Research shows that modern, progressive PTs should act as participants in the learning environment, playing the role of discursive partners with pupils as they construct meaning for themselves (Emmer & Evertson, 2008; Good & Brophy, 2008; Weinstein, 2007). When the above ideology is combined, it's clear the PT is presented with the task of developing and establishing tools and procedures within their classroom to ensure that meaningful learning occurs through collaboration with pupils. Various PTs approach this collaboration/facilitation for learning through different classroom management styles, however. What is of real importance is for educators to recognise which style is most suited to their pupils (Mostofi & Mohsemi, 2018). Baumrind (1971) outlines four main possible styles for parenting which can be applied to the realm of teaching and classroom management styles (cited in Walker, 2009): Authoritative, Authoritarian, Democratic and Laissez-faire. These styles will now be discussed

#### *Control and authoritative teaching*

The authoritative teaching style is highly controlling, with the PT making consistent demands for compliance and frequent demands for directed, pupil self-management (Walker, 2009). In this style, PTs use reason to gain compliance and are warm and supportive towards pupils. This style is like the authoritarian style, where the PT is also highly controlling and values strict obedience but relies on coercion and are less nurturing (Walker, 2009). Such controlled approaches lead to a child having a disposition of imaginative powerlessness within, because they are “caught in a box... they can't get out and do what they really want to do... or be who they are... or have the emotions that they really want to have and be expressive” (Nilson, 2011, p. 100). Evidence accumulated from a vast range of research approaches demonstrates that controlling strategies (e.g., directives, evaluation, avoidance of providing choice options) negatively affect not only intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1987

& 1985; Reeve, 2014; Reeve & Hyungshim, 2006), but other achievement-related behaviours, such as creativity (Amabile & Hennessey, 1992) and preference for challenge (Boggiano, Main, & Katz, 1988; Boggiano & Ruble, 2013; Boggiano, Ruble, & Pittman, 1982; Harter, 1981). It is the viewpoint of Şahin & Çokadar (2006) that these approaches perceive pupils as mere objects. In the school environment, the fettering of creativity can often be seen in the insistence on only one correct method, way or answer, in intolerance of the pupil/PT mistakes, disregard of pupil/PT ideas or new solutions, and in the authoritarian attitude of the educational professionals (Somolanji & Bognar, 2008).

#### *Freedom, democratic teaching versus laissez-faire*

The democratic teaching style involves placing few controls or demands on pupils. They elaborate on this in describing learning environments that are facilitated for by a democratic PT as being “do your own thing” classrooms (Mostofi & Mohsemi, 2018, p. 256) This style is permissive by nature and furthermore states that it is encapsulated also by moderate levels of nurturing (Walker, 2009). The final style on this scale is the laissez-faire teaching style which involves minimal involvement from the PT’s perspective. This type of PT places few demands, if any, on pupils and appears generally uninterested (Mostofi & Mohsemi, 2018). Lowenfield (1957) ascertains that as the desired outcome of visual arts education is creative and mental growth, where “any application of an external standard, whether of technique or form, immediately induces inhibitions and frustrates the whole aim” (p. 12). The laissez-faire PT doesn't wish to impose on pupils. Some see this as a neglectful teaching style (Walker, 2009). Others highlight that in classrooms that are based on a laissez-faire style, there is diminished control of teaching content which in turn leads to learning content becoming more boring to the pupils (Elstad, 2006). The outcome of this laissez-faire approach could result in a shifting of focus in education from content to form (Jedeskog & Nissen, 2004). Research shows that a PT’s use of the laissez-faire method affects pupils

negatively, as it results in a lack of interest in the system and a disregard for high achievement from the pupils' perspective (Khasawneh, 2021). In contrast with the democratic method, he goes on to say that the latter has a very significant positive impact on pupils in developing their personalities and meeting their needs (Khasawneh, 2021).

### *Learner autonomy and facilitation*

When investigating the styles of classroom management, it is important to consider the context of the visual arts education classroom because the visual arts are a special sort of undertaking (Perkins & Pforzheimer, 2013). Barbara (2010) promotes a classroom management style that is a pupil-centred learning facility that focuses “on the pupils’ learning and what pupils do to achieve this, rather than what the teacher does” (p. 42). This of course supports the child’s autonomy and ownership over their learning, and furthermore, it changes the role of the PT in the classroom towards that of a facilitator as opposed to a more traditional teacher (Loveless, 2008). Furthermore, there is a positive influence from the facilitative stance taken by PTs in engaging pupils in the creative process (Sefton-Green, 2008). The PT should no longer be viewed as an infinite source of wisdom, power and control from which knowledge is imparted and orders are given directly onto pupils, and this is also advocated by Burnard & Swann (2010) who highlight that there is wrongly an “immense pressure on teachers to be all knowing in ways which close down possible avenues of learning” (p. 80). By contrast to this “all-knowing” traditional teacher stance, the facilitative stance allows for a blending of logic and consistency with imagined possibilities where reason and sensation are compatible (Sullivan, 2010).

When the issue of classroom management styles in visual arts education is placed in the Irish perspective, some interesting perspectives arise: The current Irish visual arts education curriculum teacher guidelines (NCCA, 1999a) inform that the PT should be more of a catalyst than a teacher of technique. This emphasises the facilitative role encouraged

above and is echoed in the overall curriculum introduction (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 1999c) and the concept of learning through guided activity and discovery. As such, the PT needs to guide and assist the pupil, but only to the degree that it remains in line with what the curriculum introduction describes as being “most effective in advancing the child’s learning” (p. 15).

### *Overly prescription, product and process*

Research indicates that pupil’s artwork in primary school can be subject to an overload of PT assistance/guiding, can be overly prescriptive and lesson focus often concerns product as opposed to process (DES, 2005; INTO, 2009). This is widely recognised as poor practice (Gibson, 2020). Huzjak & Krajnc (2017) explain that “creativity is in correlation with tolerance, and stereotypical thinking is correlated with conformity and intolerance” (p. 202) and as such, it appears that in a PT’s classroom management style, they need to ensure that over-scaffolding is not in occurrence at the sacrifice of the pupil’s creativity. What is interesting to note is that the DES Inspectorate’s review notes that 20% of PTs view teaching methods and approaches as a challenge in visual arts education, Moreover, they feel that implementing this child-centred curriculum is challenging more so whilst still trying to facilitate for lessons without influencing children towards the educator’s way of thinking. Irish PTs are faced with the challenge of striking the appropriate balance between providing an effective learning environment while fostering pupil creativity and self-expression. As such, PTs need to ensure that their classroom management style does not influence or over-direct this creative process. The TAA approach views the PT as a facilitator and demonstrator; however, pupils have artistic freedom to ensure their agency over their learning.

## Modelling and discussion as effective teaching strategies

The current Irish primary visual arts curriculum is very specific in outlining its expected role of the PT:

The task of the teacher is not to teach clever techniques or to demonstrate ways of producing images and forms he/she finds acceptable but to build on interests and strengths by drawing the children out and making suggestions as appropriate (NCCA, 1999a, p. 12).

This demonstrates that it is not an expectation of the PT to be expert or skilled in the area of visual arts to teach this curriculum to children. Furthermore, in the exemplars offered in this curriculum document, there is no direct encouragement of the visual arts educator modelling artwork or the art-making process for the pupils. On a similar note, the notion of engaging with teacher artwork is not listed as one of the starting points proposed by this curriculum (NCCA, 1999a).

It is reported that a central requirement in effective teaching is that the PT is a competent professional able to help the pupils to achieve the curriculum goals presented to (Niemi & Jakku-Sihvonen, 2006). Moreover, the depth of experience and personal insights of the PT within their own artistic practice provides an essential source for communicating about the creative processes in making art to the pupils (Hausman, 1967). In this light, it becomes clear that there is a very apparent correlation between a PT's own experience and practice in visual arts and their ability to facilitate meaningful visual art learning and artistic development in pupils. This is a view that is supported by Andrews (2004), who states that visual arts education is a central component of a comprehensive education, requiring highly skilled PTAs or PTSs to achieve quality. This viewpoint contrasts greatly with the absence of PT modelling/demonstration/engaging with the creative process themselves from the current visual arts education curriculum.

This contrast between the curriculum recommendations regarding teacher modelling and the research cited above could be linked to the fact that it is challenging for PTs to respond to the curricular demands of multidisciplinary studies (Lindfors, 2010). It could also be associated with the fact that should a PT be less experienced in practicing visual arts, they will undoubtedly lack confidence in themselves and in turn experience motivation problems. This problem is noted as being present on an international level (Hennessey, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2001; Oreck, 2004; Russell-Bowie & Jeffrey, 2004; Smithrim & Upitis, 2001). Whilst this counter argument is understandable, we must remember that these problems result in avoidance behaviour and cause restricted teaching and learning of arts education for pupils in the classroom (Garvis, 2009a), and this undermines the PT's fulfilment of their duties.

#### *Modelling creative problem-solving*

The skills that are associated with the making of art are crucial to model when teaching, and moreover, it is essential to note the significance of modelling artistic problem-solving so as to allow for a problem within the creative process to be resolved, as well as demonstrating the importance of modelling the ability to communicate about one's artwork to others (Budge, 2016). O'Connor (2009) concurs with this argument in suggesting that by modelling practice, PTs are communicating much about the shared discourses, views and practices of the art world. We must remember that learning to be an artist is a complex process which includes making sense of the practices and disciplinary world in which artist work through observation and discussion (Budge, 2016). Having the PT model "ways of knowing, doing and being, acts as a way to assist in this process of sense-making" (Budge, 2016, p. 255). In this sense, modelling is central to making sense of what is being learned. Others consolidate this point in arguing that people make sense of identity through discourse and dialogue (Flum & Kaplan, 2012).

### *Talk and discussion*

Research argues that in visual arts lessons, interactions between PTs and pupils should involve conversations in which PTs use their visual/artistic experience and practice to assist the pupils in meaning making in visual arts (Burton, 2000; Matthews, 2003). Whilst discussion and dialogue are of central importance in the pupils' development of understanding of the creative process, both productive and receptive artistic activities need to be implemented by PTs (Duh, Zupančič, & Čagran., 2014). When PTs communicate with pupils on an aesthetic level, through art making, pupils become sensitised to the existence of artistic values and develop the ability to verbalise their experiences within the visual arts (Tomljenovic, 2015).

Exemplary practice is underpinned by the PT having a rich and diverse understanding of the needs, interest, and cognitive capacities of their pupils, and an openness to listen, hear, and plan in a way that is cognisant to the various sources and starting points that are of interest to them (Burton, 2012). For a PT to meet these criteria, they need to be reflective in their thoughts and in their classroom practice. This is true in general education and in visual arts education. Furthermore, it is worth noting the importance of reflection as a core element to the child's experimental learning where they engage in a direct encounter and they then purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to it and seek to integrate their various ways of knowing/understanding (McGill & Weil, 1989). This shows that reflective practice is central to the children's creative process, which is experiential by nature. Barnes (1990) solidifies this in explaining that:

in reality, the creative process (and the learning experience) lies in the gap which exists between the glimmer of an idea and its final tangible product. Creativity, it could be said, lies in the gap between intention and outcome, means and not just ends (p. 32).



As such, PTs need to model and promote a reflective mind-set in the pupils in classrooms to facilitate for the creative process. A huge factor that is central to this topic, is the construct of creativity. “Creative people are reflective at certain times and spontaneous at others” (Hedley, Antonacci, & Rabinowitz, 2013, p. 33), and this informs PTs that as facilitators for pupils’ learning and development in the area of visual art, they must provide time for reflecting and discussion and well as time for spontaneity and vibrant expression. For many, the notion of modelling or instructing of the thought processes surrounding spontaneity and creativity poses a huge problem and this naturally, in turn, poses a challenge to their ability and confidence in teaching in this area.

The TAA approach emphasises PT modelling of the creative process regardless of said teacher’s technical skill level of artistry.

### *Questioning*

“Questioning is an essential element of efficacious teaching” (Hannel, 2009). It is widely accepted that effective teacher questioning improves the quality of education (Nappi, 2017). In visual arts education, research shows that PT’s questions need to be clear and understandable to all pupils, so as to allow them to feel safe and able to express their own thoughts and ideas (Tomljenovic, 2015). This in turn leads to the promotion of positive attitudes towards the visual arts in the classroom (Pavlou & Kambouri, 2007). Aside from the benefits of questioning for the pupils, it is important to note that teacher questioning also has benefits for the PT (Peterson & Taylor, 2012), most notably in the information it presents to the PT with relation to the level of pupil understanding (Lewis, 2015). Furthermore, it is widely accepted that both PT and pupil play dual roles in learning interactions (Bowers & Doerr, 2001; Haupt, 1966; Rodgers, 2002).

In acknowledging this duality of pupil/PT roles, it become clear to us that there is also great importance to pupils posing questions (Haupt, 1966). Pupil questioning parents/teachers is of huge value as part of their learning process across a range of learning approaches (Butler, Ronfard, & Corriveau, 2020; Golinkoff, & Klahr, 2015; Harris, Koenig, Corriveau, & Jaswal, 2018; Weisberg, Kittredge, Hirsh-Pasek, Gopnik, Schulz, & Schulz, 2007). When the concepts of both PT-initiated questioning and child-initiated questioning are applied to visual arts education, there is a strong link between questioning and reflection (Hetland et al., 2015). This will be discussed in further detail in the Studio Thinking part of this chapter.

### *Mantle of the expert*

Dorothy Heathcote's "Mantle of the Expert" approach involves PTs and pupils exploring, in role, the prior knowledge they possess regarding a problem or task while learning more as part of the process (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994). This approach, that is used in drama education, puts the pupil at the centre of the learning whilst the PT's role is to create the conditions whereby a mantle of leadership, knowledge, competency and understanding surrounds the pupil (Aitken, 2013). The mantle of the expert draws on three teaching modalities: inquiry learning, arts (drama) for learning, and expert framing – where pupils are framed as adult experts in a given subject (Abbott, 2007).

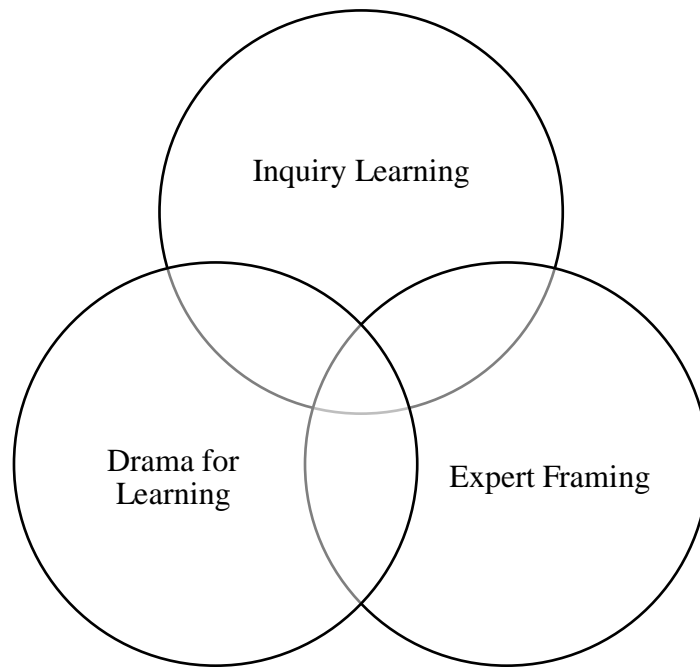


Figure 3

*Modalities underpinning Mantle of the Expert Approach (Abbott, 2007)*

The element of framing that supports this approach is one that is crucial to its success (Aitken, 2013), because it is within these frames or ranges of available viewpoints, that humans inevitably bring to any social situation (Goffman, 1986), that pupils can adopt a point of view and learn within that context (Aitken, 2013). This element underpins the TAA approach whereby both the teacher and the pupils adopt the “frame” of artist. This is something that the current curriculum expects of the pupil, but not of the teacher.

Studio thinking

The studio thinking framework is a visual arts education approach developed based on the results of research into what excellent visual arts teachers teach, how they teach and what pupils in their classes learn (Hetland et al. 2015). They elaborate on this to explain that the framework is underpinned by two core elements: four prescribed studio structures, and eight studio habits of mind. This framework is one that is suitable to a range of contexts because of

the focus on habits of mind, as opposed to disciplinary content or media-specific techniques (Sheridan, 2011). The four studio structures for learning that are integral to this framework are demonstration-lecture, pupils-at-work, critique and exhibition. Upon first glance, this framework is reminiscent of the current Irish visual arts education curriculum, however, when this approach is inspected in comparison to the approach recommended by said curriculum, there are detailed differences to be noted.

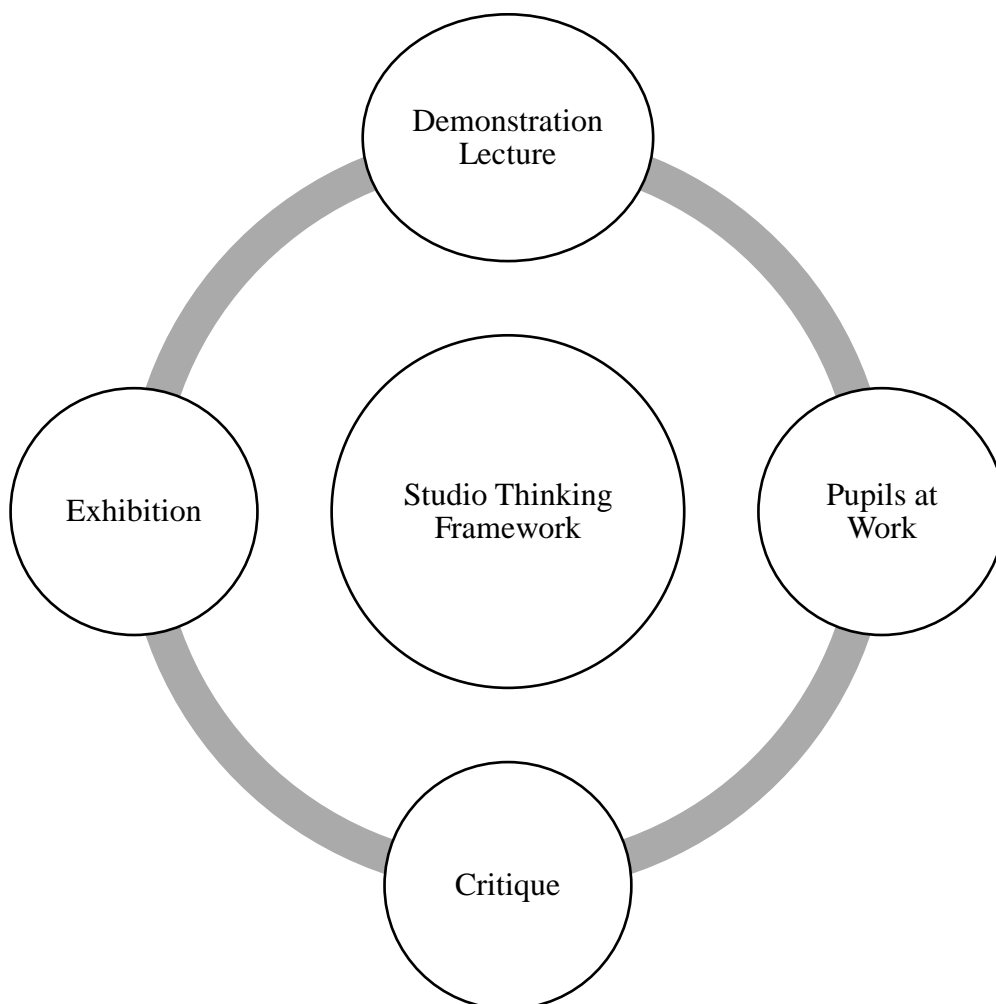


Figure 4

*The four overarching structures for learning within the studio thinking framework (Hetland et al., 2015)*

The first structure that characterises the Studio Thinking Framework is demonstration-lecture. This entails the PT delivering information to the pupils regarding the process and the product. It often includes visual examples and social interactions of varying lengths; however, the aim is always to convey information as quickly as possible to allow the time spent making art and reflecting on the art to be maximised (Hetland et al. 2015). This focus of arts education time onto the process of art making and reflection or response to the artwork are both concepts that characterise the current visual arts curriculum with the PT providing a stimulus or visual example as sources of artistic experiences to which pupils can respond.

The second structure that is seen as being central to the Studio Thinking Framework, pupils-as-work, is one which consists of pupil's creating artwork based on a visual arts educator's assignment, which in turn dictates their materials, tools and/or challenge. The framework explicitly states that this should be conducted through the PT "briefly" talking to the whole class, but consulting with individuals or small groups for the most part (Hetland et. Al 2015). This is reflected in the current visual arts education curriculum in Ireland, where the teacher guidelines explain the importance of the interactions that take place in groups and with the PT as being integral to the development of skills and concepts (NCCA, 1999b). Once again, there is an apparent gap between what the curriculum advises, and the reality of the Irish visual arts classroom: The INTO (2009) reports that around half of educators spend more than half of their time addressing the whole class. Once more, this highlights the lack of consistency between curriculum recommendations and the reality of visual arts education in Irish primary school.

Upon comparison of the third structure recommended by the Studio Thinking Framework, Critique, there is an apparent similarity with that which is advised for in the curriculum also: It is within the duties of the PT to facilitate for responding to art through

discussion and reflection on the pupils' work – observing, conversing and reflecting – both during the process of art making and prior to the completion of the work (Hetland et al. 2015). Whilst this structure is a concept that is shared between the Studio Thinking Framework and the current visual arts education curriculum, there is an element of uncertainty as to whether this is the reality in Irish classrooms. The Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO, 2009) reported that three quarters of Irish PTs devote all the time in art lessons to making art, without devoting any time to responding to art. This insight contrasts starkly with the guidelines of the current visual arts education curriculum.

Critique of one's work, discussion and reflection are central to the TAA approach and these are of great importance because these skills, including visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, and the willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes, are mental habits that are not emphasised anywhere else in the education system (Winner & Hetland, 2008). This is a viewpoint that is shared with McGill & Weil (1989) who emphasise the importance of reflection as a core element to the child's experimental learning where they engage in a direct encounter and following this they then purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their varying ways of knowing. When pupils are involved in their art-making stage of the process and when the TAA conferences with children in the room both at group level and on an individual level, the TAA led questioning is geared towards encouraging the pupils' reflections on their own work and their peers' work.

The fourth and final structure explained by Hetland et al. (2015) under the Studio Thinking framework, Exhibition, shows that the expectations of the visual arts educator are similar to that which is prescribed by the current curriculum; Exhibitions of children's work must be planned, installed or put together and exhibited. This exhibition can occur outside of the class space, however, is not limited to outside the classroom. The work displayed can

vary in form and the duty of the PT is to select, organise and publicly display this work (NCCA, 1999a). In the TAA Approach that I am proposing, this structure remains the same as that implied by the Studio Thinking Framework in that the TAA would plan for, install, and exhibit children’s work.

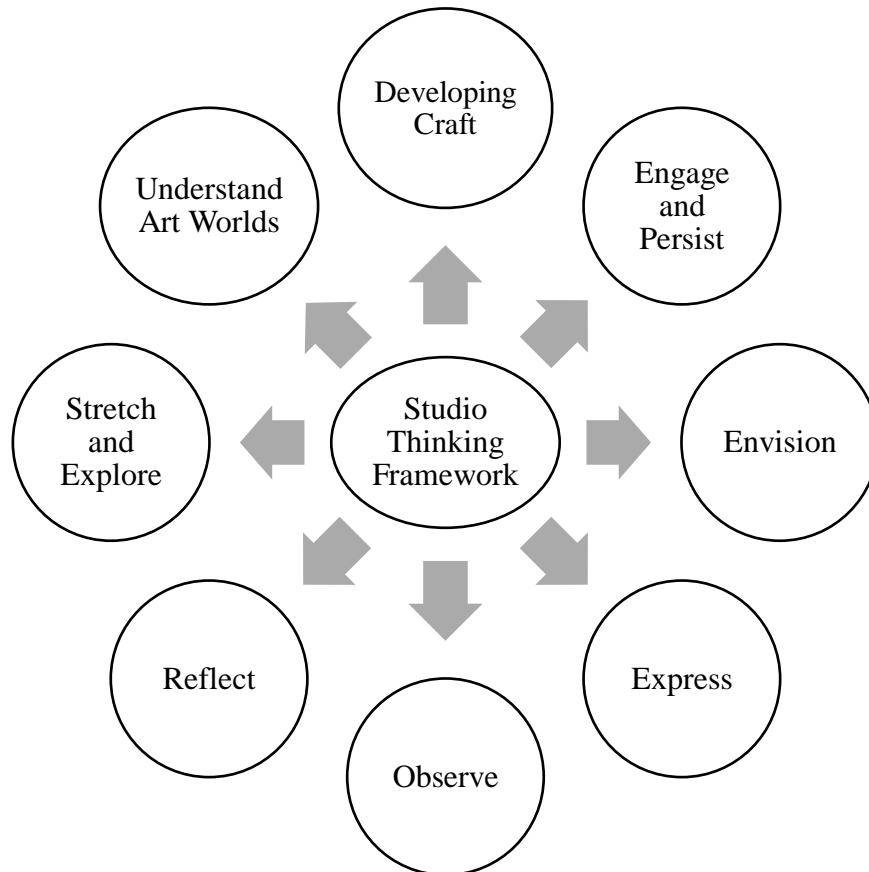


Figure 5

*The eight studio habits of mind within the Studio Thinking Framework (Hetland et al., 2015)*

Hetland et al. (2015) identifies eight studio habits of mind that represent ways of thinking that are developed in studio classrooms that are facilitated for by what they have found to be effective PTs. They describe these habits as almost an unspoken/secret curriculum that supports the PTs’ implementation of their relevant state curriculums. What is important to consider is that the eight studio habits of mind presented by Hetland et al. are non-sequential and non-hierarchical (Strickland, 2018). This means that they all hold equal

importance within the studio thinking framework and they can be explored in any order, both in isolation and collectively. I will now elaborate on some of the studio habits of minds that are central to the TAA approach. The key studio habits of mind that I will discuss will be engage and persist, observe, reflect, stretch and explore, and developing craft.

A key habit promoted by Hetland et al. is that pupils need to engage and persist. This consists of pupils committing to their work and following through on it. Kent & Steward (2008) support this in their Rule 7 in art which says that “the only rule is work. If you work, it will lead to something. It’s the people who do all of the work all of the time who eventually catch onto things” (p. 176). This studio habit is one that is particularly transferrable to all types of work as this teaches pupils to focus, to develop mental states conducive to working, and to develop self-regulation (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Studies show that whilst praise is an important factor in the encouragement of engaging and persisting in visual arts, what is also crucial is that the PT formulates projects that include pupil choice, a practice which is often underemphasised (Douglas & Jaquith, 2018; Jaquith & Hathaway, 2012). In the TAA approach, pupils witness the PT persisting with work through committing to the art and problem-solving to follow through with the creative process.

Hetland et al. present observing as a key studio habit of mind. This links strongly with the current visual arts education curriculum in Ireland as the initial step of the “looking and responding” strand unit (NCCA, 1999b). What needs to be reiterated in this context is that whilst the espoused curriculum promotes looking at art and responding to it, this is not being catered for by most PTs in the Irish education system (INTO, 2009). Furthermore, what differs from the studio thinking framework to the current curriculum is that in the curriculum, there are for main starting points/stimuli identified for visual arts lessons as outlined above. By contrast to this, there is one other central stimulus that Hetland et al. implore for PTs to make use of to improve the efficacy of their practice and in turn, develop their pupils’



observing habits: Artworks being created by the PT themselves in front of the class. This is central to the TAA approach.

The next studio habit of mind described by Hetland et al. is the concept of reflection and for them, reflection in visual arts education can be divided into two categories. The first form of reflection is questioning and explaining, and this consists of artists or pupil artists reflecting metacognitively when considering their works and the decisions they have taken as part of the creative process. This is something that the TAA approach models specifically to pupils as part of the teacher demonstration. The second form of reflection refers to evaluating. This form of reflection is one that is emphasised strongly in the current Irish visual arts education curriculum, both in making their own art and responding to artwork (NCCA, 1999a).

“Stretch and explore” is another studio habit of mind that is promoted by Hetland et al. and this concept is at the core of creativity: Finding new ideas from exploring and risk taking. As John Cage said “We’re all breaking all of the rules. Even our own rules” (Kent & Steward, 2008, p. 176). In this sense, experimental rule-breaking and risk-taking are at the core of the arts. In the world of art, mistakes are indeed opportunities; They lead to problem solving and furthermore the project towards something that is central to creativity: Problem-finding (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976).

Developing craft is a key studio habit of mind that is advocated for by Hetland et al. (2015). This habit of mind consists of two facets: technique and studio practice. In terms of technique, pupils learn to use tools, to use materials and to understand and apply artistic conventions. This relates strongly to the concept of increasing pupil choice which is to be promoted so as to allow for increased meaningful student agency which is backed by an understanding of tools/materials/conventions (Barnes, 1990). The second element of this

habit of mind; studio practice involves learning to care for the tools, materials and the environment. This encourages pupils to present themselves as artists and work effectively within a studio environment. Hooks (2014) promotes this and furthermore identifies the huge challenge that is posed in striking the correct balance between allowing pupils to work effectively as artists whilst still enabling for learning and progression.

The studio thinking framework emphasises the importance of displaying pupil work. Art portfolios can be described as the presentation of their artistic person to the public (Castiglione, 1996). Portfolios stand as a record of the pupils' thought, creative process and creative product (Lu, 2007) and they are widely recognised as being of extremely high value to PTs and to other visual arts professionals in their assessment and evaluation of visual arts lessons and of pupil work and progress (Doren & Millington, 2019; Lu, 2007; Taylor, 1991). The TAA approach does not affect or negate the use of these.

This studio thinking framework was one that was developed in the United States to make the case for the arts, find out what the arts actually teach to pupils and describe what pupils should be learning in an effective visual arts education programme that is undertaken seriously (Hetland et al., 2015). The framework proved a great success within this context and was acclaimed as a vision of what learning the arts could be (Perkins, 2006). When relating this framework to the Irish primary education perspective, it is important to note that in the Irish context, generalist PTs teach art, unlike in the United States, where this framework was adopted. Generalist PTs' lack of confidence both in the area of arts and more specifically, visual arts is well emphasised internationally (Alter, Hays, & O' Hara, 2009; Andrews B. W., 2016; Bamford, 2012; Kind, De Cosson, Irwin, & Grauer, 2007; McDonald, Hunter, Ewing, & Polley, 2019; Snook & Buck, 2014). It is with this in mind that I have developed the TAA approach. The TAA approach is underpinned by the studio thinking

framework and acts as a proposed tool to bridge the gap between the current curriculum and the studio thinking framework within the Irish context.

## Conclusion

The literature that was reviewed provided an insight into the role of the PT in facilitating for meaningful visual arts lessons in the Irish context. The research indicated that whilst the current Irish visual arts education curriculum is both child-centred and engaging for pupils, it is not being implemented to its full potential in the Irish education system. Discrepancies between the espoused curriculum and the realistic, reported practice within the Irish education system demonstrate several challenges that the visual arts curriculum poses to PT. Whilst there are some PTAs and PTSs who have special interest/expertise in and passion for the visual arts, there are others who do not share that. This is resulting in a varying visual arts education experience for pupils within the Irish education system (DES, 2005; INTO, 2009; NCCA, 2005).

It is clear from the review of relevant literature that in visual arts education, pupils need to be given choice in their work and the materials that they use so as instil agency within them over their artistry (Barnes, 1990). This voice needs to be supported by an environment that offers them security which in turn can allow for them to build confidence in their artistry (Oğuz, 2010). Whilst pupils need to have control over their artwork and the creative process they partake in, the PT needs to strike a balance so as to ensure they are progressing (Huzjak & Krajnc, 2017). The studio thinking framework outlines the underlying structures and habits of mind that underpin an effective PT's practice and pedagogy, and one of the main features here is the sharing of the PT's own artwork and engagement with the creative process (Hetland et al., 2015). This differs from the recommendations of the 1999 curriculum in relation to teacher modelling. There is a strong value associated with questioning within education and more specifically within visual arts education and this plays a core role in the

TAA approach, as does the positioning of pupil and teacher into a role of assumed expertise when learning and engaging with the creative process.

This chapter has thoroughly investigated the relevant literature that arose in the context of this study and next, chapter three will describe and justify the design of this qualitative research project furthermore elaborate on the context of the participants involved in this study. It also gives a clear portrayal of the research methods involved in this project and the ethical considerations that were required to allow for this project to be undertaken. Following this, it will facilitate for an explanation of the data that was collected and the procedures that were followed throughout the various phases of this study, before highlighting the data analysis that took place and issues regarding trustworthiness and authenticity that pertain to it.

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss both the research design and methodology that underpinned my research. I explain the process of participant recruitment and the procedures and data sources that were used as part of this study. Furthermore, I give a thorough insight into the ethical considerations that needed to be taken as a central element to this research and I pinpoint and explain any issues relating to trustworthiness and authenticity within the context of this work.

### Research design

This study is situated within the qualitative paradigm and as such, it aims to reveal the meaning of an occurrence for those who are involved in it (Kamal, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within this, my research was based on the constructivist paradigm that meaning is actively constructed and reconstructed in all interactions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). From an ontological perspective, these realities or meanings are subjective, varied and multiple meaning that research seeks to look for complexities of views rather than narrowing views into a few categories (Creswell, 2007). This piece of research aimed to interpret the meanings constructed by pupils relating to visual arts and their own art-making.

This piece of research is situated within the world of visual arts education and uses arts-based methods both in its data collection but furthermore in its expression of the findings. As such, the genre of visual arts practices within an arts-based approach also related strongly to this research. This arts-based or aesthetic paradigm is underpinned by a phenomenological school of thought (Rozendaal & Schifferstein, 2010). Pupil artwork was assessed following the implementation of the TAA approach. As a researcher, I also explored the literature and ideology reviewed in the piece in aesthetic form and moreover, I presented part of the expression of findings in aesthetic form also. This creative practiced allowed for

an expression of arts-based findings through the means of art. Sullivan (2011) argues that “artistic research can reveal new insights through creative and critical practices” (p. 82).

### *Overview of phases*

This research was undertaken in four main phases. The phases of the study allowed for a continuing flow throughout the research and facilitated for both the written element of the research and the creative practice element of the research to co-exist and develop simultaneously. The four phases of the study are outlined below.

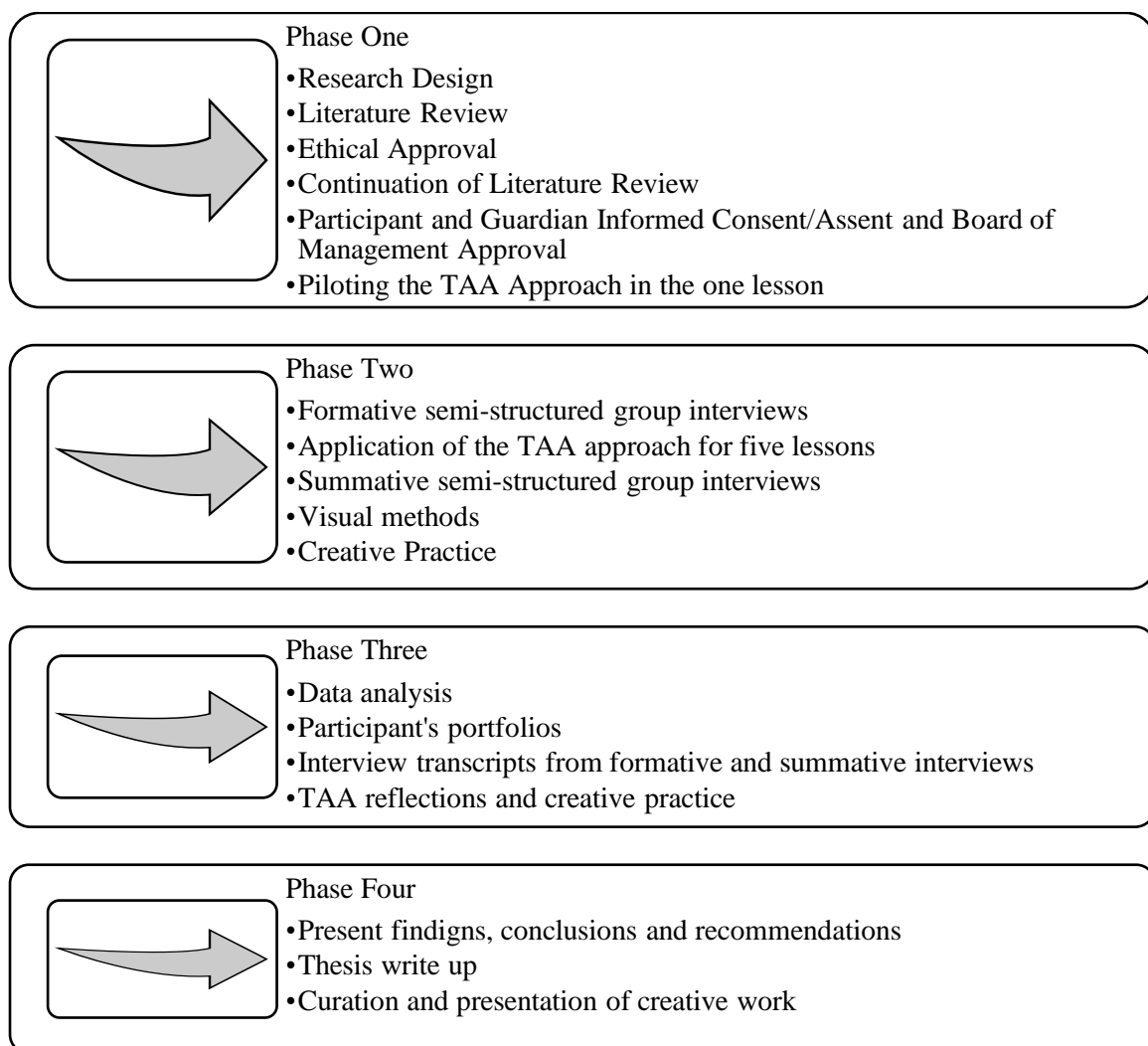


Figure 6

### *Phases of this study*

## Case study

Within this constructivist or interpretive paradigm, my research was best suited to the case study qualitative design. Case studies allow for the exploration and investigation of “contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships” (Zainal, 2007, p 2). This form of research design was of particular suiting to this research because of its incorporation of context into the research (Meyer, 2001; Yin, 2009): This was of great importance because the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context were not clearly evident because of the nature of this research. It is in the consideration of the surrounding influences and contexts that the resaercher gains a multiperspectival analysis whereby both individual opinions and peer culture constructions are identified (Tellis, 1997). It is noted that case studies produce detailed qualitative accounts which not only help to explore the data in context, but also assist in explaining the complexities of real-life scenarios which may not be accessible through other research designs (Zainal, 2007). This creates a holistic view for the researcher (Noor, 2008), and this contributes to the authenticity of the research (Hill, 2017). It is also important to note that whilst the findings of this case study may be suggestive of what may be found in other contexts, the results of this case study cannot be generalised without further research (Simon & Goes, 2013).

Yin (1984) notes three categories of case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. This research falls within the category of an exploratory case study. Exploratory case studies are used when the researcher sets out to explore any phenomenon in the data and when there is no single set of outcomes (Zainal, 2007); This was the case in this piece of research. Case studies can also be strengthened by prior fieldwork in the area of interest (McDonough & McDonough, 1997; Yin, 1984). Within my study, this was applied through the implementation of a pilot TAA lesson.

## Participants

The purposive sample of participants who took part in this exploratory case study consisted of twenty-five second class pupils; ten girls and fifteen boys. These pupils attended school together in a medium sized rural school outside the urban centre of Drogheda, Co. Louth. Pupils ranged in age from seven to nine years old and were peers in the same class for over three years. They represented a natural mixture of children with varying levels of interest and skill in visual arts. They furthermore represented a natural mixture of varying intelligences and varying levels of academic school achievement. They were familiar with each other on a social level and were used to working in the same classroom as each other in visual arts. Although it could be argued that such a small sample size could prevent findings from being extrapolated (Faber & Fonseca, 2014), this sample size allowed for a range of ability in the areas of visual arts whilst ensuring that their portfolios and interviews were evaluated in a valid, reliable way. As they were in their fourth year of primary education, they had engaged with the 1999 visual arts education curriculum for three full years with PTs and engaged in weekly visual arts lessons over the course of these three years. For the first two years lessons lasted for fifty minutes weekly and for the third year, lessons lasted for one hour weekly. For four months prior to the implementation of this field research, they had been taught non-TAA implementation lessons by a teacher who identifies as both PTA and PTS.

## Data collection

Hatch (2002) highlights that “the fewer the number of participants, the more important it is to include multiple data sources” (p. 50). This is because of the centrality of comprehensive data triangulation within the case study structure (Smith, 2018; Yin, 2009). The methods collecting data in this research were selected for their capacity to yield data that would contribute to the aims of the research and allow for triangulation – facilitating for a



both a more holistic view of the TAA approach, and a strengthening the credibility of the research. Between January and February 2022 data was gathered as part of this study.

This research drew data from several sources to ensure there was a scope for greater triangulation of data in line with Smith’s (2008) recommendations. The table below shows the data sources that were included in this case study.

Table 4

*Data sources collected*

Data Sources	Details	Time of collection
<i>Interviews</i>	All participating pupils engaged with semi-structured group interviews pre and post TAA approach implementation.	Early January 2022 (Pre-Implementation) Late February 2022 (Post-Implementation)
<i>Photographs of Artwork</i>	Pupil artwork from the TAA approach lessons was photographed.	January and February 2022
<i>Teacher Observation</i>	Teacher observed pupil in their engagement with TAA and in their subsequent artmaking	January and February 2022
<i>Teacher Reflections</i>	Teacher reflections on the implementation of the TAA approach.	January and February 2022
<i>Researcher Creative Practice: Artwork and Artistic Statements</i>	Researcher creative practice pieces were developed in exploration of the study.	December 2021 – April 2023

Data collection for this study commenced with semi structured, audio recorded, group interviews with all participants prior to the implementation of the TAA approach. Interview groups consisted of between four to seven pupils and groups were selected in line with their seating arrangement in class, the arrangements in which they sat whilst engaging in TAA

implementation lessons. The aim of these interviews was to gain an insight into the varying dispositions pupils in the class had in relation to visual arts; what experiences and habits they had from home and school in the visual arts, what they perceived visual arts to mean in their context, what their understanding of the creative process was, and what opinions that had in relation to the teaching of visual arts in school. These interviews were conducted in groups to ensure for participant comfort and to promote a natural, constructivist discuss amongst participants. These interviews consisted of 16 overarching questions that guided the discussion. Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and took place outside of the main classroom, in a room the pupils were familiar with, outside of formal teaching time.

Following the completion of these interviews, the next form of data collection consisted of teacher observation when implementing the TAA approach in the classroom. Teacher observation is one of the overarching assessment tools outlined in the 1999 visual arts education curriculum (NCCA, 1999a), and the observation that took place during the TAA approach lessons was typical to that applied by any teacher within the Irish education system.

Pupils finished artwork following each of the five lessons was used as part of the data collected. As pupils were the owners of the artwork, they had the right to take it home with them and so, upon the completion of each of the six art lessons, photographs were taken of the pupils' completed artwork and this pictorial evidence acted as the third data source collected. Pupil work was photographed and assessed in line with the NCCA assessment criteria (NCCA, 1999b). The pupils' work was also analysed for any developments in terms of their artistic skill and technique. Photographic evidence was used for illustrative purpose in this piece of research. Pupils' artwork was added to their already existing art portfolios to be taken home with them at the end of the academic year.

Following each lesson, the TAA engaged in reflections around the lesson. These reflections were in written format and were based on the efficacy of the TAA approach within the context at hand. The 'What' model of written reflection was adopted by the primary researcher to add structure to the reflections. This model was proposed by Rolfe, Freshwater & Jasper (2001). This model is an iterative process that consists of three simple questions: What happened (Descriptive), so what does this mean (Knowledge and meaning) and now what I do (Plan of action). These written reflections following each TAA approach lesson acted as a data source for this research.

Upon completion of the implementation of the TAA approach lessons, pupils engaged with a second round of interviews. Once again, these interviews were in groups and were undertaken outside the main classroom, in a room that was familiar to the pupils. These interviews were audio recorded once more and also lasted for approximately 20 minutes each. The purpose of these interviews as a data source was to determine and development or change in the pupils' dispositions towards visual arts: to identify what (if any) differences were noticed by the children because of the TAA approach, to pinpoint the participants' opinions towards the modelling techniques and engagement with creative process during the TAA approach lessons, to elicit the pupils' opinions towards the teacher's sharing of his own artwork, and to uncover and perceived impact that the TAA approach had on them or their perceptions of visual arts. These semi-structured interviews were guided by 19 questions. These questions have been included in Appendix A.

Following the collection of all data, the data sources were analysed and triangulated to identify and common themes or perspectives that presented themselves and findings were presented.

## Research methods

Arts-based research is said to include an effort on the researcher's behalf to explore the possibilities of an approach to representation that is situated in aesthetic considerations and culminates in something that resembles a work of art (Barone & Eisner, 2011). It has been argued that this arts-based approach, which calls upon artful ways of knowing and being in the world, challenges the wider academic community and its fixation with scientifically grounded ways of knowing (Finley, Messinger, & Mazur, 2020). This research was art-based under several lenses. Firstly, as my research was situated within the realm of visual arts education, it was arts-based in its content matter. Secondly, my case study included the participant's creation of art and engagement in the creative process which culminates in their creation of physical artefacts that will be photographed as a data source. On a third level, this project is arts-based in its TAA approach whereby the teacher/researcher takes the role of artist, creating art whilst conducting classroom-based research. Finally, this study is arts-based in its portrayal of findings being depicted both in the written word and through the medium of visual arts.

When we blend together the identities of teacher and artist in the context of my research, the concept of *a/r/tography* comes to the fore. Springgay, Irwin and Kind (2005) tell us that "to be engaged in the practice of *a/r/tography* means to inquire in the world through a process of art making and writing. It is a process of double imaging that includes the creation of art and words that are not separate or illustrative of each other but instead are interconnected and woven through each other to create additional meanings" (p. 899). In this sense, *a/r/tography* allows us to work through enquiry as a means of building meaning. It facilitates for pedagogic situations wherein teachers and pupils come together to participate, enquire and share their own artistic experiences and learning processes with each other (Aoki, 2005). This allows for an opening up to conversations and relationships that assist in building

meaning as opposed to the passing on of that which has been learned (Greene, 1977; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008).

Proposed methods for this research include arts-based methods (ABR) comprising of content analysis of children's portfolio of artwork following the TAA approach lessons and the investigator's A/R/Tographic work (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong & Bickel, 2006) comprising personal artwork, visual metonymy and written reflections informed by Rolfe, Freshwater, & Jasper 'What' reflection Model (2001). Other key methods include semi-structured group interviews entailing one pre and one post interview of twenty-minutes duration with groups of primary school children. Children will remain pseudo-anonymous in these audio-recorded interviews and at no point will their identities be disclosed either during the interview or in any written discussion/evaluation of results.

#### *Phases of this study*

The semi-structured interviews that were undertaken prior to the implementation of the TAA approach were put in place to gauge a level of understanding with relation to the pupils' prior understandings of and dispositions towards visual arts. The semi-structured interviews post implementation of TAA approach were put in place as a means of identifying any changes in their understandings and dispositions. When designing these interviews, there was a common concern that children have difficulty in ascertaining what is it the interviewer wants to know from them (Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999). Questions needed to be clear, accessible, and consisting of child-friendly language as research shows that children are more dependent on the researcher's questions when attempting to access past information and experiences (Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein, Larus, & Clubb, 1993; DeLoache & Marzolf, 1995; Docherty & Sandelowski, 1999). Group interviews are a helpful tool to a researcher working with children as they allow for the creation of a natural context for the children (Eder & Fingerson, 2003; Mayall, 2008) where the discussion can naturally grow out of peer

culture allowing participants to build on each other's points and discuss a wider range of experiences and thoughts than that which might have occurred in individual interviews (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002). It is recognised that a more accurate data can be found as children justify their statements to their peers (Albrecht, Johnson, & Walther, 1993). While group dynamics lead to this justification of statements, which is of benefit to the researcher, it is important to consider that group dynamics can also lead to tension and exaggeration (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002).

The field research element of this research consisted of a total of six lessons; one pilot TAA approach lesson, followed by five TAA approach lessons. The purpose of the pilot lesson was to examine the feasibility of the approach and identify any issues that might have occurred/needed resolving prior to the implementation of the five TAA lessons. The pilot study offered a great insight into the logistics of implementing this field research element of this research. Following the pilot lesson, a number of decisions were made about the implementation of the other TAA approach lessons. These decisions, as well as the reasoning behind them, are outlined in the table below. The research was conducted in the form of an exploratory case study and moreover, as it was not action research, there were no changes made to the TAA approach over the course of the five lessons taught.

Table 5

*Decisions made regarding TAA approach post-pilot lesson and reasoning behind them*

Decisions informing TAA	Reasoning behind these decisions
Strand units to be isolated to drawing and paint and colour	For this research, the strands involved were contained to drawing and paint and colour to ensure that there are not too many variables in this research that is small in scale.
Resources to be laid out at central table	The wide variety of resources and media from which pupils can select were laid out on a central, communal table which was located close to the TAA station. This allowed for clarity for pupils in terms of the running of the lesson whilst allowing for increased choice.
Teacher as artist to research	As part of the TAA think-aloud, the TAA researched the topic/theme/title of the project as an artist might, this incorporated the use of books and internet and was done involving the think-aloud technique.
Pupils free to socially construct with others when finished	When pupils had completed their work and if they had some time left, they were given the freedom to observe and question the artwork of others within the classroom, instead of completing an early finisher sheet.

This research included both a written dimension and a creative practice dimension. The creative practice dimension of this research acted as a means of interrogating and re-presenting some of the constructs stemming from the literature review (e.g. creative process, agency versus control, confidence and self-belief) using ABR that expressed my own evaluation and analysis of research findings in visual form. There are a plethora of angles and influences that impact the children's artistry. When these came together, I was enabled to see the interrelationships, and their true effect and causality became truly evident. By nature, visual arts constructs are complex and multi-dimensional to the extent that they need exploration through visual means as well as through text. I felt that in solely representing my

evaluations in a written means, would have restricted my ability to portray the complexities of these interrelationships and so, these pieces aimed to stand side by side with my written work in my presentation of this piece of research. The following figure offers an overview of the research as a whole and portrays the various elements of the study and their interconnectivity.

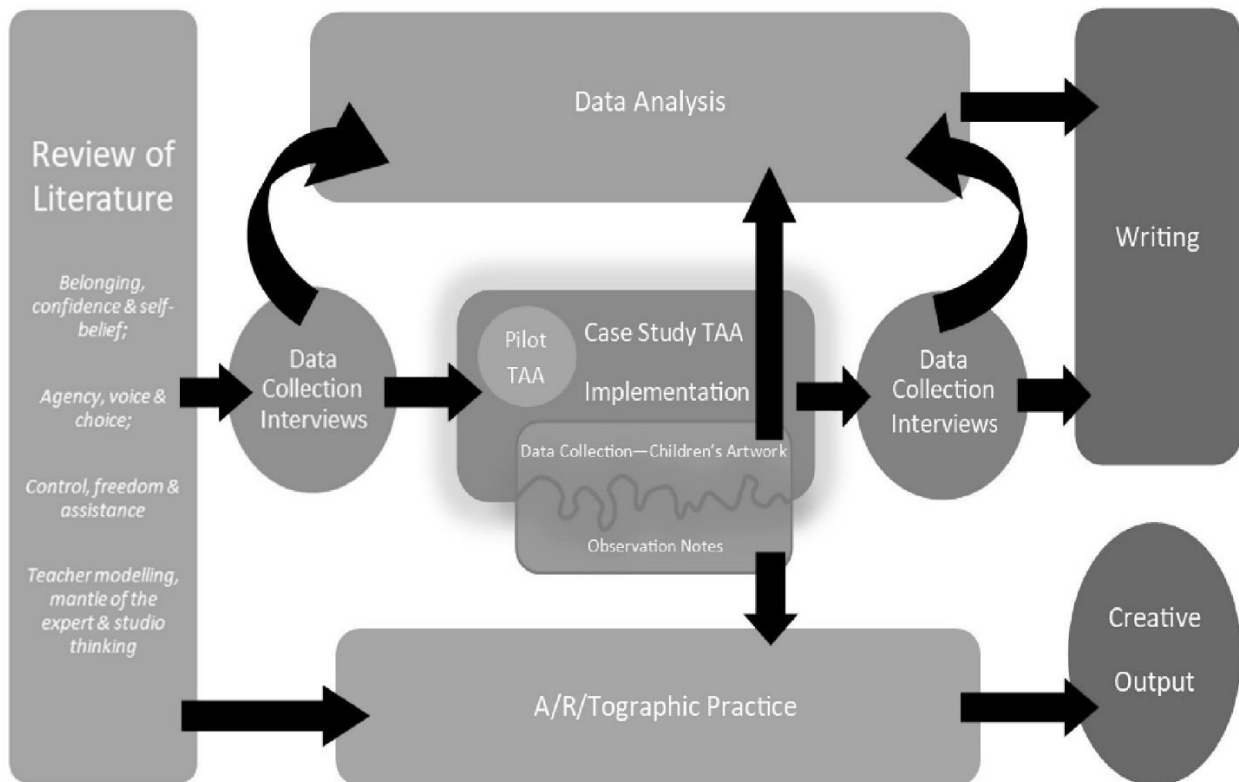


Figure 7

*Overview of the research*

Ethical considerations

There were several ethical considerations that needed to be addressed in relation to this research. I was required to gain written permission from several bodies to complete this research. Firstly, consent was required from the DCU Institute of Education’s research ethics committee (REC). I also needed written consent from my school’s Board of Management (BOM). Furthermore, I needed informed written consent from the participants' parent(s)/



guardian(s) to allow me to interview their children in two semi-structured group interviews and to photograph their work for evaluation purposes. I also needed informed assent from the children to engage in this project. In the three cases of consent/assent, I was required to explain the research and what participation entailed using three separate plain language statements that were both clear and age appropriate. As I was the class teacher of the pupils, I explained to both parent(s)/ guardian(s) and pupils that participation was totally voluntary and that agreeing to participate or not would have no impact on children academically, emotionally or holistically. Nonparticipation in the research component did not preclude a child from partaking in visual arts.

When the project was explained to pupils initially in school, using the age appropriate, pictorial, plain language statement, pupils had the opportunity to discuss it with their parents/guardians before giving informed written assent. The information/ consent letter that was given to parents/guardians also included a contact email of the researcher so as to give them the opportunity to ask any questions/raise any concerns they may have had. Plain language statements, consent forms and assent forms can be found in the appendices.

As the participants were children, they were considered to be vulnerable. In the case of a teacher as researcher, there was the potential for deferential vulnerability amongst participants. To mitigate against that, the investigator explained and reassured in plain language that everyone would be continuing to learn and enjoy visual arts whether or not they chose to participate in the research. With respect to study vulnerability, while the method explored was novel, lesson structure, content and learning outcomes all adhered to the NCCA (1999a) curriculum standards and the whole school visual arts education plan.

Data that was stored consisted of photographs of children's artwork, which never used the pupil's name, and audio-recordings of pre-TAA approach lessons and post-TAA

approach lessons semi-structured interviews with children. Photographs of artwork were taken on the researcher's camera and audio-recordings of interviews were taken on the researcher's laptop. The researcher uploaded and stored these on the DCU Google Drive. Upon their upload to the DCU Google Drive, they were deleted off the researcher's camera and laptop. As the development of the pupils' artwork and appreciation needed to be assessed over the six-week period, the images of the artwork had to be linked together to a particular pupil. A key was generated whereby the photographs of the work of each child was identified using this key only: Each child was randomly given the name of a famous artist and their work/responses were labelled as being the work of "Banksy/Picasso" etc. This key was kept separate to the images, with the key being stored in a locked filing cabinet and the data relating to them stored in DCU Google Drive. All consent and assent forms (Pupil, Parent/Guardian, BOM) were stored in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of this project. At the end of the project, all data was destroyed.

## Procedures

My research took place in the fifth and sixth month of the academic year meaning that pupils had also engaged in visual arts lessons for four months of second class with a teacher who identifies as both PTS and PTA, however, the TAA approach was not implemented in these initial four months. Pupils were informed by their class teacher, that he was undertaking this research, and this was explained to them in child-friendly language. It was explained that participation in the research component was voluntary and that nonparticipation in the research would not affect their engagement in visual arts. Everyone took part in visual arts as per the curriculum, but pupils were given the choice to opt out of the research components if desired. Pupils had the opportunity to discuss with parents and guardians before agreeing to partake in the research. One pupil out of the entire class opted to

refrain from participating in the study. This pupil participated in the class teaching and learning experience but not the research component.

### *Interviews*

Prior to the implementation of the TAA approach, pupils were interviewed by their teacher; the researcher. These short, roughly twenty-minute-long interviews took place in groups. The aim of this initial round of interviews was to ascertain an understanding of the pupils' level of interest in visual arts, opinions of visual arts and abilities to express what visual arts means to them. Following the TAA approach lessons being taught, the same pupils were interviewed again. This was to gauge as to whether there was any change or development in their thinking and expression regarding visual arts. Children were interviewed in small groups to allow for them to feel more comfortable and also to allow for a level of social constructivism in their responses. They were interviewed by their teacher to ensure that they were familiar with the interviewer and felt comfortable in answering questions. These interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes to ensure that this age group were enabled to focus on answering all questions posed to them. These semi-structured interviews were guided by a series of questions which can be found in Appendix A. Interviews were completed outside of teaching time on a voluntary basis.

### *Lessons*

Children who took part in this project completed all the artwork and interviews involved within the school. It did not bare a greater workload for them than that which would usually have been expected of them in their typical visual arts education lessons. Pupils participated in the lessons, as they normally would have, and they created artwork to add to their portfolio, as they normally would have. The only change between their typical visual arts lessons and the lessons taught as part of this research was the implementation of the TAA approach. In implementing these TAA lessons, the lessons were conducted in a studio

environment, as the TAA approach is underpinned by the key concepts of this environment: a safe, secure studio environment whereby pupils can feel confident and build on their self-belief, most specifically in visual arts. The TAA lessons that I put into place as part of this research involved implementing the TAA approach with the same class group over the course of six, hour-long lessons (One pilot TAA approach lesson followed by five TAA approach lessons). These lessons occurred on a weekly basis for six weeks. The lessons were in line with school and government expectations and were within the strand areas of drawing, paint and colour, and fabric and fibre. The lesson plans relating to these lessons can be found in the Appendix B. The following table outlines the overarching content of each lesson.

Table 6

*Lessons taught*

Order of lessons	Lesson title	Strand	Page number
Week one (Pilot lesson)	What Lies at the End of my Rainbow	Paint and Colour, Drawing, Fabric and Fibre	184
Week two	My Wondrous Sea Creature	Paint and Colour, Drawing	186
Week three	My Tree of Life	Paint and Colour, Drawing	189
Week four	My Superhero Alter Ego	Paint and Colour, Drawing	191
Week five	My Fairy Godparent's House	Paint and Colour, Drawing	194
Week six	My Door into Another Universe	Paint and Colour, Drawing,	196

Following the lessons, pupil's artwork was photographed and assessed by their teacher: the researcher. This work was assessed in line with the standards outlined in the

NCCA's 2007 guidelines (NCCA, 2007), and in accordance to the visual arts assessment recommendations outlined in the 1999 curriculum (NCCA, 1999a, 1999b).

### *Visual methods*

This project incorporated visual methods in a number of ways. Firstly, participants created their own artwork when engaging with the TAA approach within the classroom. This was then assessed in line with the curriculum, which will be described in the next section. Simultaneously, whilst pupils created artwork, the teacher also created his own artwork around the given topic. This is central to the facilitation of the TAA approach. Pupils were invited to conference with the teacher at the TAA station in the room. Visual methods were incorporated into this project in another way; through creative practice. The researcher reflected on and explored the TAA approach, relevant literature and data found through the means of visual arts. This consisted of four preliminary/exploratory piece of artwork and one seminal sculpture. Each of these pieces was accompanied by an artist's statement. Whilst data sources were all triangulated as part of this study, these pieces of researcher artwork allowed for a clearer expression of the teacher's understanding of the creative process as part of this research.

### *Assessment and the TAA approach*

The TAA approach is underpinned by PT's observation of pupils' creative process and of pupils' pieces of artwork and this observation occurs during the lesson introduction, in the questioning and discussion that takes place, during the main body of the lesson when the PT and pupils discuss work together and in the discussion in the lesson conclusion. As such, the TAA promotes the implementation of a continuous process of PT observation whereby observation is integrated into all stages of the lesson.

The current visual arts education curriculum recommends that the PT occasionally designs particular visual arts education activities to assess particular elements of the pupils' development in visual arts education (NCCA, 1999a). This is still accessible to the PT who implements the TAA approach in their classroom and moreover, PTs engaging with TAA may be more flexible in their designing of activities because of their experiences: It is argued that PTs who engage with the creative process themselves (in creating their own artwork) have a deeper understanding of their pupils in the area of visual arts and furthermore are enabled to be more flexible in their teaching because of this experience they have had (Zwirn, 2005).

The 1999 curriculum highlights the centrality of curriculum profiles in the implementation of teacher assessment across all curriculum areas (NCCA, 1999c). This means of assessment affords the PT, the pupil and the parents/guardians with detailed information regarding the pupil's individualised needs and achievements in the area of visual arts education (NCCA, 1999a). These observations that for the curriculum profile are based on pupil achievement in relation to curriculum objectives that were outlined as part of school planning (NCCA, 1999a). The TAA approach does not have any impact on the PT's implementation of curriculum profiles as a form of assessment.

Visual arts portfolios were in use for the fourth consecutive year in the classroom in which this case study was implemented. Pupils were familiar with the concept of the visual arts portfolio and has previously engaged in some reflection of their artwork using the portfolios. The TAA approach did not impact the usual implementation of the visual arts portfolio and pieces of art from the lessons taught as part of this case study were included in their visual arts portfolio at a later stage, following their display in the school. For this research, two of the four main areas for assessment that are outlined by the 1999 curriculum assessment recommendations (NCCA, 1999b) were chosen. These two areas include the

pupils' expressive abilities and skills and disposition towards visual arts (NCCA, 1999b). It is important to note that subjectivity was considered in assessment of student work in this research. Gates (2017) points out that when the assessment of art is forced into some truly objective form, it becomes this very soulless, uninspired counting system. To counteract this, Gates advises that knowing students, and being familiar with their lives and work, is central to combatting subjectivity in assessing their work. In the context of this work, this was incorporated as the researcher was the mainstream class teacher of the participants for over four months and they assessed student work having already engaged in discussion with them regarding said work during the creative process in TAA in-lesson conferencing.

### Data Analysis

Data that was collected as part of this research underwent a process of inductive data analysis. This was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide to conducting thematic analysis. The six steps entail familiarisation with the data. This involves reading the data to become familiar with the content and identify initial impressions. Generating initial codes involves identifying and labelling key patterns in the data. Searching for themes involves grouping similar codes together to create possible themes. Reviewing themes entails checking their significance and relevance of each potential theme in relation to the research questions. The next step involves defining and describing each theme in detail, using quotes or examples from the data. This final step involves summarising the findings and presenting them in a clear and coherent manner, using quotes or examples to support any arguments.

For interview transcripts, data was analysed and coded using the six-phase guide in listening to and reading the data and identifying recurring themes and patterns inductively on sticky notes. A similar process was undertaken for teacher observation and teacher reflection notes. Pupil artwork was laid out by lesson and coded inductively using sticky notes under

the two chosen areas of curriculum assessment. Pupil's expressive abilities and skills were analysed by identifying:

- Examples of the pupil's ability to express their feelings, relations and experiences with originality,
- Instances of the pupil's ability to use materials in a skilled and imaginative way,
- Samples of the pupil's responses to a stimulus to create and adapt an idea in the way they wish to express themselves and
- Cases of quality/improved use of line, shape, colour, texture or pattern achieved in a piece of artwork.

Pupils' dispositions towards art activities were analysed by identifying:

- Examples of pupil's ability to take risks and respond to artwork and
- Instances of pupil's level of positivity in their approach towards their artwork (This area was triangulated heavily with teacher observation and teacher reflection notes).

Creative practice was analysed through identifying themes and patterns that were developed in the researcher's creative responses to the unfolding research. These themes and patterns related mainly to the final sub-question regarding the teacher's understanding of the creative process. Both the artwork and the relevant artistic statements were analysed as part of this process.

As part the data analysis, data from the varying sources mentioned above was triangulated together to form a holistic view of codes and themes that arose.



### *Trustworthiness and authenticity*

In the realm of qualitative research, the trustworthiness of the study is reliant on the data itself and also on its analysis (Grennan, 2017). The authenticity of the data was ensured in multiple ways. There were a number of measures taken to ensure the credibility of this research: The researcher was debriefed with research supervisors (Shenton, 2004). The researcher met regularly with the supervisory team to ensure that the research was conducted in a reflective nature. Prolonged time was spent with the participants both in terms of engaging with surveys and in terms of TAA lesson implementation. Finally, participant's words were used in the final report to ensure credibility. With regards to transferability, one of the limitations of this case-study is that by nature, research findings cannot be transferred to other sample groups without further research being undertaken: The researcher recognises and encourages the need for further research in this area. This study aimed to provide a rich, thick description allowing for each reader to make their own decisions regarding the transferability of the findings (Cresswell, 2013; Grennan, 2017).

Dependability has been ensured through the describing of the specific purpose of the study, outlining the data that was collected and how long the collection process lasted for, explaining the thematic coding that was undertaken as data analysis and discussing, interpreting and presenting the findings. The data was triangulated (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This was enabled several multiple methods of data collection. Having catered for the issues of credibility, transferability and dependability, confirmability of this research has occurred through the researcher's recognition of and reflection on his own personal attitudes, feelings and biases with relation to visual arts and the TAA approach, throughout this project. This reflective awareness allowed for interview questions to follow participants responses as opposed to leading them, asking for clarification or elaboration when needed.

## Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the aim of this chapter was to present a detailed account of the methodological approach to the research in addressing the research question. As such, the chapter presented the TAA approach and gave insight as to how it was applied during this research. The constructivist research design was presented and discussed. The context and details of the participants who took part in this case study was also provided. This was followed by a comparative insight into the TAA approach in contrast to the traditional approaches recommended by the curriculum. Towards the end of this chapter, an insight was offered into the research methods employed as well as issues pertaining to the ethical consideration and trustworthiness of this study. Chapter four describes, discusses and elaborates on the findings that have come to the fore throughout the course of this research.

## Chapter Four: Research Findings and Discussion

Data analysis has been coined as a phase of transformation in which large volumes of data that have been collected are converted into a clear, meaningful, reliable analysis (Brown & Dowling, 1998; Gibbs, 2008). It is through this analysis of data that underlying patterns and meanings become evident, which in turn form the basis of explanations, new hypotheses, or new theories (Open University, 2001). Bazeley, (2009, p. 9) warns against “a garden path analysis” within the world of qualitative research whereby summaries of themes are briefly presented with quotes scattered along the pathway as evidence. Whilst description is necessary, this is not enough (Sorensen, 2011). By contrast to this Bazeley ascertains that “the data must be challenged, extended, supported and linked in order to reveal their [its] full value” (p. 8). As such, findings that have emerged from this research will not only be described and commented on but will also be developed.

It is through the process of data analysis that a piece of research is transported from “the rambling pages of description” to a final piece of coherent research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 153). Furthermore, it is recommended to make use of varying types of data to feed into this process of data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Kolb, 2012). When engaging with this process, it is advisable to refrain from segregating the phases of data collection and data analysis in the mind of the researcher (Anderson & Arsenault, 2000; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Gibbs, 2008). Maykut & Morehouse (1999, p. 123) support this in stating that “data analysis is best conducted as an early and ongoing research activity”. It was because of this that my teacher reflections played such a central role as a form of data in this research, alongside data collected from interviews and children’s works of art.

## Emergent themes

Whilst the interview data and artwork of each research participant offered a unique angle on their own progress/development in, and understanding of, the area of visual arts, there were recurring observations, attitudes and behaviours that came to the fore from the interviews, and there were overarching themes that characterised their artwork when it was assessed. Although all artwork created was individual work - as opposed to group projects - very evident patterns emerged in the quality of the pupils' work, and in their outlook on visual arts on an individual level, and indeed in their collective understanding of the TAA approach. There were also emerging themes that came to the fore from teacher reflection and teacher creative practice, both in terms of the artmaking as part of the implementation lessons, and with regards to the ongoing creative practice that guided this research, alongside the written word. Figure 8 presents the overarching themes, and within those, the sub-themes that arose prominently and consistently from the data that was collected and analysed.

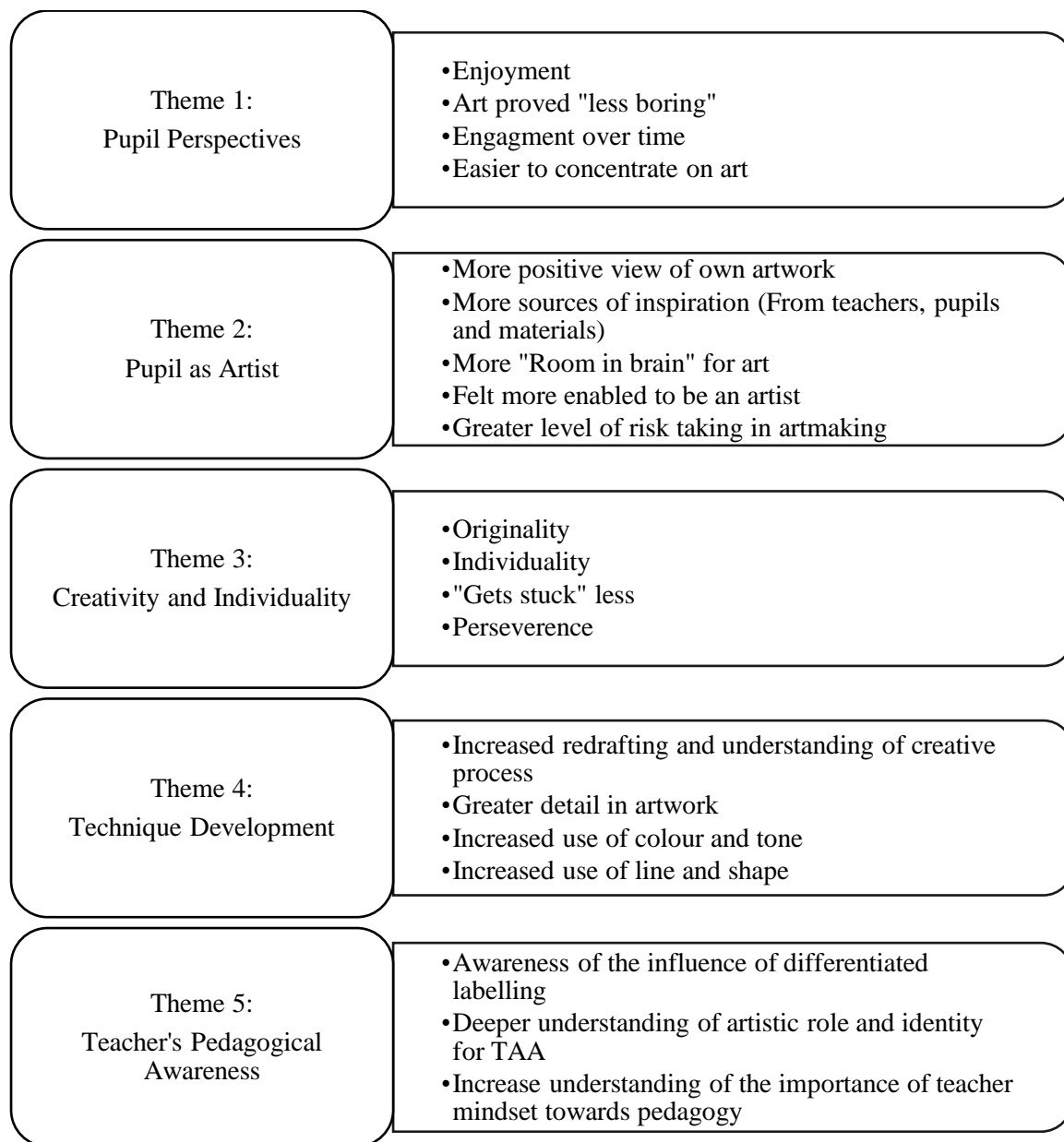


Figure 8

### *Overarching themes and subthemes*

This piece of research utilised multiple forms of data collection and although all data was triangulated, overall, it was evident that each data collection tool contributed separately to the overarching themes that were formed from the data. Data collected from the interviews, assessment of pupil work and from teacher reflections mainly underpinned the pupil perspectives theme and data from teacher reflections and artmaking mainly underpinned the

teacher's pedagogical awareness theme. All of the other data sources used contributed to the other overarching themes. The following section elaborates on the themes presented in Figure 8.

### Theme 1: Pupil perspectives

It is believed that just as the visual art has evolved itself over time, so too have the attitudes and opinions that people hold in respect to them (Gibson, 2003). Upon triangulating the data collected in this study from pupil artwork, teacher reflection and semi-structured interviews, a pattern emerged in relation to the pupils' perspective towards visual arts. A wealth of research shows that the nature of these attitudes are dependent on the contextualised environment in which they experience visual arts (Crum, 2007; Mansour et al., 2016; Robb, Jindal-Snape, & Levy, 2020; Tan & Gibson, 2018). It has been noted that in the home setting, pupils valued engaging with art as a positive social experience promoted by and shared with family members (Barrett, Everett, & Smigiel, 2012; Robb, Jindal-Snape, & Levy, 2020; Tan & Gibson, 2018). In the school perspective, we need to be aware of the core role that PTs play in forming not only pupils' art experiences, but also the work they produce and the outlook they have (Rose, Jolley, & Burkitt, 2006). From data collected in this research as part of teacher reflection, this outlook was clearly a positive one, moreover, evidence from interview data showed that this attitude had become more positive since engaging with TAA lessons. There were multiple subthemes to this apparent shift in perspective which I will explain in more detail below.

#### *Enjoyment*

Pre- and post-TAA approach interviews raised thorough insight into the pupils' perceptions of visual arts. One of the most prominent subthemes that came to the fore was that after the TAA approach lessons, pupils deemed themselves to be having "more fun" in visual arts lessons. When asked in a Pre-TAA interview what the PT should do to make

visual arts more interesting, the participants in one of the four interviews stated that everyone should have more fun, including the teacher (Participants: Yeats, Henry). Pre-TAA interview data suggests that the majority of pupils (all except three) said they felt happy when asked to think about visual arts. Other common responses that arose included feeling confidence, feeling pride and feeling relaxed. In two of the four interviews pre-TAA lessons, pupils spoke openly about feeling relaxed when engaging in visual arts lessons. By contrast to this overall positivity towards visual arts, two pupils spoke about feelings of nervousness and when asked to explain why, one stated, “because I’m not a good artist” (Participant Matisse). Another pupil claimed that their artwork made them feel “weird” (Participant Dali). When asked how they felt when asked to think about visual arts, another pupil replied that they would feel “like I’d [they’d] want to be an artist” (Participant Warhol). When asked to elaborate on this they explained that they want to be an artist “because it feels like it would be fun”. This was met with an agreed consensus from other participants within the group interview. The same group of participants noted that a way of knowing that something is visual arts is that it is fun. What is interesting to note here is that the pupils identified potential for fun or increased enjoyment without stating that this was currently the case in visual arts lessons. This is interesting to note when we consider that literature explored reflects that visual arts lessons are more enjoyable when that are accessible and relatable to pupils (Mac Giollari, 2010).

In all four post TAA implementation interviews, participants expressed that they found visual arts to be more enjoyable than prior to the TAA visual arts lessons. In the first of the four post-TAA interviews, pupils expressed that they felt there was a direct relationship between their perceived sense of greater enjoyment and the opportunities they had had to see more of each other’s artwork. In the second of the four post-TAA interviews, participants related this increased enjoyment to getting to observe the PT creating his own artwork in front of the pupils. This builds on the literature explored which highlights the importance of

social interaction in artmaking (Mulcahey, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978) in emphasising the importance of seeing and discussing the incomplete and finished artwork as part of this process. In the other two interviews, pupils said that visual art was more fun because of the greater number of choices they were allowed to make during the creative process. Choices regarding layout and content of artwork were mentioned here, however the main recurring theme that arose was the choices with regards to the materials they could use. This sense of increased enjoyment was echoed in teacher reflection notes in which pupils' excitement over various chinks, markers and crayons was noted with one child stating, "Are we allowed use ALL of these?" (Participant Rembrandt). Furthermore, this echoes the research of Oğuz (2010) which highlights the importance of choice when it is at an accessible level for pupils. When asked if they thought of visual arts any differently since partaking in TAA lessons, participants voiced that they felt good doing art now, with one pupil stating that they used to hate doing art but now they like it (Participant Goya). There was a consensus from all pupils that they either loved visual arts now or liked it a lot more than they had prior to TAA implementation lessons.

#### *Art proved "less boring"*

Across all four interview groups, participants explained that following TAA visual arts lessons, they found art to be less boring. Participants found that because the PT created his own artwork in front of the children, instead of offering an initial sketch or demonstration on the whiteboard, the artmaking process was less boring to them (Participant Keating). Some participants credited the choice of materials that could be used to make the art less boring (Participant Seurat). Both choice of colour and texture seemed to play a part in making the creative process less boring. Participant Rembrandt remarked:



“You're not confined to like... uh... these five colours. You're only allowed to use these; you can use all of them and there's loads of them. Like I've had just different sheets of paper. Like, and if you want to have different textures or if you want to have different sizes, it's not like you have to use this paper.”

Others argued that because there was no final desired or “correct” product, and because they had a creative license with regards to the content of their art within the theme that this made the creative process less boring for them. Participant Raphael commented that:

“...and like on Fridays, like in the other classes, I was just like, why, why, why do I have to do art today? Cause it was always boring. We had to do the exact same stuff. Like when they hung it up on the wall, you couldn't even know which one was which, because they all looked the same and *they were all the same.*”

Whilst it appears positive that TAA lessons were considered less boring, what is alarming to note is that in typical visual arts lessons Elstad (2006) linked pupil's boredom directly to laissez-faire style classrooms, which is not in line with current curriculum advice.

In all post TAA interviews, the topic of “copying” others' artwork came to light with all pupils concurring that direct copying was a negative practice. Some said that the TAA lessons were less boring because there was less direct copying of artwork (Participant Kahlo). Whilst pupils had quite a negative view of direct copying, participant Warhol thought that some copying could be helpful as part of the creative process. Most pupils concurred that copying elements from the PT's artmaking that was being demonstrated in practice helped their artistry and made the process less boring for them. This contradicts the research of Lowenfield (1957) who states that pupils should not be allowed to copy anything.

Whilst at surface value, this sense of change with regards to monotony seemed to be centred around the art making process, upon analysis of pupil artwork, it became clear that on a whole class level, there was great variation in the content and layout of their artwork which meant that the artwork offered much more variation when displayed as a whole. This was supported by participant Keating who said that by comparison to artwork displayed following

TAA lessons, the older artwork was more boring. Teacher reflection notes also noted more variation in content of pupil artwork by comparison to previous art lessons.

### *Engagement over time*

Teacher reflection notes showed that overall that pupils engaged with the piece of artmaking at hand at their own pace. By natural default, these paces were varied within the class group that took part in the artwork. This variation of speed of completion of artwork is one that would naturally occur in many lessons in the primary school context due to the broad range of abilities within any given class. Initially, I identified this as something that would require more preparation, like in other subjects, whereby a backup or early finisher activity would be prepared to extend the learning of pupils within the art lessons. As part of a pre-existing early finisher area within the classroom, a selection of general early finisher activities were set up with activities in the subject areas of English, maths, art, penmanship etc. During the pilot TAA lesson, when children were complete, pupils were directed towards this area initially as a means of keeping them engaged and to extend their learning. However, having reflected upon my doing so, I recognised that this was not extending the learning taking place during the lesson at hand, but by contrast, it was keeping pupils busy at other work, which did involve some level of learning in other areas (eg. Developing drawing skills with drawing prompt sheets), but which did not extend learning relevant to the learning objectives at hand in this lesson. Towards the end of the pilot TAA lesson, one child approached the PT to ask if he could help his friends, instead of completing the early finisher drawing sheet, for the last three minutes. Following this, when pupils had completed their work and if they had some time left, they were given the freedom to observe and question the artwork of others within the classroom, instead of completing an early finisher sheet. This allowed pupils to learn from other artwork created by their peers.

In post-TAA implementation interviews, conversation arose in all four of the interviews around the topic of completing work. Participants were in favour of the TAA approach in terms of them getting to complete their artwork in a way that involved less rushing on their behalf. This seemed to be for two reasons. Firstly, they felt it improved the quality and detail within their artwork (Participant Da Vinci), and secondly, they felt that conferencing with the TAA meant that they were offered more individualised advice to allow them to continue artmaking in a more productive way whereby they felt less rushed (Participant Banksy). This was interesting as the teaching of art lessons prior to the implementation of TAA and during its implementation were guided by the curriculum (NCCA, 1999c). Some research shows, however, that pupils require sufficient time to suit their own level of artmaking and so the materials and topic of the lesson could be factors relating to this feeling of being less rushed (Oğuz, 2010). This also reflected one of the key studio habits of mind from the Studio Thinking Framework; Engage and Persist (Hetland et al., 2015), as pupils are seen to feel less rushed having been scaffolded in their engagement and persistence through the TAA approach. Whilst pupils felt less rushed, there were still some instances of artwork not being totally completed by the end of the lesson. This was limited to colouring or other final touches not being finished, and as per the typical class practice, pupils were allowed to finish it in recreational time in the morning whilst waiting for everyone to arrive. Teacher reflection notes showed there was no difference in the number of pupils who still had final bits to colour following TAA implementation lessons than there would be following regular art lessons.

#### *Easier to concentrate on art*

Teacher reflection notes indicated that pupils were very invested in their artmaking during TAA implementation lessons. This was evident in several ways. Reflection notes showed that there were less instances of the teacher having to redirect pupils back to the task

at hand or correct pupils for misbehaviour. They also showed that pupils engaged very well with the TAA approach, specifically within the teacher pupil conferencing element of the approach. This conferencing consisted of the students coming to the TAA station with their piece of artwork in progress and discussing both the TAA's artwork and the students. This was guided by both lower and higher order questioning relating to decisions made/being made regarding topics such as colour, layout, pattern, line etc. During these brief conferences, pupils presented as being very independent in their decision making regarding the artwork. Whilst they were not always initially sure what to draw next/what material to use, they came across as being very intent on making the final decision themselves and not surrendering to suggestions or advice they did not totally concur with. Pupils interacted well with the PT in explaining their artwork and what direction they wanted it to go in. There were frequent examples of pupils rejecting teacher suggestions and justifying as to why they would not take this route in their artwork. This was positive to see in the context of the TAA approach as Barnes (1990) has highlighted that it is in having this voice, autonomy and focus that pupils learn that art celebrates individuality and diversity.

It was noted in teacher reflection notes that whilst pupils were still conversing as part of the creative process, there was less projecting of voices further across the room. Moreover, from listening to conversations between teacher pupil conferences, most of the conversation that was taking place seemed to be relating to the artwork in progress. Tomljenovic (2015) notes that this is positive in that it allows the pupils to actively verbalise their artistic experiences. Within this, there were multiple discussion topics such as the artistic decisions being faced regarding the artwork in progress, the use of materials and sharing of said materials and the justification of why they were including certain elements in their artwork. Data collected as part of post-TAA implementation pupil interviews suggested that the direction of conversation and the slightly reduced noise levels within the classroom made it

easier for pupils to concentrate on their own artwork and the artwork of others (Participant Raphael). Usually, “everyone goes noisy and you're like, you can't concentrate” (Participant Kahlo). It was alarming to see pupils having this perception about visual arts as a school subject.

## Theme 2: Pupil as artist

“It’s the way education has worked for centuries—educators perpetuating the (imagined) social order through this process of indoctrination. Pupils as technicians. But what if we, on occasion, also chose to see pupils as artists, people engaged in the creative construction of their own experience. How might that change our relationship with them?” (Hannah & Ellis, 2018, p. 12). The notion of the pupil working as artist is one that forces the PT to shift the focus from guiding pupils to the same place, but by contrast to equip them with the skills and tools to express themselves (Eisner, 2002). This is one that poses a challenge to PTs, who are considered generalist practitioners (Alexander, Rose, & Woodhead, 1992; Alter, Hays, & O’Hara, 2009; Garvis and Pendergast, 2011a; Hallam, Gupta, & Lee, 2008; McCoubrey, 2000;). From the data collected as part of this research, it was clear that there was an increase in pupil participants verbally identifying as being an artist or as working as an artist. This theme, when analysed, presented some interesting interlinking subthemes which I will now discuss.

### *More positive view of own artwork*

As discussed in the pupil perspectives theme, pre-TAA implementation interviews showed that whilst there was an overall positive attitude towards visual arts, there were mixed emotions amongst some pupils with some feeling nervous, feeling weird, and feeling like they’d like to be an artist, as well as feelings of happiness, pride, confidence and relaxation. Interestingly, one group of participants elaborated on this feeling of confidence in highlighting that their confidence was limited to the drawing of certain subjects and outside

of that, they had little confidence (eg. Felt comfortable drawing a face or a stick man but not a full person – Participant Reid). Within the same interview, when asked how the PT could help pupils in visual arts, another participant suggested that the PT could do the “hard bits” for the pupils (Participant Keating). This shows a willingness to engage in artmaking to a comfortable stage, however, it also displays a lack of perseverance and a focus on product over process. In making this suggestion, the pupil implies that they are not capable of attempting certain aspects of the artwork and should be demoted to allow for someone else to complete this element for them. This was alarming to hear, however, it is reflected in the cautionary literature that encourages moving away from being ‘right’ in the eyes of a third party beholder (Hetland et al, 2015).

There was a noticeable shift in attitude in data collected from post-TAA interviews with most pupils highlighting that they feel good doing art and love art. Two pupils elaborated on this by saying that if you make a mistake when making art, you can turn it into something (Participant: Kahlo, Rembrandt): “Like every time you make a mistake, you learn something new” (Participant Rembrandt). This was supported in teacher reflection notes as in four of the five lessons (excluding the pilot lesson), it was noted that pupils were asking for new pages less. In post-TAA interviews, nineteen pupils out of the twenty-four that partook stated that they do art more frequently now, whether that be at home, in school or elsewhere. This aligns with the research of Nickerson (1999) who highlights that this can only occur if pupils feel safe and secure in their classroom environment. In all four of the post-TAA interviews, conversation arose from at least one participant per interviews about redrafting artwork at home with one participant noting that they now reteach art lessons from school to younger siblings at home (Participant Picasso).

In teacher reflection notes, conferencing with pupils during the ultimate and penultimate TAA lesson of this research showed a more positive outlook towards their own

artwork. Participant Degas noted in the final TAA lesson that they felt like they were “better at art and better at being an artist too” and when asked what was meant by that, they elaborated in saying that although they knew they were not the best at art in the class, they knew they were getting better and they were probably better at being an artist than the others. During the second of the six lessons, pupils expressed as part of teacher conferencing that they like making art this way because they got to feel like their art was important (Participants: Le Brocquy, Seurat). This aligns with the works of Hetland et al. (2015) asserts that such a shift towards positivity and confidence occurs in light of a move away from overly teacher-determined artworks that focus on product rather than process.

*More sources of inspiration (From teachers, pupils and materials)*

Having analysed and assessed pupil artwork, it was clear that there was a great variation in terms of the content of their artwork within the thematic direction given. Pupils’ artwork incorporated themes and ideas from television shows, books, YouTube, the school environment, the home environment and of course their imagination to name but a few. Teacher reflection notes showed that pupils were less likely to select similar characters/motifs for their artwork than that selected by their friends or peers at their desks. Teacher reflections noted that this was contrary to what would have been typical of this class and other pupils at this age group who would often be easily influenced by their friends’ decisions, whether it be to highlight their friendship or to be liked by others. By contrast, for the most part, participants cautiously veered away from any major elements that might be viewed as copying in the eyes of their peers or teacher. Although this had some exceptions, with two pupils creating a mushroom shaped house in the “My Fairy Godparent’s House” lesson, pupils were overall opposed to copying within TAA implementation lessons with certain participants openly heard to be discouraging it “It’s really mean when you do that, like who would want to do that to their friend – it’s basically robbing – like why would you do that to

someone; They wouldn't want to be friends with you anymore" (Participant Michelangelo). Whilst this ideology is positive in the sense that it encourages individuality, it is alarming from a social perspective in terms of the creation of a safe space for artmaking to occur in which is central to the classroom space (Nickerson, 1999).

Interview data displayed that pupils acknowledged that there was a greater quantity of sources of inspiration that fed into the creative process as well as the completed piece of artwork during TAA lessons. When asked what differences they detected between regular visual arts lessons and TAA implementation lessons, all pupils expressed that there was more inspiration to be found during the TAA lesson process. When asked what they found helpful about TAA lessons, in all four interview sessions, there was a mention of more inspiration being helpful – e.g. In three of the four post-TAA interviews, more inspiration was the first answer that came to the fore when asked what was helpful. Pupils elaborated on this in saying that there were more ideas and they differentiated these ideas into three distinguishable groups: Ideas they thought of themselves, ideas they observed, and ideas that they constructed/shared with their friends. Pupils felt that the TAA lessons helped them to use their imagination to conjure their own ideas for their artwork (Participant Rembrandt). Agee & Welch's research (1989) shows that this can only occur within a psychologically safe environment. They also felt that observing the TAA creating their own artwork helped them greatly to design their own artwork. Participant Raphael commented "And before, when we were doing art, it's a really, really hard time thinking of those stuff to actually do it. Like gaining the habits, something like that. Yeah. But now that you did that, just both of these ideas are actually really good - Just popped into my head. It's just like a better example."

Whilst it was accepted that it offered more inspiration to the pupils, a small number of pupils admitted to feeling jealous of the standard of the PT's when observing TAA engaging in the creative process in front of the class. Whilst this was the case, they simultaneously



stated that the TAA approach encouraged them to improve their artmaking. Pupils described the shared ideas as ideas that they co-constructed with their friends when discussing the artwork and engaging in the creative process. They also spoke about how they could take these shared ideas home with them. Talking about artwork, whether it be at whole class level when questioning the TAA, in small groups when discussing with peers, or during teacher conferencing all proved to be important factors in the creation of new ideas according to the participants. This echoes the importance of social constructivism in the context of the visual arts classroom (Mulcahey, 2004).

#### *More “room in brain” for art*

The implementation of the TAA lessons caused change in the pupils’ artmaking in school, however, there was also an evident pattern in the pupils’ attitudes towards visual art and engagement with visual art outside of the classroom setting. Prior to the implementation of TAA visual arts lessons, participants were asked how often they had the chance to make visual arts. There were a variety of responses to this question with the most frequent level of engaging with visual arts outside of formal school lessons being twice a week and the least frequent being once every two years. The amount of time participants said they would spend on these artmaking sessions was said to be between twenty minutes and sixty minutes. There were several factors that lessened the frequency and opportunities for artmaking: availability of parents to help, when there is nothing to watch on the television, when not allowed to play computer games anymore, when homework is finished, when new art materials come into the house. From the comments of most participants, it became clear that visual arts activities were always secondary to another type of activity, or something that was only gotten round to if there was spare time.

Post-TAA interview data suggested that there was an increase in participant engagement with visual arts outside of the context of the formal visual art lesson. In all the

post-TAA interviews, participants discussed how they now engage in visual arts activities more often, both at home and in recreational time at school. In many cases they noted that they are more likely to choose a visual arts activity as opposed to another recreational activity: “So, so I used to never do art... And now, um, since you're doing art, I, now I always do it. And then I, now I used to play video games a lot, but now I don't do it.” (Participant Henry). Some of these pupils said they created their own types of artwork at home now, such as masks, cards and drawings. More explained how they took their own artwork they had created at school and redrafted it at home; changing or altering it to improve it in some way. Others described how they created their own versions of artwork they had observed from a peer or from the teacher at school. In this way, the TAA is seen to concur with the research of Barnes (1990) which argues that pupil engagement will not be widespread if there is only one approach or option.

As well as making more time for visual arts in their lives, some pupils also said they spent more time thinking about visual arts, noting a perceived growth in their mindset: Participant Kandinsky claimed to like art more; “Because it gives you more imagination of, of um, stuff and, and makes, makes more room in your brain for art.” When asked to elaborate on this, they claimed that their “brain has opened to being inspired and it's and it's just, and it's just, and it just, my brain opened a bit and more art is getting in because the brain has expanded” (Participant Kandinsky). This growth in artistic thinking is something that Nilson (2011) contributes to occurring following a move away from more controlling teaching styles.

#### *Felt more enabled to be an artist*

In pre-TAA interviews, when questioned as to how they felt when asked to think about visual arts, one participant responded that they would feel “like I'd [they'd] want to be an artist” (Participant Warhol). When questioned as to what they meant by this, they

elaborated by saying that they want to be an artist “because it feels like it would be fun”. This was met with an agreed consensus from other participants within the group interview. What is interesting to note is the choice of words used by participant Warhol, which places them, as a pupil of visual arts outside the identity of being an artist by the use of the conditional language “would” in both their original response and in their explanation. This was echoed through in an interaction that was noted in the teacher reflection journal following the pilot lesson that was taught. In this account, the teacher recorded that when introducing the first lesson to the children, he explained that he would be working as an artist at the front of the classroom simultaneously to the pupils’ work. This was met with a rather startled reaction from pupils with one pupil questioning: “You’re an artist? But I thought you worked as a teacher” (Participant Goya). This highlights the participants’ struggle to comprehend the duality of identity that would involve either themselves or their teacher working both as pupil/teacher and artist. Participant Vermeer in post TAA implementation interview stated, “Um, I think when I was like younger, I never, like, I never like got to like do art until like second class. Like you like made me love art now.” This highlights a shift in attitude in terms of the pupil’s perceptions of their own engagement with visual arts. Sefton Green (2008) has correlated this increased engagement and self-perceptions to the teacher’s taking of a more facilitative stance as opposed to what Burnard and Swann (2010) refer to as an “all knowing” stance.

#### *Greater level of risk taking in art making*

It became clear when analysing the class’s artwork by lesson theme and when analysing individual participant artwork across all six of the taught lessons that there was great progression in their work both in terms of their skill and technique, but also in terms of their content and the development of their artwork. Analysis of pupil artwork under the curriculum assessment area of disposition towards art (NCCA, 1999b) gave great insight into

the quality of pupil artwork and the progression of their learning and artmaking. It was clear that there was an increased level of risk taking evident in the participants' artwork by the later stages of the TAA implementation lessons. This correlated with the work of Eisner (1979) who encourages the PT to work artistically which provides a climate of risk-taking. As the scope of this research does not allow for the discussion and analysis of artwork from every participant, I have selected two participants' artwork to show and discuss their increased risk-taking. The first participant selected is Picasso and they would have been considered to be low average in the area of visual arts prior to implementation of TAA lessons. This pupil would have had low self-esteem in visual arts and would have shown little excitement or interest at the thoughts of a visual arts lesson prior to TAA implementation. The second participant selected is Turner and they would have been considered to be high average in terms of their artistic abilities prior to TAA implementation. This pupil would have a great interest in visual arts and would engage in visual arts activities at home. For both participants I will present the artwork they created from week two "My Wondrous Sea Creature" and week six "My Door into Another Universe".



Figure 9

*"My Wondrous Sea Creature" - Week two artwork by participant Picasso*



Figure 10

*"My Door into Another Universe" - Week six artwork by participant Picasso*

Upon analysis of the first piece of participant Picasso art presented above, “My Wondrous Sea Creature”, it became clear that the pupil did take a positive approach to the art making however, it was also evident that the whilst the pupil did engage with the process to an extent, the personal involvement could have been better as two other pupils in the classroom created similar-shaped pink sea monsters. Whilst their monster was similar to that of other participants, it was clear that some efforts had been made to add personal touches to

the monster through the incorporation of purple and red fins and gills on the sea monster. Overall, this participant could be said to have displayed a low average personal involvement with the creative process. In terms of the risk-taking that took place, it is clear that there were low levels of risk-taking in this piece of art: The pupil did not choose to add any background detail or other sea monsters to interact with his main creation, and the majority of the page is lacking in detail or artistic interest besides the incorporation of colour. This meant that overall, the artwork was not particularly inventive or personalised. By comparison to this, great progression can be seen in the increased risk-taking that was involved in the creation of the second piece. The content of this piece was unlike that of anyone else and it displayed great personal involvement resulting in a very individualised, inventive piece. This coincides with Kent & Steward (2008) who argue that in art we must all break rules, even rules we have made ourselves.

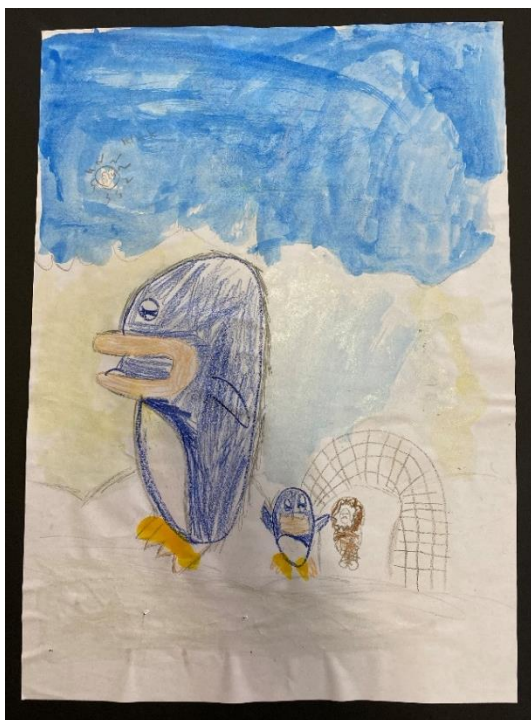


Figure 11

*"My Wondrous Sea Creature" - Week two artwork by participant Turner*

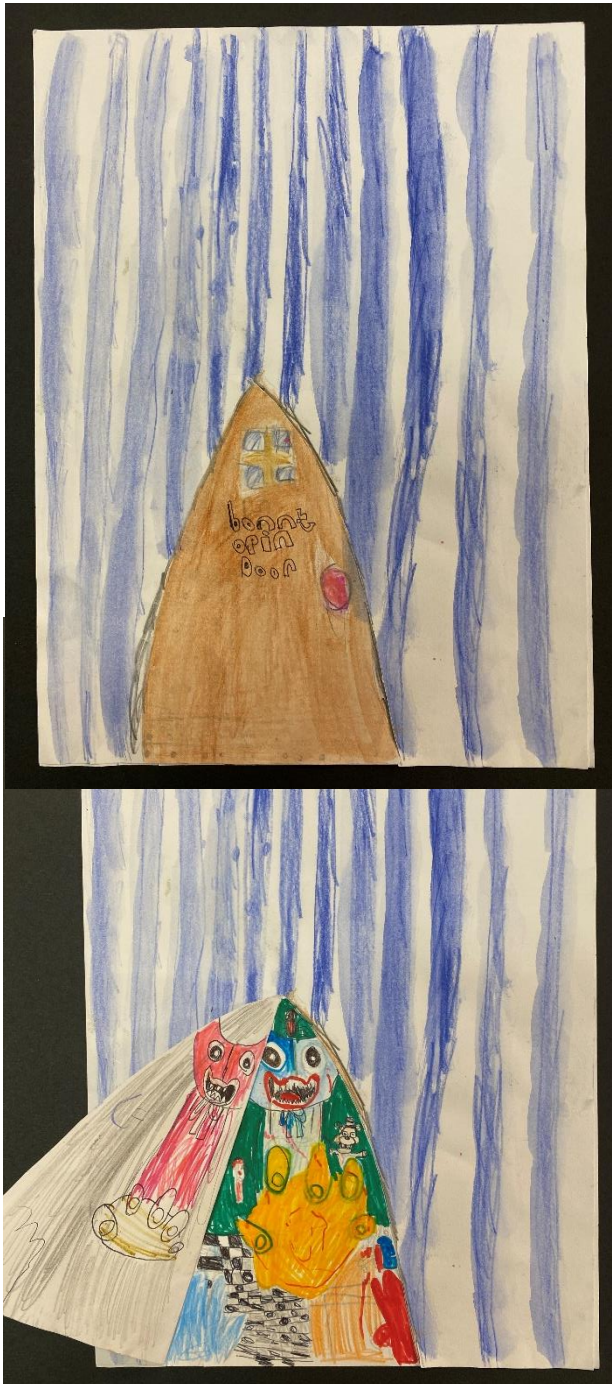


Figure 12

*"My Door to Another Universe" - Week six artwork by participant Turner*

The first piece of participant Turner's artwork, entitled "My Wondrous Sea Creature", displays a very good level of personal involvement with the theme at hand and the pupil,

similar to participant Picasso, had a very positive approach to the artwork. This pupil was the only participant to draw penguins in this lesson. At first glance, this piece of art doesn't appear to have a massive amount of detail and there doesn't appear that there were a lot of risks taken as part of this creative process, however, upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that there was more risk taken and more inventiveness and individual character involved as both penguins are being chased out of an igloo by an angry Eskimo. This piece of artwork was the only piece created during this lesson whereby the creature wasn't underwater. Whilst this first piece is stronger than participant Picasso's first piece when assessed in terms of the pupil's disposition towards art activities, progression can still be seen in Turner's piece from week six, "My Door into Another Universe". Before the flap is opened on this piece, there appears to be little individualism with a relevantly plan layout and not much detail, however, when the flap is pulled back, the true level of risk-taking is evident. Great inventiveness is evident in colour choice and in the content chosen, most especially in the outreached hands that extend from both sides. This truly shows great engagement with the theme and the participant's personality really shines through in this artwork. This level of personal engagement and risk-taking is something that has been recognised as being positive in visual arts in how it builds resilience, leads to problem-solving and increased development of creativity (Burnard & Swann, 2010; Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976).

### Theme 3: Creativity and individuality

Research shows that creativity is an extremely valuable and necessary skill that can assist children in navigating their way through the increasingly complex world in which they find themselves (Kim & Kim, 2018; Sousa & Pilecki, 2013; Saracho, 2012). It is acknowledged that there are many factors that can act as barriers to the promotion of creativity in pupils (Ata-Akturk & Sevimli-Celik, 2020). It is argued that in order to promote and foster creativity within the classroom setting, there needs to be planning done so as to



make both appropriate learning techniques and a rich variety of resources available to pupils (Dere, 2019). Data collected shows that there was an increased perception of creativity amongst pupils after TAA implementation as well as a his quality of individual artwork created as part of this creative process. There were a number of evident patterns that arose in relation to this which I will analyse below.

### *Originality*

Across the board, data collected from post-TAA interviews showed a great amount of discussion of the topic of copying in visual arts. As mentioned above, pupils were of the view that directly copying the work of another was a negative practice. Some pupils felt that TAA lessons were more interesting because there was less direct copying of artwork (Participant Kahlo). There was a personal element of offence attributed to the notion of directly copying the work of others: “there's someone at my childminder's who is always copying me and I'm like, no. And someone says, because they copy you, that means they like your idea. But I don't believe that because really, it's not really nice.” (Participant Rembrandt). Participants were quite blunt about their opposition towards the notion of copying as they felt it had social implications “It’s really mean when you do that, like who would want to do that to their friend – it’s basically robbing – like why would you do that to someone; They wouldn’t want to be friends with you anymore” (Participant Michelangelo). This is something that is in agreeance with the research of Lowenfield (1957) who argues against copying, because it can lead to a plateau in their sense of wonder and willingness to wonder (Amabile, 1989).

In contrast to this, whilst direct copying or grand scale copying was negated, some argued that small amounts or copying could be positive: Participant Munch argued that “You can find other people's ideas and that you might like, that you would have never thought to do”. This outlook was supported by participant Warhol who thought some copying could be helpful to the artmaking process. On a constructivist note, Participant Vermeer felt that it

could help if you were stuck with your piece of artwork it would be helpful to copy elements of another's work, where permitted. There was a significant difference noted between copying the PT's work and copying the work of peers or other children. Overall, participants seemed to agree in interviews that copying from the teacher was acceptable and not offensive or inappropriate. They also distinguished between copying in varying subjects: Copying in visual art was slightly more acceptable than copying in maths, for instance (Participant Le Brocquy). This highlighted the difference in perceived importance in their minds between visual arts and maths and aligns with research highlighting that pupils can learn a great deal from their teacher's artwork but also from one another's artwork (Mulcahey, 2004)

Post-TAA interviews showed that pupils found the TAA approach helpful because there was less copying which meant that pupils did their own thing. They explained that this meant that there was more difference to be seen between pupils' artwork when looking at the final products. This was seen as a positive outcome. By contrast, when pupil artwork was assessed, it became clear that whilst there was less copying from each other, there were strong aspects of copying motifs/core elements from the PT's artwork that was created in front of the class. Whilst copying of this type was evident, it was limited to no more than one or two elements of the teacher's artwork when it occurred. There was an apparent difference between the other elements/components of the pupils' work to that of the teacher's, showing an underlying wish to have an individualised final product.

A small group of pupils noted that since engaging with TAA visual arts lessons in school, they had started to copy/redraft artwork they had completed, or observed at school, at home. Furthermore, participant Matisse expressed that if you wanted to be an artist when you grew up, this type of copying would really help you. When asked how, they commented that there was a lot of information to take in when you were creating a piece of art and that this copying or redrafting at home would act as scaffold to this. This is reflected in the work of

Hetland et al. (2015) who emphasise the studio habit of mind of observing from others. Furthermore, it links in with the current curriculum strand of looking and responding (NCCA, 1999b).

### *Individuality*

Having assessed pupil artwork in terms of the participants' disposition towards art activities, it became very clear that as the weeks progressed, with each lesson, overall, there was an increased individuality to be seen across the class's artwork. There were fewer pieces of art that looked similar in theme/motif. There was an increased sense of risk-taking during the creative process evident in the participants' final pieces of art. This inventiveness was not an instant change, rather, it was a gradual occurrence that grew over the course of the six weeks. Inserted in Appendix J is a compilation of all pupil artwork from the final TAA lesson entitled, "My Door to Another Universe". It can be seen clearly that there is great variation in content, colour, layout and detail in each piece of artwork. This increased appearance of greater personality in participant artwork was also reported in teacher reflection notes. Hetland et al. (2015) identify this as being typically matched to a decline in the importance of making artwork so it looks 'right' in the eyes of the teacher.

Similarly, this came up as part of post-TAA interview discussion: When asked about the differences noted between typical art lessons and newly implemented TAA lessons, all groups commented on how they now do their own thing when creating art and this was viewed by them as a very positive sentiment. Pupils commended the opportunities they had had to create whatever they wanted within the broader theme presented by the PT. One pupil commented that "It's a very boring world if everyone, and everything's the same" (Participant Rembrandt). This statement echoes the research explored earlier with highlights that visual art is a celebration of diversity and individuality for its own sake (Barnes, 1990). Some pupils elaborated on this in stating that you were more likely to have a positive view of your own

artwork through creating art in the TAA implementation lessons. In interviews, some pupils related the increased individuality to be seen in artwork to the increased choice that was given to pupils with regards to media and materials (Participants: Seurat, Rembrandt). Others felt there was a correlation between the greater individuality and the increased artistic freedom they felt within the theme presented by the TAA: They enjoyed that there was not the correct or desired product to be working towards during the artmaking process (Participant Raphael).

*“Gets stuck” less*

Teacher reflection notes highlighted that there were fewer instances of pupils approaching the teacher seeking help with the complaint of being stuck with their artmaking. This was evident from the second of the six lessons. In pre-TAA implementation interviews, all four groups brought up the concept of how the teacher should help the children when stuck. This help was discussed as being mostly in the form of verbal advice, but in the case of one of the interviews, pupils felt the teacher should complete the tricky aspect of the piece of art for the pupil. This aligns with the research of Hedley, Antonacci and Rabinowitz (2013) who encourage the PTs discussion and oral scaffolding of the artwork.

There was a pattern in the attitudes of the participants towards being stuck, however, in the post-TAA implementation interviews. By contrast to before, pupils admitted to getting stuck less in artmaking now. Some pupils felt that taking on board the TAA’s suggestions and ideas from the conferencing stage greatly helped them in their engagement with the creative process: “Really, really helpful because now, like we can share ideas, which makes it easier because some like the teacher will have a really good idea for you to use” (Participant Michelangelo). Whilst participants all agreed that the conferencing was beneficial to them in their learning and development in the area of visual arts, some negative aspects of this practice were also noted: One pupil highlighted that the conferencing disturbed the flow of

their artmaking if they were called up at disadvantageous time in their artmaking (Participant Keating). Moreover, participant Kandinsky added to this in saying that whilst the conferencing was helpful, it ate into artmaking time.

Others attributed their getting stuck less to the TAA's modelling of engagement with the creative process in front of the class. Participant Reid remarked that:

“First of all, I realised that you, you used, you used to let us just do our art, whatever we wanted. Well, we kind of have to follow the rules, but you started to do your own art and it inspired us to make, like, maybe make better ideas, you know”.

This finding stands in stark contrast to the research on an international scale that highlights the lack of artistic confidence amongst PTs (Hennessey, Rolfe, & Chedzoy, 2001; Oreck, 2004; Russell-Bowie & Jeffrey, 2004; Smithrim & Upitis, 2001).

It was also argued in all four interviews that the overall increased discussion around that artwork and the artmaking helped pupils navigate through their own creative process. Pupils noted that they were more likely to “roll with” their artwork post-TAA, even if it did not work out as they might have initially planned (Participant Rembrandt).

### *Perseverance*

As mentioned above, participant Rembrandt noted that participants were more likely to “roll with” their artwork post-TAA, even when things went wrong. This displayed a level of perseverance in terms of their attitude towards the creative process. This was echoed in teacher reflection notes where it was recorded that pupils rarely came up to the TAA to ask to start again, which contrasted greatly to that experienced pre-TAA. In post-TAA interviews, pupils admitted to getting stuck with their artmaking less. There were several underlying patterns that came to the fore that were interconnected with this. All interview groups concurred that they felt there were more sources of inspiration with the TAA lessons, some argued this was from observing each other's artwork. More said this was because of the

teacher's demonstration of engagement with the creative process, which they argued helped them to store a bank of ideas or inspiration in their minds: "Um, well, it was different because if you give us any good ideas, then we can keep them in our head if we're doing another piece of art" (Participant Michelangelo). It is interesting to see this, showing the studies of Budge (2016) and O'Connor (2009) which highlight the importance of modelling in visual arts to be true in the implementation of this case study. Others related this to gaining inspiration from the materials. This is reflective of the research of Murphey, Prober and Gonzales (2010). Pupils concurred in post-TAA interviews that a major difference they found through engaging with the new approach was that they were encouraged to, and were more likely to, do their own thing. Overall, they admitted to perceiving themselves as better at art now. Participant Matisse felt that this improvement in their artwork had occurred between January and February (This TAA approach was implemented at this stage): "It was helpful because at the start of the year I was bad at art and then now, I kind of got better."

Participants Raphael and Kahlo said that they now recognised the importance of sticking with their artmaking until the end of the creative process: "Like I always think I'm really bad at art, and I'm actually finished it's kind of good" (Participant Raphael). This showed a level of resilience within the creative process, despite the existence of feelings of self-doubt and a lack of self-confidence within them. Pupils described how they now take the time to plan their artwork more comprehensively than before, both in their head and on their whiteboard/rough work page, and they noted that this helped them in their art making: "It helped me being able to picture it in my head, what I'm trying to draw" (Participant Goya). As well as emphasising their newfound importance of planning for artmaking, they also placed a value on redrafting artwork, both in recreational time at school, and at home. This was something that they noted when asked in what way they think differently about visual arts now, showing that this redrafting is not part of their thought process within the creative

process. Participants also displayed a new flexible attitude whereby they did not worry as much about artwork going wrong because they knew there were other options: participant Rembrandt said that in the past, “you would be like, oh my art's bad. I need to start over again”. Participant Kahlo was quick to elaborate on this for them in saying that if you feel this way, the artwork could be turned into something else. As well as this perseverance helping them in completing a certain piece of artwork, there was also a perceived learning taking place: “Like every time you make a mistake, you learn something new” (Participant Rembrandt). This is reminiscent of the work of Barnes (1990) in focusing on the value of process over product.

#### Theme 4: Technique development

“It is necessary to be brave to teach art techniques and to improve children’s skills because art is a distinctive discipline having its own language that can make communication meaningful” (Bilir-Seyhan & Sakire, 2018). Bilir-Seyhan & Sakire highlight to us as educators that generalist practitioners require a certain amount of bravery in teaching technique, however, it is essential that this is taught to facilitate for pupils to function artistically. It is in this presentation of different techniques and artistic methods that visual arts education supports creativity and aesthetic values (Ercivan Zencirci, 2012). In short, as summarised by Fox & Schirmacher (2014), pupils cannot create something from nothing. Data collected from this research highlighted an improvement in participant technique through engagement with the TAA approach. This apparent improvement in technique was evident across all participant artwork when assessed using the curriculum recommendations (NCCA, 1999b). I will now discuss this data with reference to pupil artwork.

#### *Increased redrafting and understanding of creative process*

Pre- and post-TAA implementation interview data showed a clear pattern in terms of the participants’ understandings of the steps involved in the creative process/making a piece

of artwork. Prior to the TAA lessons, when asked what steps one would take when creating visual arts there were multiple distinct concepts that were clearly shared amongst participants. Some pupils outlined that you first think about the art, then you sketch it and then you colour it in. In two out of the four interview groups, this was elaborated on in suggesting doing the most challenging aspects first, followed by the less challenging aspects, to distinguish the art making into two chronological categories to complete it. One group of pupils considered this question more practical in advising that the first step was to gather required materials and the next step was to create the artwork. These responses reflect an immature understanding of the creative process with little consideration for planning, decision making, redrafting etc. Research shows that PTs need to be in a position to identify, nurture and support pupils' creativity through the means of the creative process (Zimmerman, 2009). One participant did, however, recommend going lightly with pencil first and then re-outlining more heavily (Participant Munch).

By contrast to the above, post-TAA interview responses showed a more developed understanding of the creative process and what it entails. Participants expressed a variety of sources that helped influence their decision making and their art making within the creative process. Pupils noted the assistance of teacher conferencing in this. They also noted the role of the materials in this and moreover, the importance of understanding the materials and how they work: "Cause if we're using the wrong paper, on our pencils, they could break, snap, and our art won't look good" (Participant Seurat). Participants also displayed an interest in seeing the TAA to help form the basis for their own work: "We wanted to know what yours would look like, because most teachers are just like "Okay, this is what it looks like, bye" (Participant Raphael). They elaborated in showing that whilst they might not take aspects of the teacher's art to guide their art making today, they could store the information for future redrafting or artmaking: "Um, well, it was different because if you give us any good ideas,



then we can keep them in our head if we're doing another piece of art” (Participant Michelangelo). Participant Warhol also added that one on one conferencing with the TAA allowed them to take a deeper look at the artwork and see more. This concurs with research explored earlier which emphasised that discussion and dialogue are of central importance in the creative process (Duh, Zupančič, & Čagran, 2014).

In every one of the post-TAA interviews, discussion ensued from at least one participant per interviews regarding redrafting artwork at home and one pupil even described how they now reteach art lessons they have engaged with at school to younger siblings in the home context (Participant Picasso). This concept of redrafting was one that pupils placed a huge importance on now, correlating the concept of redrafting directly to the improvement of their artwork: “And when I go home, if I get a piece of paper and I don't know where to draw, I can think of something that I did in school and I can draw it and I can make it even better” (Participant Banksy).

#### *Greater detail in artwork*

In four of four post-TAA implementation interviews, pupils recognised an increased level of detail incorporated into their artwork. This was echoed in teacher reflection notes across a number of the lessons. This became most apparent, however, in the assessment of participant artwork. As mentioned above, because the word count of this research does not allow for the discussion of the artwork of every participant, as such the work of two pupils has been selected for discussion. The first participant who has been selected, Da Vinci, is a pupil who would be considered competent in visual arts, spending time at home artmaking. The second participant selected, Keating, is a pupil who has special educational needs that affects their access to the curriculum in all areas. This pupil had little interest in visual arts prior to TAA: Whilst they always partook in lessons, they openly voiced not liking art, which was linked to challenges faced in their fine motor skills. For both participants, two pieces of

artwork will be discussed; artwork from the pilot lesson, and artwork from the fourth lesson, “My Superhero Alter Ego”. When their artwork was assessed in relation to their expressive abilities and skills (NCCA, 1999b), it became clear that in both cases, there was an increase in detail in the artwork.



Figure 13

*"What Lies at the End of My Rainbow" - Week one artwork by participant Da Vinci*



Figure 14

*"My Superhero Alter Ego" - Week four artwork by participant Da Vinci*

In the first of these two pieces by participant Da Vinci (Figure 13), there was a good sense of originality and personal experience. This was being expressed through the participant's portrayal of a core message, that the Coronavirus pandemic would cease to exist. There is a very definite use of line and shape in this artwork giving it a very full look and this is paired with dramatic colour choices which result in a very vibrant, striking appearance overall. There is some level of detail in this work, however, better use of detail could have been made to tie in with the message being expressed. The woven rainbow is well-shaped and was carefully executed with a very definite level of skill. Although this piece of artwork displayed the participant's good abilities in the area of expressive abilities and skills, further improvement in this area is evident in the next piece of artwork (Figure 14), "My Superhero Alter Ego". Like the first, this piece of artwork displays a strong response to the stimulus given, with a great use of shape and colour. There is a greater level of detail in

shape and pattern in this piece, giving almost an effect of texture and depth to the piece, despite its two-dimensional nature. This piece incorporates a great use of contrasting colours with tone and shade that are all based on the primary colour yellow. This piece expresses their Superhero Alter Ego with great detail and thought, in a style that is allegorical in nature, showing a villainous, antagonist snake positioned to the left of the superhero and an innocent victim in the form of an owl to the right of the brave protagonist. This layout not only offers a narrative to the viewer, but also offers a sense of balance to the piece of art. There is a clear increase in the amount of technical and expressive detail in the second piece of art discussed.



Figure 15

*"What Lies at the End of My Rainbow" - Week one artwork by participant Keating*



Figure 16

*"My Superhero Alter Ego" - Week four artwork by participant Keating*

The first of these two pieces of artwork (Figure 15) displays a poor level of originality and involvement. This piece lacks detail and displays poor response to the stimulus given. The pupil has incorporated a great use of colour into the rainbow, however, the choice of blue as the colour on the inner layer makes it fade in with the background. The pupil did, however, use great skill to weave the rainbow to this quality, given their educational needs. This participant had a poor level of expressive, personal involvement with this piece of art, leading to a lack of development on the piece and this is reflected in the poor expressive abilities and skills that are evident. There is an improvement evident in participant Keating's expressive abilities and skills in the second piece of artwork (Figure 16), "My Superhero Alter Ego". The pupil made great use of space and shape in their design of the flying superhero. There is a much-improved level of detail in this piece with a logo incorporated into their costume and fire and lightning dramatically splitting the sky in the background. The participant's choice of

colour offers a sense of drama given the use of contrasting primary colours. There is a good sense of motion incorporated. Overall, in terms of this pupil's expressive abilities and skills, the pupil has displayed great improvements, when their special educational needs are taken into consideration. This echoes the work of Oğuz (2010) in highlighting that time, tools and materials need to be in line with the child's individual needs. It is important to note that in the contexts of both of these pupils, the TAA approach has aligned with current curriculum recommendations whereby the PT should be more of a catalyst than an explicit teacher of technique. (NCCA, 1999a)

#### *Increased use of colour and tone*

Both teacher reflection notes and post-TAA implementation interviews reported of increased use of colour and shade in pupil artwork. This was particularly clear to see when participant artwork was assessed in terms of their expressive abilities and skills. This aligns with the research that states the value of being confronted by new and different materials (Barnes, 1990). The curriculum assessment guidelines inform that expressive abilities and skills would be observed partly through the quality of colour achieved in artwork as well as the child's commitment to achieving this. To display this, I will present a piece of artwork by participant Yeats, entitled "My Door into Another Universe" (Figure 17). Participant Yeats is a participant who would be considered a low average; this is evident in this pupil's fine motor work and in their self-esteem in visual arts. I will also discuss "My Wondrous Sea Creature" by Participant Reid (Figure 18), who is a pupil who displays strong abilities in visual arts, attending drawing classes outside of school.

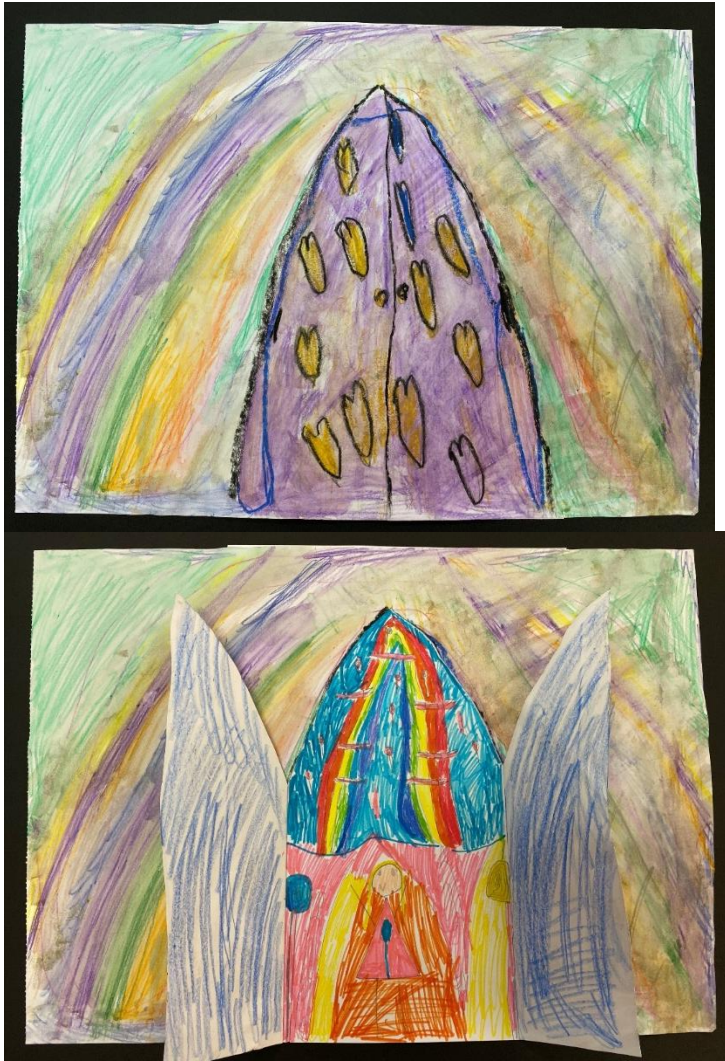


Figure 17

*"My Door into Another Universe" - Week six artwork by participant Yeats*

When assessed in terms of its expressive abilities and skills, this piece of artwork showed great quality in terms of its use of colour and tone. The pupil chose contrasting colours, both primary and secondary to create a hazy rainbow feel that enhances and emphasises the shape of the door. The choice of watercolour pencils creates a foggy effect which adds a sense of mystery to what might lie within. The fronts of the doors are covered in golden love hearts which stand out richly on the purple background, offering a regal feel and sense of importance to the doors. When the doors are opened, the viewer's eyes are met with a strong linear pattern in the centre of the page that incorporates primary colours and stands out vibrantly in contrast to the more muted tones outside. This linear colour pattern draws the train of sight of the viewer downwards towards the girl presented within, who is framed in pinks and oranges, colours which have been saved from use elsewhere in the artwork.



Figure 18

*"My Wondrous Sea Creature" - Week two artwork by participant Reid*

Upon viewing the detail and pattern used in this piece of artwork, it is evident that participant Reid has experience drawing and sketching. This is also echoed in the skilful use



of watercolour pencils in the background to create the feel of being in the depths of the ocean, the murky water framing this dangerous creature with its varying shades of blue. The participant has made excellent use of varying contrasting tones of brown in this piece. This is emphasised in the varying textures of watercolour pencils, normal colouring pencils and poster paint. The tones vary in shade and also in intensity/vibrancy of colour because of this. The tones incorporated in the unusual shape of this creature contrast starkly with the surrounding watery shades.

*More inventive use of line and shape*

In post-TAA interviews, pupils noted that they see art differently now because it should include “funky and cool shapes” (Participant Henry). A development in participants’ use of shape, and also line, was evident in artwork when being assessed. To display the evidence of this use of shape, I will discuss a piece of artwork by Participant Munch, entitled “My Fairy Godparent’s House”. Participant Munch would be considered to be competent in the area of visual arts, with a great interest in sketching and drawing. To display this use of line, I will present a piece of artwork by participant Raphael, entitled “My Tree of Life”. Participant Raphael’s artwork would be considered to be a low average in terms of their artistic ability and expression.



Figure 19

*"My Fairy Godparent's House" - Week five artwork by participant Munch*

The figure above displays participant Munch's take on the stimulus of "My Fairy Godparent's House" (Figure 19). When assessed in terms of its expressive abilities and skills, it was clear that there was a strong use of shape incorporated by the pupil. There is an apparent contrast between the shapes the participant has chosen to form the body of this inventive house façade. Shapes vary in dimension, width, height and shapes with both curved edges and straight edges have been incorporated. The pupil has emphasised the duck head tower as one of the most important features of this war-like house in its prominence of height. The participant has inserted great personal ideas into this piece and responded excellently to the stimulus.



Figure 20

*"My Tree of Life" - Week three art by participant Raphael*

This piece of art incorporates great use of line and pattern which stand out at first glance. The participant has incorporated a variety of straight and curved lines in the piece which make good use of the space on the page. Whilst the choice of materials combined with the choice of paper has left a somewhat rough finish on the background, the pupil has framed and emphasised lines using the contrasting green leaves and the yellow and red flowers. The clear, straighter lines of the rainbow offer great contrast to the woody, curled lines of the branches as they wind their way through the sky. This more inventive use of line and shape was an unexpected finding and similar literature to this was not found in the literature prior to this stage in the research.

## Theme 5: Teacher's pedagogical awareness

My own creative practice had an integral role in this research both in terms of my creation of the proposed TAA approach and my expression of findings. Having made art in my exploration of the literature and key concepts that were central to it, having engaged in artmaking in my field implementation of TAA, and having developed a final piece of artwork to express my findings, it is clear that the learning that had come from the creative practice element of this research has been crucial in the overall findings. These findings will be discussed below.

### *Awareness of the influence of differentiated labelling*

As I would consider myself a PTS, I have always prided myself on planning and teaching interesting and creative visual arts lessons. In my designing of lessons, I have always subconsciously tried to plan for lessons that would provide for pupils of all levels of ability within the context of the class I was teaching. Upon reflection on this, in doing so, on some subconscious level, I was labelling pupils as having a certain level of ability in the area of visual arts. Barnes (1990) demotes this labelling of pupils and argues that we should not impose labels or indeed our preferred options on pupils. When sourcing stimuli for lessons, I would project in my mind to the lesson and to that which would be created by certain pupils to help guide my lesson design. When teaching the lesson and when circulating the room, discussing the artwork in progress with the pupil, I would feel more excited when approaching certain pupils to see what their take on the concept had been. In this sense, I was subconsciously teaching to the high achieving. Whilst I still taught, scaffolded and supported all pupils, I had a set of subconscious expectations for each pupil within a mental bell curve of sorts when it came to their artwork and its perceived quality. Whilst these inner thoughts were never expressed to pupils in my discussion or assessment of their artwork, I feel that they subliminally fed into my teaching and my attitudes towards the learning that I planned

and facilitated. Hollands (2004) highlights that this is not positive, but by contrast, pupils and teachers should enter an empty space without expectations.

This concept is first seen in my first exploratory piece of artwork entitled “A Triumphant Tea Party”. This piece can be seen below and also in Appendix L. This piece depicts the PT through the metaphor of a teacup, pristine and glowing, however there is an underlying, contrasting sense of uncertainty with the flower heads bowed and the repetitious misspelling of the word *diminished*. These allude to the capacity for all PTs to be distracted or overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle of and demands associated with teaching to the extent that they cannot take a step back and reflect on the bigger picture of what is being taught. Whilst this is not ideal and perhaps not intentional, having reflected on both literature in the Irish context (DES, 2005; INTO 2009), and on an international level (Alter, Hays, & O'Hara, 2009; Chapman, 2005), it is clear that this occurs.

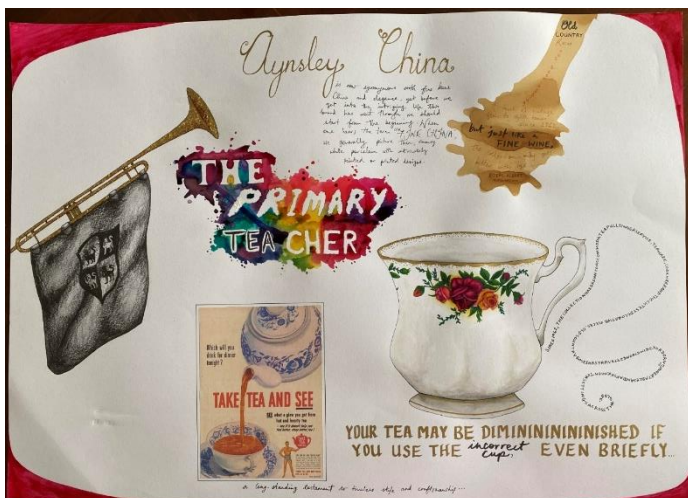


Figure 21

“A Triumphant Tea Party” – The first preliminary piece of the researcher’s artwork

In the second preliminary piece, “Fuel and Grow” (Which can be seen below and in Appendix N), we witness the teacup facilitating for the feeding and growth of the pupil and whilst at first glance we acknowledge the teacher to be providing nourishment to the pupil, upon closer inspection and reflection, it becomes clear that the teacup itself is growing, this growth is occurring in a different direction or dimension, despite the fact that the teacup is

slightly more tarnished that it was in the first piece. The teacher has become aware of this labelling and through this growth; having gained a deeper awareness of this, I can now look forward and use this awareness mindfully when planning and teaching.



*Figure 22*

*“Fuel and Grow” – The second preliminary piece of the researcher’s artwork*

*Deeper understanding of artistic role and identity for TAA*

As part of my implementation of the TAA approach lessons, I was forced to engage fully with the creative process myself, which aided me in marrying my identities of artist and teacher as one. As well as this, it assisted me in my learning in putting me in the same position as the pupils. This presented a different role to me than that which would have been typical of art lessons prior to this study – A new role whereby my own creative process was exposed to pupils; with my own artistic expressions growing and learning before them and alongside them. This aligns with the research of Andrews (2004), who highlights the importance of teacher engagement with the creative process through artmaking. In discussing both their and my own artwork with them when conferencing at the TAA station during the early TAA implementation lessons, I gradually developed an awareness that the struggle that I faced in terms of what had often felt as a conflicting set of aspects to my identity (As artist, as teacher etc.) was one which was truly being subconsciously echoed within the pupils’

minds – Whether it be associated with the social pressure of being expected to create something of high quality or whether it be the unspoken unanimous conclusion that one’s artwork would be below some expected par. In engaging with the creative process through the TAA approach I developed a better understanding of the pupils and their similarities to me. This was explored in the fourth preliminary piece entitled “Flúirse” (Which can be seen below and in Appendix R) which shows a straw from the cup to the lips of the artist, concealed behind the billboard. This marrying of nourishment and identity has been allowed for thanks to the deepened understanding of how the roles of teacher and artist can co-exist harmoniously through the implementation of TAA. Furthermore, the artist’s lips can offer a means to communicate this language and understanding of visual arts to other adult audiences; PTs within their school or learning environment.



*Figure 23*

*“Flúirse” – The fourth preliminary piece of the researcher’s artwork*

I began to see that because the TAA centres around the creative process rather than the completed product and because the teacher takes the role of artist, pupils who emulate the teacher’s actions also take the role of artist which helps to focus on the creative process and engagement with it in a way that is not subliminally limited by predetermined social

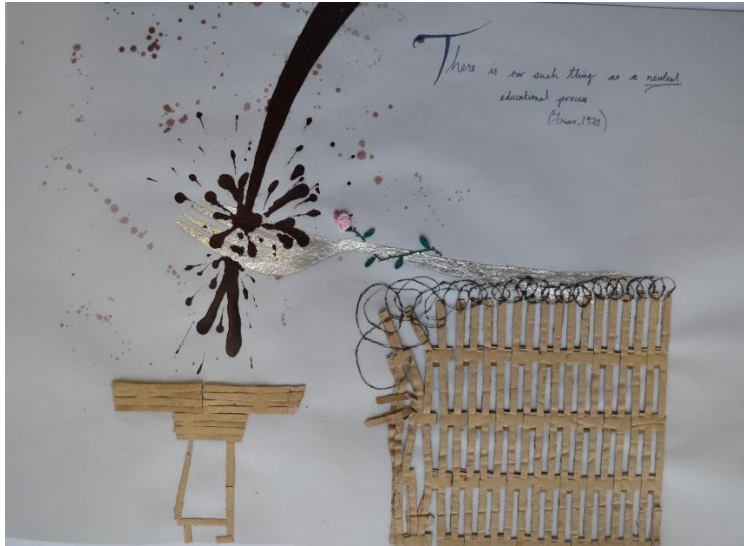
standards relating to artistic abilities. This is depicted in “Flúirse” through the viaduct which pours artmaking into the teacher, who will not only facilitate for this to help pupil growth within the role of teacher, but will also grow themselves and share this with others within the role of artist, and threefold, will grow as a learner which is seen in the growth of the teacup both in terms of its form and in terms of its floral motifs. This focus on process means teachers and pupils are not staticised in their artmaking and their developing creativity by the feelings and preconceptions they have about themselves and their artmaking because of previous experiences, peers and their environment. In this way, I found that while pupils can be instructed in the modelling of technique and can gain inspiration from artwork, the wider world and from those around them, their true creativity can only come from within them and their openness to engage with the creative process in a manner that is conducive to their developmental level and their character.

*Increased understanding of the importance of teacher mindset towards pedagogy*

Engaging in expressive art making which collated and summarised the findings of this research aided me in combining the elements of visual arts pedagogy that characterise the TAA approach. Whilst I had already identified as a teacher with specialist interest and passion for visual arts, and while I was already fully qualified to teach visual arts and equipped with a minor specialism of expertise in this area, I found that in implementing the TAA approach my understanding of the creative processes grew, but furthermore, I developed a deeper awareness of the pedagogy involved in using this understanding of the creative process to improve my teaching within visual arts education. This is reflected in the third piece of preliminary artwork “Imprisoned with Care”. This piece can be seen below and in Appendix P. Within this piece we see that the teacup PT has been replaced with a fork PT, a more rigid, shiny instrument that is certainly fit for purpose, however, it does not meet the requirements for the facilitation of the transfer of artmaking to pupils or self. This represents



a PT who is not open to development in the area of visual arts; a PT who lacks confidence or competence. We see that although this instrument cannot transport tea because of its form, the potential for growth and development in this area is there, underlying in the floral growth that envelopes its handle.



*Figure 24*

*“Imprisoned with Care” – The third preliminary piece of the researcher’s artwork*

We see, however, that this growth is constrained by a fence with miniature barbed wire, representing a mindset that is not opened to developing and growing. Whilst this barricade is flimsy in its design and dilapidated in its form, holding no true reason for not developing in engagement with the creative process, it remains exactly that: a barrier. This mindset is one that blockades the PT’s ability to grow and transform from a fork into a form that is truer to that of a teacup, which would allow openness and facilitation for artmaking and growth in the creative process. As such, it became clear to me through the implementation of the TAA and my artistic exploration of the relevant literature that there needs to be a level of openness amongst PTs to allow for engagement with the creative process themselves, before they can go on to effectively facilitate this with pupils. This coincides with the research of Gibson (2003) and Price (2007) who implore teachers to be

open to engaging with artmaking without bringing their own baggage into their teaching subconsciously.

My seminal piece of artwork, “Ascension” (Which can be seen below and in Appendix T), takes the focus away from the PT and turns the lens on the pupil who has engaged with the TAA approach. We see in this piece that the pupil has grown from the teacup. From within it, the pupil has emerged amongst an abundance of growth. This growth started as a mere floral motif, however, following its meaningful engagement with the TAA and the creative process, it has developed and flourished to reach new heights. The growth alongside the pupil on this journey and at each step or hurdle the reach, it scaffolds them and aids them on their way. We see that although the PT is a mere memory, barely visible amongst the mossy undergrowth, it acts as a root and foundation for the facilitation of this quality growth. Furthermore, we see that as the pupil progresses, new, fresh growth is evident that is not connected directly to the PT. Most importantly, we see that as the pupil ascends the stairway of steps, there is no final destination evident, this growth is not limited by a final destination, and it also moves in circular motion: an iterative cycle of flourishing. This research experience has acted as a form of professional development for me in my understanding of the teaching of visual arts and moreover, the TAA has become a pedagogical tool that I now see as being very beneficial to my classroom practice.



*Figure 25*

“Ascension” – Main piece of researcher’s artwork

#### Conclusion

The collection of data and the analysis and discussion of said data in this case study sought to investigate the efficacy of the implementation of the TAA approach in the classroom context. It must be noted, however, that “data analysis represents a central step in qualitative research and has a major impact on the outcome of any research conducted” (Flick, 2014, p. 3). It is because of this that this research has been designed in such a way as to incorporate a variety of data sources to provide for a more comprehensive insight into the TAA approach. Having analysed the data, it became clear that there were four overarching themes of patterns reflected in the data collected: The pupils’ perceptions of art changed positively following TAA implementation. Participants displayed an increased sense of identity as artist in terms of their attitudes towards their work and towards the creative process in general. Pupils admitted to showing more creativity and individuality in their artmaking and this was reflected in their inventive, original artwork. There was an evident development in the pupil’s techniques, skills and abilities. While this chapter has presented a

comprehensive discussion of the main themes and subthemes that emerged as pupils engaged with the TAA approach in their classroom context, the closing chapter will offer a detailed discussion of the conclusions and findings that can be drawn from this research: its implications for my own practice, for the practice of others and for curriculum development and implementation.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

### Introduction

Visual arts education has offered me great pleasure, development, stimulation and passion as a pupil, teacher and artist. It has allowed for a growth that has sparked my interest in this area of research and acted as a catalyst to develop and propose the potential of the TAA approach. As a generalist PT in the Irish context, a specialist interest in the visual arts adds great insight and reflective practice into my teaching of visual arts, however, it has concurrently presented a conflict of role that has conflated to result in a duality of identity that is still emerging and growing.

The 1999 visual arts curriculum (NCCA, 1999b) has provided for great advances and developments in visual arts education over the past twenty years (DES, 2005). However, as a PTS in the Irish visual arts education field, there are some concerning aspects of this curriculum, and its subsequent implementation. Firstly, studies show that there are elements of the espoused curriculum that are not being implemented satisfactorily (INTO, 2006; DES, 2005). This includes, but is not limited to, the implementation of all the recommended starting points. This poses concern for me as a PTS, but furthermore, what adds to this perturbation is what is lacking in the four starting points: There is no promotion or encouragement for the inclusion of PT artmaking (at specialist or at generalist level) as a means of stimulus for pupils. In this sense, PTs being active artistically, taking on the role of artmaking and engaging with their own creative process during a visual arts lesson is a notion that has been left on the periphery. As such, my identity is one that feels in some ways estranged to the curriculum in terms of these starting points.

The TAA approach was developed to bridge this gap between PT facilitation for visual arts lessons and child-centred pupil engagement in the creative process. It provides an opportunity to the PT to work within the realm of the creative process, offering the pupil an

insight into not only artmaking, but also the behaviours and attitudes of artists. This research involved the implementation of the TAA approach across 6 lessons in a class of twenty five seven-nine year olds, with pre and post implementation interviews as well as teacher reflection and creative practice. As this research was grounded in the context of visual arts education and sought to identify improvements in pupil artwork, whilst also incorporating teacher artmaking and its influences on the development of pupils, it was necessary to explore both the literature that underpinned the artwork, and the findings collected from varying data sources, through the medium of art also, so as to allow for a truer investigation and expression of the work carried out; one which simply could not be achieved solely through the medium of written word.

Within this concluding chapter, I will offer the reader a depiction of the findings obtained from an in-depth analysis of the data that was collected as part of this study; a discussion of the implications of these findings for my own practice, the practice of others and for curriculum development and implementation; a presentation of the limitations of this exploratory case study; and an overview of the new emerging questions that have been raised by this study and seek pursuing.

### Key conclusions

The all-encompassing question that was posed both initially to guide this research, and consistently in the progression of this exploratory case study asked, *How does the TAA approach potentially impact the teaching of visual arts in the primary school?* Semi-structured interview responses, pupil artwork and teacher reflection notes were triangulated (both in the realm of qualitative research and through creative practice) as part of a comprehensive, reiterative process of data analysis, in pursuit of uncovering an answer to this question. The conclusions are presented in three clear categories: Pupil expressive abilities and skills, pupil understanding of the creative process in visual arts, and teacher

understanding of creative process in visual arts. The below figure offers an overview of this research and its conclusions.

### *Increased pupil expressive abilities and skills*

Research argues that whilst visual arts pupils often feel under pressure to have reached a certain standard or attained a certain level of mastery before they are enabled to engage in meaningful artistic expression, this is not necessarily the case in many forms of visual arts (Graham, 2019). Gude (2013, 2007) elaborates on this in stating that this concept is in fact anachronistic of positive, modern visual arts practice. Notwithstanding the limitations of this study, the artistic self expression of young visual arts pupils in the context of this study offer great insight into the possibilities for self-expression in the Irish primary context. Pupil participants were found to create artwork that was more self-directed in terms of both the content and motifs that were evident in their artwork and also in terms of their techniques they used. They associated such actions with *copying* which they deemed as being unacceptable on a grand scale and in some cases, perceived as an offence that would or should be taken personally. Whilst large scale copying was negated, smaller scale copying, following informal spoken assent was deemed by the participants as being of value to developing their artmaking and engagement with the creative process. This led to a greater sense of individuality amongst participant artwork and this was something that was celebrated and commended by pupils as being a positive thing both in terms of each individual's art portfolio and in terms of whole class display of artwork. As such, not only was participant artwork more unique and personalised, but moreover, this was something that was emphasised positively as part of their TAA creative experience.

Pupil artwork also was found to have incorporated greater detail across their artmaking. This was evident in a number of aspects of their artmaking, most noticeably in their use of shape, colour, pattern, composition and line. Pupil artwork was more developed

in these areas overall, with added finer detail and motifs incorporated across participant artwork. In the vast majority of cases, the detailed sections or motifs that were incorporated into the pieces of art were noted to portray messages or allegorical elements of the concept behind their piece of art. This was evident both in assessment of pupil artwork and in pupil conversations with teacher that were noted in teacher reflection notes. In this sense, it became evident that pupil work was more intricate from an aesthetic perspective, but moreover, from an expressive perspective, with meaning behind artistic elements that were created. It is noted that the development of finer detail within artwork with reference to the compositional whole of a piece of art involves the artist's use of higher level thinking skills including reflecting, perceiving and reasoning (Brigham, 1989).

Participant artwork also clearly portrayed increased skilled use of colour and tone: Pupil artwork involved a wider range of tones and shades of colours that previously had not been incorporated into their work. This was evident in the pupils' choice of colour for their piece of art and simultaneously in their arrangement of colour choices, both complementary and contrasting in the composition of the artwork. Pupils were more engaged in spending time selecting and creating colours, perfecting shades with increased consideration to their impact on the piece of artwork. This increased level of thought was not isolated to the world of colour, however, as participants were seen to be engaged in making more inventive use of line and shape as part of the creative process. More detail was added to pupil artwork in terms of the lines and shapes they used, and moreover, pupils were found to have experimented more in their choice and creation of shape and space across the page. Lines were used creatively to add texture and movement to artwork and a broader range of more unusual shapes were also incorporated. These elements all contributed to a greater level of visual risk-taking within the participants' creative processes. Whilst this increased sense of



risk-taking was evident from a visual perspective, it was also echoed in their descriptions of their artwork and in their explanations of their experiences post TAA implementation.

#### *Deepened pupil understanding of the creative processes in visual arts*

It is understood that artefacts created by pupils as produce of the creative process are in fact concrete externalisations of their cognitive understanding of the content at hand (Sawyer, 2022; Sawyer & Berson, 2004). Results collected within this exploratory case study offered significant insight into the development of the pupils' understanding of the creative process in this context. There were a number of concepts that arose that displayed an apparent development in their understanding of the creative process and what it means for them. This yielded findings that displayed what pupils began to recognise as being important or central to their learning of visual arts within the creative process. On a deeper level, there were a number of themes that arose that showed the pupils' developing understanding of the creative process in their role as artists. Prior to this study, pupils did not consider themselves to be artists, but by contrast, they saw this as something that was for professionals and was very much separate to their artmaking both at home and at school. These findings, in the context of this exploratory case study, highlighted a shift in their perceived identity whereby pupils grew to acknowledge themselves more as makers of art as well as pupils – bridging the gap between pupil and artist and recognising the importance of their identity in the creative process.

Participants explained how they *got stuck* less frequently following the implication of the TAA approach. Whilst they were still faced with artistic decisions as part of the creative process, there was a decrease in the frequency of times whereby these decisions would lead to them being unable to work through the problem and continue on with their art-making. They linked this to discussing artwork with others around them, observation of the teacher, and gaining inspiration and insight from the choice of materials. This lessening of the *I'm stuck*

mentality meant that pupils worked more independently in their artmaking in terms of their autonomy and ownership over their artmaking, whilst simultaneously gaining inspiration and insight into artistic decisions and problems facing them through interactions with others who were also engaging in the creative process. A concept that developed from this was their overall acknowledgement of a greater sense of perseverance with their artwork following TAA implementation. Pupils continued trying to partake in the creative process, showing more resilience when faced with artistic choices or conundrums, developing an understanding of the creative process as being something that poses obstacles, but moreover, in developing the understanding that these obstacles can be overcome and can add to one's artistic abilities. Participants noted that these particular factors, amongst other aspects of the TAA approach, contributed to them having a more positive view of their own artwork.

Pupils who participated in the TAA implementation lessons noted that they felt more enabled to work as an artist because of their engagement with the TAA approach. Not only did they understand their teacher in a new light under the artistic lens of his identity, but furthermore, they began to understand that artmaking could form a part of their identity and that indeed, when they engage with the creative process, they are in fact working as artist, making similar decisions to and encountering similar challenges to what they would previously have described as *real artists*. They summarised this in explaining that they now felt there was more room in their brain for art as they developed their level of engagement with the creative process and began working as artist as opposed to having the role of pupil who is making art. They admitted to finding it easier to concentrate within TAA implementation lessons as they found both themselves, and the others around them were more focused on artmaking and the stages they were at in the creative process, which in turn decreased the level of distraction in the room in their eyes. It was also noted that pupils spent more time redrafting their artwork following engagement with the TAA approach. This

redrafting took place in school, both during formal visual arts hours, and also in recreational time. Moreover, pupils recalled how they had started to redraft artwork at home often, in some instances even including siblings in the redrafting process. This showed a greater level of understanding of and commitment to their engagement with the creative process and highlighted their increased focus on the process of artmaking, rather than the product.

Findings showed that participants began to understand the creative process and being something that involved greater enjoyment than they had felt before engaging with the TAA implementation lessons. They linked this with feeling overall less rushed when engaging with artmaking within these lessons and furthermore added that TAA lessons were less boring.

*Heightened teacher understanding of the creative processes and subject connoisseurship in visual arts*

My own creative practice played a key role in this research both in terms of my creation of the proposed TAA approach and my expression of findings. The first element of my creative practice involves an exploration stage including four preliminary artistic pieces. These pieces allowed me to pinpoint and express my understanding of my role as primary teacher within visual arts education having graduated from St. Patrick's College (The Institute of Education, Dublin City University). It helped me to analyse my thoughts on the curriculum and reflect upon my experiences with the creative processes and with the teaching of visual arts at primary level. Furthermore, it allowed me to combine key elements that came to the fore through the review of literature, delve into them on a deeper, more contextualised level, and collate them to form the fundamentals of a more clarified TAA approach. This artistic research allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of what I had identified as a problem with relation to the current starting points and furthermore, gave me the knowledge to enable me to create the TAA approach which stands a means of solving this problem. This artistic practice allowed me to actively reflect on the problem before starting the creative

process of artmaking, during the process, and retrospectively, enabling me to reform my initial rough ideas for the TAA approach. All four of these pieces, and artist statements relating to them, are included in Appendix M.

The second element of my creative practice is one cumulative final piece of artwork. This piece entitled “Ascension” was formed as an expression of the findings of this research. Since there were a variety of data sources in this research, this part of the creative practice allowed me to gather and combine the findings in a way that artistically expresses their combined meaning. It acts as a collation of the varying sources and delves into the efficacy of the TAA approach visually. This piece summarises the findings across all thematic areas and expresses visually my deeper understanding of role and identity in art, my increased pedagogical connoisseurship and my awareness of the influence of subconscious labelling in my practice. The below photograph of this piece of art offers a two-dimensional insight into the efficacy of the TAA approach, however, as part of my engagement with the creative process within this exploratory case study, I became conscious that the true growth both in skills and abilities and in terms of a deepening of understanding of the creative process that occurred following TAA implementation could not be restrained to two dimensions. As such, I found that as the research grew and developed, so too did the materials being used and the nature of the artmaking that I as artist, teacher, and researcher, engaged in. Further photographs of this piece of artwork, and a more detailed accompanying artist’s statement, can be found in Appendix N.



*Figure 26*

*“Ascension” – Main piece of researcher’s artwork*

#### Research implications

The core aim of this research was to introduce and evaluate the efficacy of the TAA approach within the context of primary visual arts education. This research hoped to do this in a way that would enable for a future developing of this new TAA approach to visual arts education whilst simultaneously revealing the value of this approach to visual arts educators, researchers, policy makers and curriculum developers. This research sought to investigate this approach from both the PT’s perspective, but also from the pupil perspective, grounded in the context of a real classroom with real children engaging in the creative process. This research has indicated clearly in this context that the TAA approach to visual arts education in the primary classroom has overall had a positive effect on the pupil’s understanding of the creative process and on their expressive abilities and skills. It has also had a positive effect on the PT’s understanding of said process. This exploratory case study has offered a foundational insight into the TAA approach and indicated with great clarity that there is great potential for the incorporation of the TAA approach to visual arts education as a tool that

would work in cooperation with the curricular starting points to promote and encourage pupil engagement with the creative process in a meaningful way. Having reflected on these findings and having engaged in the undertaking of this research both in academic exploration and artistic/creative investigation, several possible trajectories for the TAA approach and the impact it could have on visual arts teaching and learning have come to the fore, with implications for my own practice, for the practice of other teachers, for future research and for curriculum and policy development.

### *Implications to my practice*

The findings of this study have aided me in developing my understanding of the teaching of visual arts. Whilst I would have prided myself in being a good visual arts teacher, I feel that this study has extended my understanding of the creative process for young children both in terms of their physical artmaking, and in terms of their attitude towards visual arts, most especially within the whole class context. Having undertaken this study, I can see the potential for the incorporation of the TAA approach within the classroom at primary level. Not only is there a capacity for it to be incorporated, but furthermore, the findings attest to its positive influence on the pupils in terms of their learning of visual arts and in terms of their attitude towards visual arts.

Whilst the impact on pupils alone would compel me to integrate the TAA approach into my future teaching of visual arts, a second reason for implementation of the TAA approach is its assistance to me both as teacher, and as artist, in my understanding of the creative process and of the potentials for pupil learning. I intend to incorporate the approach, as well as the current five specified starting points on the curriculum (NCCA, 1999a), and moreover, I see the value of, and potential to, incorporate some aspects of the TAA into my teaching when making use of the other stimuli suggested. The TAA approach is underpinned by six core components and whilst some of these components rely on the feature of the

teacher creating artwork, some other components, such as increased pupil choice and child-initiated questioning are ones that could be promoted and integrated into the other suggested starting points that are advocated for by the current visual arts education curriculum (NCCA, 1999a). A final implication of this research on my practice is that it has really highlighted to me the true significant value of the importance of one's own practice in visual arts in bettering oneself as a visual arts educator. This study has not only developed my understanding of the creative process but has furthermore inspired and encouraged me to engage in it more frequently myself.

#### *Implications to the practice of other teachers*

“Initiating and sustaining change in teachers’ pedagogical practice is a challenge which requires strong leadership, substantial commitment, and strategic action” (Grennan, 2017). This is of special relevance in the case of the teaching of primary visual arts education in the Irish context because of most teachers who identify as a generalist practitioner, often with little or no specific interest in visual arts. Those who find themselves in this position of having little experience or interest in visual arts can teach and facilitate the teaching of visual arts education through the lens of co-learning, developing their own skills and artistic abilities alongside the pupils. In approaching the teaching of visual arts with such an open mind, they can improve their practice and learn from those with more specialist interest and experience.

As this study was undertaken by a specialist teacher in visual arts education, it can offer more insight to those who similarly find themselves in the position of generalist PT with specialist experience, interest or training in the area of visual arts education. It is understood from this study that there is great potential for this approach within the Irish context, however, it is simultaneously recognised that any teaching pedagogy or approach looks different in the context of each classroom/school. PTS’s can implement this approach or elements of this approach as a fifth starting point when teaching the current visual arts

education curriculum. These PTS's can gain from continuing to practice their own artwork to better themselves both as teachers and as artists, embracing both of these roles in the duality of their identity. It is advocated that these specialist teachers collaborate with other teachers in their schools, most especially those who hold posts of responsibility for the arts in schools, to communicate and promote recent research such as the TAA approach to those who have less special interest or experience in visual arts education. In doing so, they will advance and develop the teaching and learning of visual arts education within their school communities.

#### *Implications to curriculum and policy development*

The findings from this study show that the implementation of the TAA approach had a positive impact on both the expressive abilities and skills of the pupils as well as their dispositions towards visual arts. These assessments were made in line with the current visual arts education curriculum (NCCA, 1999b). In this regard, the TAA approach was complementary of the current curriculum: The 1999 curriculum (NCCA, 1999a). This curriculum offers four suggested practical starting points for teaching visual arts (NCCA, 1999a). This research proposed and explored a fifth starting point for visual arts lessons - TAA modelling the creative process and sharing about their work. As such, the TAA approach was not designed to replace or divert from the curriculum which has guided the teaching and learning of visual arts education in Ireland over the past twenty years, but by contrast to this, it was developed to compliment the current curriculum and build on the good practice that currently exists because of this guiding document.



## Research recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to varying relevant stakeholders as a result of the key conclusions and implications of this research:

- This research recommends for *my own practice* that I incorporate the TAA approach into my own teaching practice in the future, in a capacity that is complementary to the curriculum.
- It is recommended that *generalist primary teachers*:
  - avail of opportunities to engage in informal research to learn more about visual art education.
  - engage in continuous professional development in the area of visual arts so as to learn more about approaches such as TAA.
  - approach concepts such as the TAA approach and other approaches or models with an open mind.
- It is recommended that *primary teacher-specialists* and *primary teacher-artists*:
  - make use of and where necessary, adapt, the TAA approach to suit their teaching.
  - continue to practice their own artwork.
  - collaborate with other teachers in their schools, most especially those who hold posts of responsibility for the arts in schools, to communicate and promote recent research such as the TAA approach to those who have less special interest or experience.
- In this time of curricular review, it is therefore recommended that the role of the TAA be incorporated into future curricular developments as a starting point or stimulus to artmaking or as being simultaneous to the creative process that is undertaken during visual arts lessons.

- Furthermore, as this work has identified the great value of having specialist teachers working amongst an overall body of generalist teachers, it would be advised that curricular developers and advisors at third level continue to include and promote the inclusion of specialist modules in preservice teacher education programmes to allow for such specialist teacher leaders in certain subject areas, including visual arts education.

Appendix O includes an artistic manifesto that is designed to promote the incorporation of the TAA approach as an additional curriculum starting point to complement the curriculum.

#### Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

This exploratory case study has presented educational stakeholders with a new approach to the teaching of visual arts education within the primary education context, the TAA approach. This approach is one that aims to promote pupil understanding of and engagement with the creative process, but furthermore, it simultaneously promotes teacher engagement with the creative process through active artmaking. Having undertaken and reflected upon this research and the processes that it involved, it has concurrently revealed the limitations of this study, which in turn highlight possible areas for future research.

The first limitation of this exploratory case study is that it is small in scale. While its findings have given a wealth of insight within the context of this case study, there is no current proof to claim that it represents others outside of this context. This means there is a lack of generalisability with relation to this study. As such, the modest nature of this quantity of work lessens its impact on educational policy. In response to this limitation, it is recognised that there is a need for development of this research on a greater scale and in varying primary education contexts. This would add a richer insight into the efficacy of the

approach (Robson, 2002). Further such studies would be of benefit to educational stakeholders as they would facilitate for data to be collected in different primary education contexts with different PTs and different pupils. This would provide for a more extensive, detailed portrayal of the efficacy of the TAA approach.

While findings that emerged from this exploratory case study proved invaluable in gauging the efficacy of the TAA approach within this context, a second limitation of this study is that, due to the scale of this study and the time constraints and demands of primary schools in the Irish context, the TAA implementation lessons in this study were taught by the researcher, who self-identifies as a specialist PT in the area of visual arts; who engages in artmaking regularly and who has undertaken a specialist undergraduate course in visual arts education and who is engaging in a postgraduate course in visual arts education. The TAA approach would benefit greatly from being researched in varying contexts whereby PTs of differing artistic interest, experience and ability would be teaching TAA implementation lessons. More varied studies conducted with a broader range of PTs (Whether they be generalist, specialist, confident in visual arts or lacking confidence in the area of visual arts) could have potentially yielded greater insights into the efficacy of the TAA approach on a grander scale. It is also possible that a greater number of observations in differing teaching/classroom contexts would offer a plethora of contextualised results. It is therefore advised that future studies investigating the TAA approach and its efficacy in the primary classroom not only conduct more studies, but, if possible, conduct studies with PTs with varying artistic interest and specialism. Such studies have the capacity to produce robust data – grounded in more varied contexts within real Irish classrooms – providing greater insight into the TAA approach.

Whilst the pupils who participated in this case study come from a variety of homes and backgrounds, it is a limitation of this study that they are – with relation to the area they

come from, the school they attend and their socio-economic background – a reasonably homogenous group of participants. Whilst in the context of this study, the evidence portrays the efficacy of the TAA approach and its potential for incorporation in the teaching of visual arts education, it can only truly speak for the sample who engaged with the process. This research offers no information on the effectiveness of the TAA approach in other schools. It is therefore proposed that future research is required within other contexts to ensure a broader image of the efficacy of the TAA approach on a greater variety of pupil participants. Such studies would offer PTs and other relevant stakeholders of visual arts education with more valuable, detailed insights into the TAA approach in action and its impact and efficacy.

## Conclusion

Conducting this classroom and arts based exploratory case study has proved to be a richly affirming and insightful experience. As an artist and a teacher, I have gained great benefit from stepping into the role of researcher to explore the teaching of visual arts education and more specifically to refine and elaborate on the TAA approach. Through this classroom-based research that was grounded in visual arts, I was enabled to implement and live the TAA approach in reality, which had spent a great deal of time growing and blossoming within my mind. Due to the complex nature of this approach with its multi-faceted design, and the special context of this research being grounded in artwork on multiple levels, it was necessary to invoke a trinity of components to enable this research: The academic research, the field-based research and the artistic inquiry. All three of these areas worked in unison to allow me to use the research of others, the expressions and attitudes of the children and my own professional and artistic experiences to apply and assess the efficacy of this newly presented approach to teaching visual arts education: I had the opportunity to contextualise, explore, reflect upon and assess the TAA approach and in reflecting and developing these findings through my own creative practice I developed a holistic,

comprehensive understanding of the TAA experience for the relevant parties involved. As a result of this, I was enabled to present this piece of work which offers a dual expression of the study that was undertaken, both monographic and aesthetic, with both aspects playing a central part in portraying the experiences and understandings that this study created and developed for me as researcher.

The research findings of this exploratory case study offer a comprehensive insight in the TAA approach development as well as its efficacy when implemented in the classroom in terms of the artistic development of the pupils, the pupils' understanding of the creative process and the teacher artist's understanding of the creative process. These findings have substantial, relevant implications to visual arts educators both in the primary education sector in the Irish context and further afield, providing foundational insight into the TAA approach to all related educational stakeholders. This holds particular significance in this important time of curricular review as the approach builds on, adds to and complements the existing functioning curriculum. In completing this study, through qualitative research approaches and arts-based methods, I have developed a better understanding of the role of the pupils in their learning of visual arts whilst simultaneously growing a deeper understanding of my role both as teacher of visual arts and creator of visual arts. This learning has only taken place because of my role as researcher, identifying and investigating my roles as teacher and artist and it has been an invaluable experience for me to build new meaning in an investigative, meaningful way.

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## Appendix A: Questions for Semi-Structured Group Interviews

The following are the list of questions I will be using to direct the two semi-structured group interviews. The first set of questions, labelled A, are to direct the interviews before the new TAA approach is implemented, and the second set of questions, labelled B, are to direct the interviews after the implementation of the new TAA approach. Duration of each interview will be 30 minutes maximum.

### A. Pre Teacher-as-artist approach teaching interview questions (30 minutes)

*Two-minute introduction about the purpose of the interview and why it is audio-recorded.*

#### *Habits and experiences to date (7 minutes)*

1. Tell me what kind of visual arts do you like to make at home?
2. What materials do you use?
3. Tell me what kind of visual arts you like to make at school?
4. How often do you get the chance to do that kind of visual arts?

#### *Perceptions of visual arts (7 minutes)*

5. How do you know that something is visual arts?
6. How do you know that something is not visual arts?
7. What words come to mind when you think of visual arts?
8. What feelings come to mind when you think about visual arts?

#### *Creative process (7 minutes)*

9. What makes you decide that you have created very good visual arts?
10. What steps do you usually take when making visual arts?



Teaching visual arts (7 minutes)

11. What are your favourite kind of visual arts lessons?
12. What are your least favourite kind of visual arts lessons?
13. In visual arts, what choices should the teacher let you make?
14. What difference would increased choices make to your visual arts?
15. In visual arts what help should the teacher give children?
16. What else should a teacher do to make visual arts more interesting?

B. Post Teacher-as-artist approach teaching interview questions (30 minutes)

*Two-minute introduction about the purpose of the interview and why it is audio-recorded.*

Detecting any differences (7 minutes)

Over the past six weeks, I taught visual arts in a different way.

1. What differences did you notice?
2. Tell me more about that.
3. Did you find that helpful or unhelpful?
4. How was that helpful?
5. Did you notice any differences in how I taught visual arts?
6. Did you notice any differences in how we looked at, and talked about visual arts?
7. Did you notice any differences regarding how resources were organised?

Teacher modelling techniques and creative process (7 minutes)

8. What do you think about me showing you how I create visual arts?
9. Tell me more about that?
10. Do others agree with that?

11. Does anyone disagree with that?

12. Was it helpful in any way?

13. Explain how/ how not?

Teacher sharing about his work (7 minutes)

14. What do you think about us looking at, and talking about my visual arts?

15. Tell me more about that?

16. Do others agree with that?

17. Does anyone disagree with that?

18. Was it helpful in any way?

19. Explain how/ how not?

Impact (7 minutes)

17. Do you think about visual arts any differently since you watched me make visual arts and showed you my work?

18. Do you make visual arts any differently since you watched me make visual arts and showed you my art?

19. Do you like visual arts any more since you watched me make visual arts and showed you my work?

20. Can you think of any other improvements I could make to this way of teaching visual arts?

## Appendix B: Lesson Plans for TAA Implementation Lessons

Lesson Title: “What Lies at the End of My Rainbow”

Date: TAA Pilot Lesson 1

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Fabric and Fibre, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Creating in Fabric and Fibre, Looking and Responding

### (1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher’s example of “What Lies at the End of My Rainbow” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select wools/thread that would be suitable for use in their weaving and weave it in such a way that it remains in place.
- The children will be enabled to design a multimedia rainbow that expresses what they would love to see happening in life and justify what certain elements represent orally.

### (2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- A selection of coloured thread and wool
- Tape
- A wide selection of fibres, ribbons, buttons, beads, etc.
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

### (3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they might like to see happening at the end of their rainbow that might greatly improve their lives. I will ask the pupils what their rainbow will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our own rainbows, through weaving with a variety of materials, in which we will be expressing what we would love to see at the end of our rainbows.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher's rainbow?
- What would your rainbow look like?
- What would you like to see at the end of your rainbow?
- What makes that so important to you?
- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what you would love?
- What might your ideal rainbow look like?
- What do you think?

### (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their rainbow using card and pencil. A wide selection of wool, fibres, ribbons, buttons, beads, etc. will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their rainbow. They will weave their rainbow and decorate around it with a selection of materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and also discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

### *Key Questions*

- What things would be at the end of your rainbow?
- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?
- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

### (5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

#### *Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?
- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

#### *Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.
- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

#### *Integration:*

- Science – Colour, light.
- Maths – Line, space and shape
- Geography – Physical landscapes and maps.
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

Lesson Title: “My Wondrous Sea Creature”

Date: TAA Lesson 2

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Drawing, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Making Drawings, Painting, Looking and Responding

#### (1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher's example of “My Wondrous Sea Creature” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select materials that would be suitable for use in their painting to create their artwork.
- The children will be enabled to design a fictional sea creature that expresses what they would imagine this to look like and justify what certain elements represent orally.

## (2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- Paintbrushes and paint trays
- Tape
- A wide selection of paints
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

## (3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they think their fictional sea creature might be and what features it might have. I will ask the pupils what their sea creature will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our own wondrous sea creatures, through the use of paint and other materials, in which we will be expressing our response to the title.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher's sea creature?
- What would your wondrous sea creature look like?
- What shape will it be?
- What body parts will it have?
- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what you would love?
- Why will that body part have that shape?
- Why would a sea creature end up looking like that?
- What do you think?

## (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their sea creature using card and pencil. A wide selection of card, paper, paint, brushes, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, etc, will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their sea creature. They will sketch out their sea creature and apply colour using their own selection from the materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and also discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

### *Key Questions*

- What will your sea creature look like?
- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?
- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

### (5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?
- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

### *Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.

- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

*Integration:*

- Science – Living things, habitats.
- Maths – Line, space and shape
- Geography – Oceans, water environments.
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

Lesson Title: “My Tree of Life”

Date: TAA Lesson 3

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Drawing, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Making Drawings, Painting, Looking and Responding

(1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher’s example of “My Tree of Life” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select materials that would be suitable for use in their painting to create their artwork.
- The children will be enabled to design a tree that expresses their lives and how they are growing and justify what certain elements represent orally.

(2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- Paintbrushes and paint trays
- Tape
- A wide selection of paints
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

(3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they think their tree of life might be and what features it might have and how it might grow. I will ask the pupils what their tree of life will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my



artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our own wondrous sea creatures, using paint and other materials, in which we will be expressing our response to the title.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher's tree of life?
- What would your tree of life look like?
- What shape will it be?
- What parts will it have?
- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what you would love?
- How will your tree of life grow?
- Why would your tree of life end up looking like that?
- What do you think?

## (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their tree of life using card and pencil. A wide selection of card, paper, paint, brushes, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, etc, will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their tree of life. They will sketch out their tree and apply colour using their own selection from the materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and also discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

### *Key Questions*

- What will your tree of life look like?
- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?

- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

(5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

*Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

*Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?
- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

*Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.
- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

*Integration:*

- Science – Living things, habitats.
- Maths – Line, space and shape
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

Lesson Title: “My Superhero Alter Ego”

Date: TAA Lesson 4

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Drawing, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Making Drawings, Painting, Looking and Responding

(1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher's example of “My Superhero Alter Ego” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select materials that would be suitable for use in their painting to create their artwork.

- The children will be enabled to design their own superhero that expresses their lives or secret/fantasy lives and justify what certain elements represent orally.

## (2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- Paintbrushes and paint trays
- Tape
- A wide selection of paints
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

## (3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they think their superhero alter ego might be like and what features and traits and superpowers it might have and how it might grow. I will ask the pupils what their superhero will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our own superheroes, through the use of paint and other materials, in which we will be expressing our response to the title.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher's superhero?
- What would your superhero look like?
- What shape will it be?
- What parts will it have?
- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what your ideas?
- What superpower will they have?
- Why would your superhero end up looking like that?
- What do you think?

#### (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their superhero using card and pencil. A wide selection of card, paper, paint, brushes, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, etc, will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their superhero. They will sketch out their superhero and apply colour using their own selection from the materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and also discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

#### *Key Questions*

- What will your superhero look like?
- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?
- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

#### (5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

#### *Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?
- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

#### *Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.
- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

*Integration:*

- Science – Living things, human body.
- Maths – Line, space and shape.
- S.P.H.E. – Myself and others – personality and traits.
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

Lesson Title: “My Fairy Godparent’s House”

Date: TAA Lesson 5

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Drawing, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Making Drawings, Painting, Looking and Responding

(1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher’s example of “My Fairy Godparent’s House” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select materials that would be suitable for use in their painting to create their artwork.
- The children will be enabled to design their own fairy house that expresses their lives or the lives of their imaginary fairy and justify what certain elements represent orally.

(2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- Paintbrushes and paint trays
- Tape
- A wide selection of paints
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

(3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud

whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they think their fairy godparent's house might be like and what features it might have and how it might grow. I will ask the pupils what their fairy godparent's house and their fairy godparents will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our fairy godparent's house, using paint and other materials, in which we will be expressing our response to the title.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher's fairy godparent's house?
- What would your fairy godparent's house look like?
- What shape will it be?
- What parts will it have?
- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what your ideas?
- What would your fairy godparent look like?
- Why would your fairy godparent's house end up looking like that?
- What do you think?

### (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their fairy godparent's house using card and pencil. A wide selection of card, paper, paint, brushes, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, etc, will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their fairy godparent's house. They will sketch out their fairy godparent's house and apply colour using their own selection from the materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and also discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

### *Key Questions*

- What will your fairy godparent's house look like?

- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?
- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

#### (5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

#### *Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?
- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

#### *Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.
- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

#### *Integration:*

- Science – Construction.
- Maths – Line, space and shape.
- S.P.H.E. – Myself and others – personality and traits.
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

Lesson Title: “My Door into Another Universe”

Date: TAA Lesson 6

Class Level: Second Class

Subject: Art

Strand: Drawing, Paint and Colour

Duration of Lesson: 60 minutes

Strand Unit: Making Drawings, Painting, Looking and Responding

#### (1) Learning Outcomes (WALT)

- The children will be enabled to look at the teacher’s example of “My Door into Another Universe” and reflect on it through adapting it and creating their own.
- The children will be enabled to select materials that would be suitable for use in their painting to create their artwork.
- The children will be enabled to design their own Door into Another Universe that expresses what their dream world would look like and justify what certain elements represent orally.

## (2) Resources / Materials

- A wide selection of card and paper
- Pencils
- Rubbers
- Scissors
- Paintbrushes and paint trays
- Tape
- A wide selection of paints
- A wide selection of markers/crayons/pencils/pastels
- Projector
- Computer

## (3) Introduction

To begin the lesson, I will inform the children of the title of the artwork, and we will discuss what that title could mean. I will engage in teacher think-aloud whereby I will debate the topic before the pupils and model the process of the teacher planning for his own artmaking. I will ask the children to think about what they think their Door into Another Universe might be like and what features it might have and what might be behind it. I will ask the pupils what their Door into Another Universe will look like, and I will answer any pupil led questions about my artmaking. I will begin to plan out my artwork. If the teacher, as artist, needs to do some form of research using books or online search engines in the room, they will model doing so to the pupils. I will then explain to the children that we are each going to create our own Door into Another Universe, using paint and other materials, in which we will be expressing our response to the title.

### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be listening and discussing as a whole class.

### *Key Questions*

- What did you notice about the teacher’s Door into Another Universe?
- What would your Door into Another Universe look like?
- What shape will it be?
- What parts will it have?



- What does this tell us about teacher?
- How does this compare to what your ideas?
- What would be behind your door and why?
- Why would your Door into Another Universe end up looking like that?
- What do you think?

#### (4) Development

Following on from this each child will work individually to begin planning and setting up for their Door into Another Universe using card and pencil. A wide selection of card, paper, paint, brushes, crayons, pastels, pencils, markers, etc, will be made available for the children to look at and select from in their creation of their Door into Another Universe. They will sketch out their Door into Another Universe and apply colour using their own selection from the materials they can choose from. The teacher will work at his own station creating his own artwork and continuously modelling through think-aloud. They will be invited at different stages up to the teacher as artist station to discuss both their artwork and the teacher's artwork at the same time. Their partner will also discuss with them and question them to explain certain aspects of their piece.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will be working both individually and discussing with the teacher and with their peers.

#### *Key Questions*

- What will your Door into Another Universe look like?
- What would you include?
- What materials might you use?
- Where might you place this?
- What did you like about their piece?
- What do you think?
- How could they improve their piece slightly?
- Why is this here?
- What does this represent?

#### (5) End of Lesson

To draw the lesson to a close I will give the children the opportunity to make any small adjustments to their work if required and will question the children as to what their piece tells us about them. Pupils will be given a chance to witness the teacher modelling this on his own artwork and will also be given the chance to look at their peer's artwork.

#### *Organisation*

For this part of the lesson the children will work individually, in groups and as a whole class.

#### *Key Questions*

- What do you think?
- Are there any changes you would like to make?

- Why?
- Would there be anything you would change if you did this again?
- What does this tell us about you?
- Why did you put this here?

*Differentiation:*

- Child with brain injury – Assistance of SNA.
- Various children in the class will complete the work to their own level.
- Teacher questioning.
- Teacher scaffolding during mini conferences with teacher.

*Integration:*

- Geography – The world, countries and habitats.
- Maths – Line, space and shape.
- S.P.H.E. – Myself and others – personality and traits.
- Literacy – oral language development through creating and justifying their own opinion and expressing themselves.

## Exemplar 8

Drawing an imaginary creature or an imagined place

all levels

### Step 1: The stimulus

A story, poem or piece of music about an unusual character or a secret place, or a painting by one of the surrealists—the works of Dali, Magritte or Miró, for example—could be the stimulus for imaginative drawing.

### Step 2: The activity

As they work, and as appropriate, the children are encouraged to think and talk about

- the materials and tools they might choose and how they would use them
- how they imagine this creature or place looks; how or where the creature lives and what is so unusual or special about it
- what their own secret place looks like and how it would feel to be there; what makes it secret.

### Step 3: Evaluation

The children are encouraged to show and talk about their completed work, about what they were trying to convey, what they like best about it and why. More experienced children could talk about the challenges they encountered and how they tried to meet them.



Children's drawings of imaginary creatures

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement for School Board of Management  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement – School Board of Management

I, Michael McEvoy, am undertaking a research project as part of my Masters by Research degree in the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education, DCU. My research centres around the area of visual arts education and my research study title evaluates the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach for visual arts education in the primary classroom. I can be contacted in relation to this project on [michael.mcevoy24@mail.dcu.ie](mailto:michael.mcevoy24@mail.dcu.ie) . My Primary Supervisor for this project is Dr. Michael Flannery.

The data controller for my research project, “Evaluating the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach for visual arts education in the primary classroom”, is DCU and this project originates from the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education. The DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward ([data.protection@dcu.ie](mailto:data.protection@dcu.ie) Ph.: 01 7005118 / 01 7008257). The data for this research is being requested so as to allow for an evaluation of the Teacher-As-Artist teaching approach. Data will be processed so as to analyse and change in skill as a result of this approach.

Data collected will consist of pseudo-anonymised audio recordings of interviews with pupils and pseudo-anonymised photographs of pupil’s artwork. Data will only be retained electronically and will only be stored until the completion of this project at which point it will be deleted. Any individual reserves the right to lodge a complaint in relation to Data Protection with the Irish Data Protection Commission. Individuals have the right to access their own personal data, and this can be done through making contact with Michael McEvoy via the aforementioned email address. Participants reserve the right to withdraw from this

project at any stage and can do so through contacting Michael McEvoy via the aforementioned email address.

Participation in this research study will involve pupils partaking in visual art lessons in their normal classroom setting over six weeks (six lessons) but the lesson will be using an alternative teaching approach called Teacher-as-Artist, whereby the teacher models techniques and shares about his artwork: Teacher will create his own artwork in front of the pupils, including brainstorming, designing and planning of the artwork (This will be explained both orally to pupils and through sketches). Teacher will also make pieces of art in front of the pupils: displaying techniques in sketching/painting/modelling/constructing and also share oral explanations and justifications regarding the artistic decisions that he made with regards to layout/colour/choice of materials etc. during the creative “art-making” process. Pupils will be invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview prior to, and after the intervention. All lessons will be in keeping with the current visual arts education primary school curriculum guidelines. Pupils’ artwork will also be photographed for analysis, and this will be analysed using current visual arts education curriculum assessment criteria. Participants will encounter no greater risk than that encountered in everyday life. Participants will benefit from involvement in this research study in their skills in the area of visual arts.

Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. Participants may choose to withdraw from this project at any stage throughout its implementation and their participation will end at that point of communication of withdrawal. They do not need to give a reason for withdrawing. In this case, whilst no future data will be collected, any data collected up until that point will be stored electronically until the end of the project. As the researcher is the class teacher this is considered a conflict of interest. Any pupils' involvement/non-involvement in this project will

not result in any effect on their grades/assessment/treatment at school. If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail [rec@dcu.ie](mailto:rec@dcu.ie)

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form School Board of Management  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form – School Board of Management

Michael McEvoy, is a primary school teacher at \_\_\_\_\_. He wishes to conduct educational research with his class group as part of his Masters by Research degree in the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education, DCU. This project is being supervised by Dr. Michael Flannery. The research evaluates the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach to teaching visual arts in primary school.

In consenting to this form, I am agreeing to allow Michael McEvoy to conduct this research project with the class group he is teaching in \_\_\_\_\_. Pseudo-anonymised photographs of pupil artwork, and pseudo-anonymised audio recordings of two sets of interviews with pupils (12 group interviews in total) will be collected for analysis. The data controller for this project is DCU and this project originates from the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education. The DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward ([data.protection@dcu.ie](mailto:data.protection@dcu.ie) Ph.: 01 7005118 / 01 7008257).

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)	Yes/No
I understand the information provided	Yes/No
I understand the information provided in relation to data protection	Yes/No
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study	Yes/No
I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions	Yes/No
I am aware that pupil interviews will be audiotaped	Yes/No
I am aware the photographs will be taken of pupil work	Yes/No

I am aware that I can decline permission for this project without any negative consequences for school staff or community Yes/No

I am aware that data collected will be disposed of at the end of the project Yes/No

I am aware that no specific reference will be made to pupils or other school personnel in the research project or in any publication arising from it without my additional sanction being sought Yes/No

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent for this research to take place in this school.

Participant(s) Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) in Block Capitals: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Appendix F: Plain Language Statement Parent/Guardian  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement – Parents/Guardians

I, Michael McEvoy, am undertaking a research project as part of my Masters by Research degree in the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education, DCU. My research centres around the area of visual arts education and my research study title evaluates the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach for visual arts education in the primary classroom. I can be contacted in relation to this project on [michael.mcevoy24@mail.dcu.ie](mailto:michael.mcevoy24@mail.dcu.ie) . My Primary Supervisor for this project is Dr. Michael Flannery.

The data controller for my research project; “Evaluating the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach for visual arts education in the primary classroom”, is DCU and this project originates from the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education. The DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward ([data.protection@dcu.ie](mailto:data.protection@dcu.ie) Ph.: 01 7005118 / 01 7008257). The data for this research is being requested so as to allow for an evaluation of the Teacher-As-Artist teaching approach. Data will be processed so as to analyse and change in skill as a result of this approach.

Data collected will consist of pseudo-anonymised audio recordings of interviews with pupils and pseudo-anonymised photographs of pupil’s artwork. Data will only be retained electronically and will only be stored until September 2024, in line with M.Ed procedures, at which point it will be deleted. Any individual reserves the right to lodge a complaint in relation to Data Protection with the Irish Data Protection Commission. Individuals have the right to access their own personal data, and this can be done through making contact with Michael McEvoy via the aforementioned email address. Participants reserve the right to

withdraw from this project at any stage and can do so through contacting Michael McEvoy via the aforementioned email address.

Participation in this research study will involve pupils partaking in visual art lessons in their normal classroom setting over six weeks (six lessons) but the lesson will be using an alternative teaching approach called Teacher-as-Artist, whereby the teacher models techniques and shares about his artwork: Teacher will create his own artwork in front of the pupils, including brainstorming, designing and planning of the artwork (This will be explained both orally to pupils and through sketches). Teacher will also make pieces of art in front of the pupils: displaying techniques in sketching/painting/modelling/constructing and also share oral explanations and justifications regarding the artistic decisions that he made with regards to layout/colour/choice of materials etc. during the creative “art-making” process. Pupils will be invited to participate in an audio-recorded interview prior to, and after the intervention. All lessons will be in keeping with the current visual arts education primary school curriculum guidelines. Pupils’ artwork will also be photographed for analysis, and this will be analysed using current visual arts education curriculum assessment criteria. Participants will encounter no greater risk than that encountered in everyday life. Participants will benefit from involvement in this research study in their skills in the area of visual arts.

Confidentiality of information can only be protected within the limitations of the law - i.e., it is possible for data to be subject to subpoena, freedom of information claim or mandated reporting by some professions. Participants may choose to withdraw from this project at any stage throughout its implementation and their participation will end at that point of communication of withdrawal. They do not need to give a reason for withdrawing. In this case, whilst no future data will be collected, any data collected up until that point will be stored electronically until the end of the project. As the researcher is the class teacher this is considered a conflict of interest. Any pupils' involvement/non-involvement in this project will

not result in any effect on their grades/assessment/treatment at school. If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact: The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail [rec@dcu.ie](mailto:rec@dcu.ie)

Appendix G: Informed Consent Form Parent/Guardian  
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent Form – Parents/Guardians

Michael McEvoy, is a primary school teacher at \_\_\_\_\_. He wishes to conduct educational research with his class group as part of his Masters by Research degree in the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education, DCU. This project is being supervised by Dr. Michael Flannery. The research evaluates the efficacy of a Teacher-as-Artist approach to teaching visual arts in primary school.

In consenting to this form, I am agreeing to my child's participation in Michael McEvoy's research project. Pseudo-anonymised photographs of my child's artwork, and pseudo-anonymised audio recordings of two interviews with my child will be collected for analysis. The data controller for this project is DCU and this project originates from the School of Arts Education and Movement within the Institute of Education. The DCU Data Protection Officer is Mr. Martin Ward ([data.protection@dcu.ie](mailto:data.protection@dcu.ie) Ph.: 01 7005118 / 01 7008257).

*Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)*

*I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)* Yes/No

*I understand the information provided* Yes/No

*I understand the information provided in relation to data protection* Yes/No

*I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study* Yes/No

*I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions* Yes/No

*I am aware that my child's two interviews will be audiotaped* Yes/No

*I am aware the photographs will be taken of my child's work* Yes/No

*I am aware that I can withdraw my child from this project at any stage*      *Yes/No*

*I am aware that data collected will be disposed of at the end of the project*      *Yes/No*

*I am aware that in the case of withdrawal or non-participation, my child will still have  
visual arts lessons*      *Yes/No*

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent for my child to take part in this research project.

Participant(s) Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_








Name(s) in Block Capitals: \_\_\_\_\_






Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix H: Plain Language Statement Pupils  
*DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY*

Plain Language Statement - Pupils

	<p>Dear pupil, My name is Mr. McEvoy.</p>
	<p>I teach at _____.</p>
	<p>I am also studying at a different type of school called Dublin City University. I am researching other ways of teaching visual arts. I would like you to help me with this research.</p>
	<p>I want to teach six visual art lessons whereby I make and show my own artwork with you in class to see if that helps you make and talk about visual arts.</p>
	<p>I will teach these special art lessons in February and March. The lessons will last for one hour and happen once a week for six weeks.</p>
	<p>To do this research, I would like to take photographs of your artwork.</p>
	<p>I would also like to audio record two interviews with you about visual arts.</p>

	<p>If you do not feel comfortable with photographs being taken of your work or with being interviewed, we will stop immediately. You do not need to give a reason for this. Teacher will be working both as teacher and as researcher so this will give him two jobs to think about. Even though teacher is researcher, pupils can decide not to take part and this will not affect how you're treated in school or scores in any test and you will still get to enjoy learning about visual arts and making art.</p>
	<p>I will write about the lessons, the artwork and the recordings of interviews in my project, but I will never use your name.</p>
	<p>I will keep the recordings and the photographs of the artwork saved in a safe place on my laptop until September 2024.</p>
	<p>I will keep the recordings and the photographs of artwork until the project is completed, then, I will safely delete them.</p>
	<p>If you and/or your parent(s)/guardian(s) have any questions about this project, please contact the researcher:</p> <p>Name: Michael McEvoy</p> <p>Work Address: _____</p> <p>Tel: _____</p> <p>Email: michael.mcevoy24@mail.dcu.ie</p> <p>Or</p>

	<p>If you and/or your parent(s)/guardian(s) have concerns about this project and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:</p> <p>The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail <a href="mailto:rec@dcu.ie">rec@dcu.ie</a></p>
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Appendix I: Informed Assent Form Pupils

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Informed Assent Form – Pupils

Mr McEvoy is doing research about ways of teaching visual arts to pupils. He wants to do some research in this class and take photographs of pupil artwork without names on it and record interviews asking pupils questions about art.

If you would like to take part in my research, then you must talk with your parent(s) or guardian(s).

If they agree, you need to sign this form and your parent(s) or guardian(s) must sign the other form.

You do not have to give your permission to take part in my research. You can still take part in all my visual arts lessons. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind at any time. If you are unhappy about taking part at any stage, then talk with me or your parent(s)/guardian(s).

I give you permission to photograph my artwork for this research.

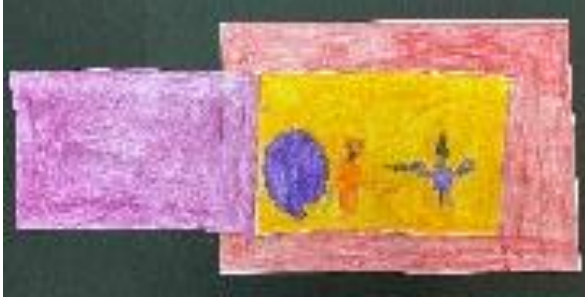
Name

I give you permission to audio record me being interviewed about art.

Name

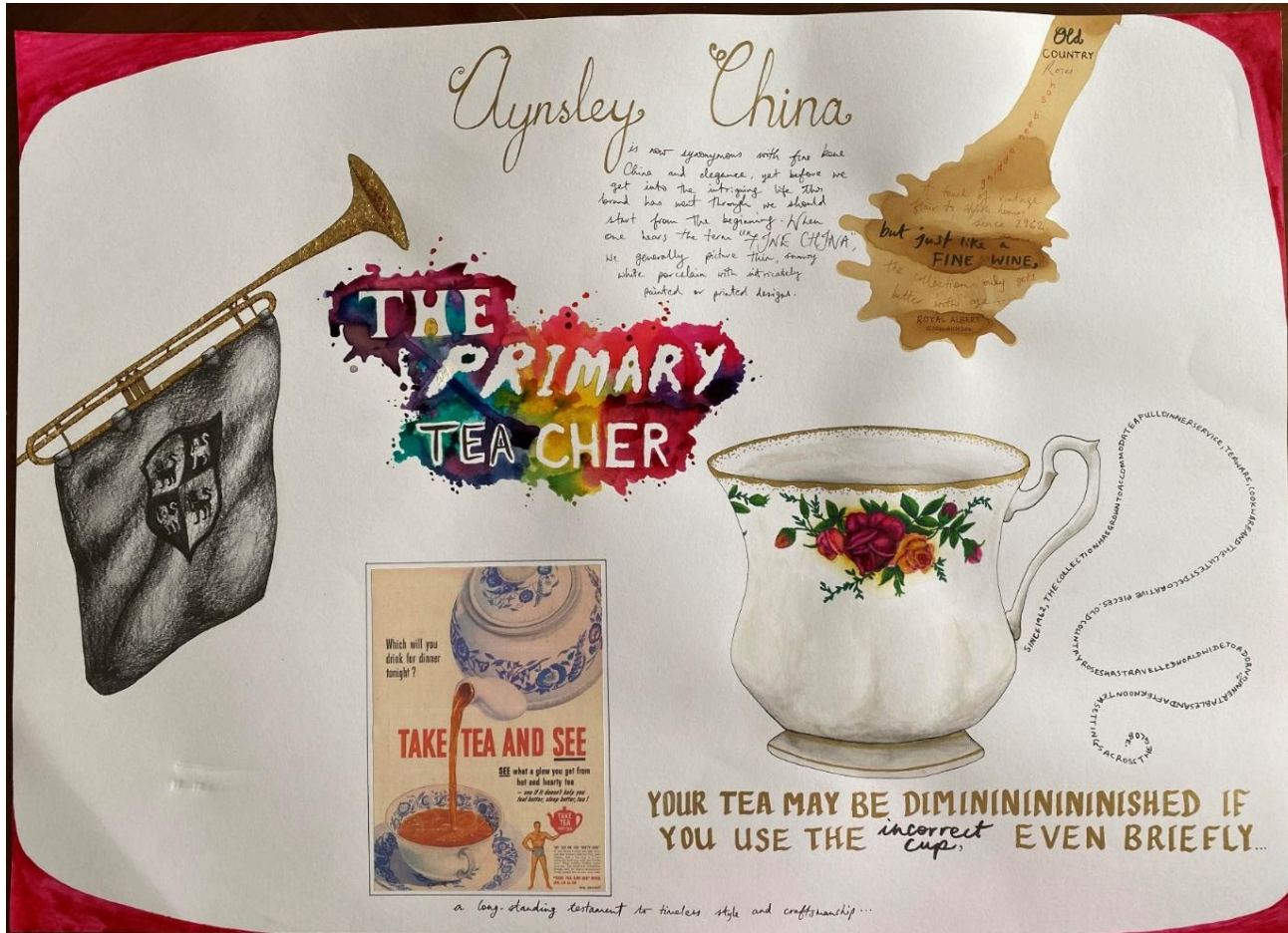
Appendix J: Pupil artwork from final lesson “My Door to Another Universe”





Appendix K: Creative Practice – Original pieces

Appendix L: First preliminary piece: “A Triumphant Tea Part



Mc Evoy, M., (2022). A Triumphant Tea Party. [Inks, pencil, card, coffee, nail polish, marker, gold leaf, pen]

Vintage tea advertisement source: <https://www.pinterest.ie/pin/take-tea-and-see-vintage-tea-ads-in-2022--973059063211238440/>

#### Appendix M: Artist's statement for "A Triumphant Tea Party"

"A Triumphant Tea Party" explores concepts relating to the development of the TAA approach. By means of introduction, a newly qualified primary teacher is presented through the metaphor of a fine bone china cup. Pristine in condition, immaculate in shape and form, the new teacup is representative of a strong tradition which has withstood a great deal in the past and that is renowned, recognised for its quality and competency. The teacup's graduation is met by cries of joy and songs of triumphant jubilation; however, a certain ominous fear lies in the form of a threat of the tea being "dimininished" should a flaw become evident or should an error be made. The teacup's joy and excitement are therefore coupled with a feeling of pressure and a sense of duty, and even in the earliest days of growth and development, a sense of contrast is evident between the creative flow of line and tea, and the rigid restrictions of the teacup's formation which have been designed to work seamlessly within its environment and context. The "floral fandangle" that adorns the teacup's façade bows its head in admiration of what it has overcome, steeped in uncertainty as to what lies ahead. The aged advertisement poster welcomes the teacup in inviting it to "Take tea and see", giving no insight into the nature of future growth, development, success or failure. With a strong sense of self-awareness, the teacup must move on, taking initial steps, as one chapter closes, facing the start of the beginning.

Appendix N: Second preliminary piece: “Fuel and Grow”

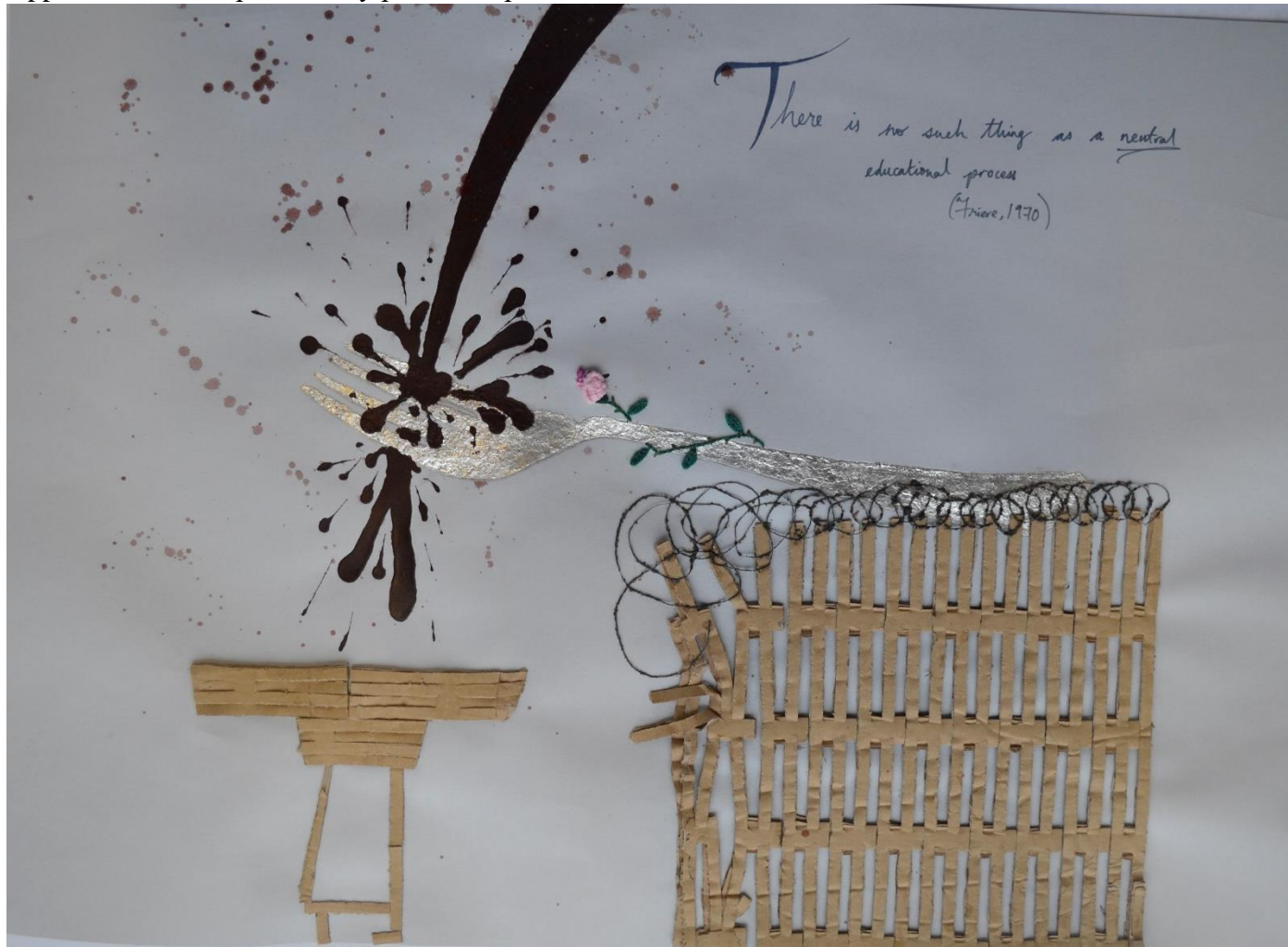


Mc Evoy, M., (2022). *Fuel and Grow*. [Card, red wine, lily pollen, acrylic paint, thread, nail polish, marker, pencil, pen].

#### Appendix O: Artist's statement for "Fuel and Grow"

"Fuel and Grow" offers a developmental insight into this piece of the china set. As time passes by, the teacup proves fit for purpose, serving as a vessel for nourishment, facilitating for the passing of tea, transferred from the source to the recipient. Upon critique, the teacup is remarked to be without chips or cracks, and just the right size. The underlying fear always remains for those close to the recipient as to whether the teacup might hold some form of concealed danger – Could there be faults beneath the gleaming ceramics? Despite these subconscious fears, the recipient benefits from the nourishment the cup can provide for, offering a chance for refuelling and growth. Whilst the teacup works tirelessly, it runs a risk of wear and tear during its daily use. Juxtaposed to the wear and tear, we notice a certain level of growth in the cup's façade. Its contact with and facilitation for the cup has encouraged and growth within is that has begun to protrude into another dimension. Despite its wear, its colours shine stronger than before; its glow highlighting its growth which entwines towards the viewer. It would appear there has been measurable growth within the recipient, however, how can a mere inanimate teacup speak for the holistic growth within a living thing? From the perspective of the teacup, their own growth is evident and can be felt as well as being seen to move outwards, altering the once perfect form of what was a pristine teacup. Regardless of the insecurities related to the teacup, the recipient looks onwards, ignorant to a great deal of that which surrounds them.

Appendix P: Third preliminary piece: “Imprisoned with Care”



Mc Evoy, M., (2022). *Imprisoned with Care*. [Card, cardboard, silver leaf, markers, pencil, pen, thread, fine metal shavings, paint]



Appendix Q: Artist's statement for "Imprisoned with Care"

"Imprisoned with Care" invites an aged friend of the teacup to take centre stage. This piece of silverware is one which has seen a great deal and served a difference purpose to the teacup. Despite a few interesting scratches, this piece of premium cutlery never fails to glimmer in whatever light it is provided with. Its luminous form has never failed to catch the eye of those it encounters, however, when attempting to purvey the role of the teacup, a disastrous affair unfolds before the viewer's eyes. Despite its strength and durability, it fails in its transferal of tea, provoking danger and challenging the purpose of its form beyond its ability. This mucky splash that threatens to land on that which is below can only be held up for so long by the rickety scaffolding which tries to secure it, bandaging a mistake that should not have been made. Whilst this item's form might not be suited to the carrying of tea, we see the fork to have another use, one it has previously fulfilled with confidence, to the extent where great growth has been achieved, meriting blossoms of a different kinds. The fruition of these blossoms has not fully yet been revealed and it is hoped that they will soon shine through, however, they are moderated and regulated by a fence that carries a heavy weight. Despite the multi-layered fence's ominous appearance with rough barbed-wire top, beneath this, it proves softer than what might initially meet the eye, perhaps even showing weaknesses in areas. Whilst this might be the case, it is still capable of confining the growth of current and future blossoms. As the tea falls, it muddles its way downwards, somewhat out of shape and consistency, perhaps unable to fall in true liquid form in the given conditions. Whilst the silverware has been appointed a duty to this tea, its success could possibly take a turn for the worst because of its own role and form or because of the influence of external forces, potentially leaving for an unsightly mess on the kitchen table.

Appendix R: Fourth preliminary piece: “Flúirse”



Mc Evoy, M., (2022). *Flúirse*. [Card, carboard, nail polish, inks, glitter, markers, pencil, pen, wool, paint]

Vintage cider advertisement source: <https://www.alamy.com/1920s-old-vintage-original-advert-advertising-bulmers-pomagne-champagne-cider-by-royal-appointment-in-english-magazine-circa-1924-image214609825.html>

#### Appendix S: Artist's statement for "Flúirse"

This final piece, "Flúirse", sees a new dimension to the teacup. Having learned from itself, the recipient, and others, it presents itself in a new way, allowing for great growth and movement within itself as a teacup. A steady flow of glitteringly aromatic tea is transported into the cup, supported by a strong aqueduct, which has endured great feats and offers a new ability to the teacup, based on aged, numerous and varied past experiences. Upon inspection from assorted angles, discrepancies can be found in the appearance of what was once a fine example of perfectly produced ceramics. Upon face value the teacup boasts its original resilient shine, however, its form appears altered, raising the question of what may have been underneath all along? Its floral fancies have grown and sprouted and whilst their petals may not hold the same perfect, unflawed shapes, the weather that has aged them and the heavy rain showers that have spurred their growth has allowed them to expand and glitter more than ever. The teacup sits proudly on a sea of colour that was once restricted by a contrastingly more formal series of words and documentation. The teacup acts as a vessel for the transport of this precious fuel, which is being digested by an aged, yet artistic, advertisement billboard, a public platform for the dispersal of information, yet also an artistic entity. This billboard is being fuelled by a new, improved teacup, that has changed with time and become more refined.

Appendix T: Creative Practice – Main Piece: “Ascension”







Mc Evoy, M., (2022). *Ascension*. [Wood, expanding foam, glue, varnish, felting fibres, copybooks, wire, wool, glitter, ribbon, thread, cardboard, paint, gold leaf, teacup]

## Appendix U: Artist's Statement for Main Piece "Ascension"

"Ascension" stands as a seminal piece of artwork that offers an expression of the collated findings of this research. The form of this piece composes primarily of the figure of a human child made of cardboard. The figure moves forwards and upwards, ascending in growth and development. The child alights a stairway of copybooks, stamping out the tools for what it considers to be mundane learning, however, upon further inspection, it becomes obvious that the lessons learned from these exercises are supporting the child as they move forward. The steps have grown from a ceramic remains of whose remnants are seen scattered below, having given birth to a meadow of flowers and undergrowth. As the steps grow higher, so too do the bloom, some of which are re-blossoming on last year's growth. Blooms from a variety of seasons of the year are evident below the placid expression of the figure, who travels on, unphased by the continuity of time. Beneath these flowers lies the undergrowth and the promising buds of growth to come when they fade away. Below these mossy ceramic ruins lies a base of parquet flooring, its octagonal symmetry offering an overall linear regiment, however, upon further scrutiny it becomes clear that whilst every second eighth has been laid in harmonious parallelism, the adjoining sections run rogue, showing the playful chaos that lies discreetly within the organised mess. The figure moves in a spiral direction, ascending only to eventually arrive looking from the same viewpoint: Despite reaching new heights, there is still much to learn and acknowledge. The central post of the spiral staircase is adorned by two corbels, structures traditionally used as far back as neolithic times to offer support to that which will come above, but that which lies above for this figure in its journey of ascension is yet to be revealed. As our eyes are drawn to these corbels, they are also drawn to the clasped hands of the pensive figure, it becomes clear upon deeper scrutiny that these fists are on the wrong arm, showing a natural innocence and dependency on an elder for

direction, care, and guidance: Whilst this figure develops and grows individually, they do not do so alone.



**Art-making  
is the  
acceptance  
of “not  
knowing”  
and  
learning to  
improvise...**

Northumbria  
University  
(2009)

*Teacher in Role as Artist*  
*Synchronous Teacher/Student Art-making*  
*Teacher Modelling Technique as Artist*  
*Child Initiated Questioning*  
*Increased Student Choice*  
*Artist Think Aloud*

THE IMPORTANCE OF:



# TEACHER AS ARTIST APPROACH

**TEACHER ARTISTIC PRACTICE PROVIDES AN  
ESSENTIAL SOURCE FOR THE COMMUNICATING  
ABOUT THE CREATIVE PROCESSES...**

HAUSMAN  
(1967)



