

INTEGRATED ARTS CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL LEVEL: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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This paper attempts to examine New Zealand arts education programmes, beginning with the primary through the secondary school curriculum, to search for the possibility of integrating the independent arts disciplines currently existing in the schools. A learner-centred interactive interdisciplinary pedagogy is intended to draw a paradigm for arts education that has two similar, yet different, integrating points of inception. One is rooted in the indigenous concept of the art form embedded in cultures like those of Africa and Asia, while the other is identified in the modern educational psychoanalytical theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Howard Gardener. Parallel kinds of integration are found in these two approaches – either between the disciplines or within an individual's intellectual development. Interestingly, it is clear that these two approaches, integrated into a curriculum, would enable a discipline-based arts practice with an interdisciplinary outcome.



Figure 1. Women performing a *waiata* during the *hui* in Ruatoria to award the Victoria Cross to Te Moananui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu, October 1943. Apirana Ngata is in the foreground. Courtesy: Alexander Turnbull Library.

The current New Zealand Ministry of Education arts strategy states that: "The Arts develop the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of human experience. They contribute to our intellectual ability and to our social, cultural and spiritual understandings. They are an essential element of daily living and of lifelong learning."¹ On the one hand, the curriculum operates with the four disciplines of dance, drama, music and the visual arts. Each of these disciplines offers learners unique opportunities to develop creativity, understand cultural and traditional issues, and experience



Figure 2. *Kapa haka*. Courtesy, Gisborne Boys High School.

emotional and cognitive growth. On the other hand, many arts activities also integrate across the curriculum into language arts, social studies, and life skills and values education. Examples are mime, role-play and dramatisation, craft work with puppets, shadow figures, and masks, drawing and painting; working with patterns and design, and spaces and shapes in mathematics; the use of waste materials in environmental studies; dance and mime in physical education, and so on.

Considering Aotearoa/New Zealand's bicultural context, where values differ across and even within cultures, will integrating the arts ever be possible? Indigenous Maori performances embody a concept of integrated arts akin to the American Indian, African and Asian context. The *waiata* (Figure 1), *kapa haka* (Figure 2) and *poi* are similar to other indigenous arts, where performances are integral to a culture (Figures 3, 4). To what extent can this be considered as an educational model? Do art forms from one culture apply to another culture? Or does a culture need to understand or accommodate other cultural art forms? Integrated inquiry and learning have the potential for making learning at school more relevant and engaging, but what are the risks of losing discipline-based knowledge, and does it matter? Many schools are working hard to engage their communities, but does the wider community want to be involved in education? What opportunities does the community have to engage with future-focused ideas about education, and whose responsibility is this? These are a few questions I will engage with in this article.

PSYCHOANALYTICAL CONTEXT/APPROACH

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is another intervention in making possible an integrated arts curriculum. In his book, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*, Gardner expands the conventional definition of intelligence.² Essentially, intelligence is the ability to solve problems or create products that



Figure 3. Burratha Katha dancers are minstrels who tour villages in Andhra, typically in groups of three or four, singing and relating stories from the ancient epics. The art is passed on from generation to generation and the couple on the right, Gandiah and Veeramma Sadula relate a tale from the Mahabharata – wherein queen Draupadi is publicly disrobed. The man on the left is their son Bhikshapati. A conch shell hangs around his neck – and its blowing is the first sound that opens this scene. Burra Katha is now a dying art, rapidly being replaced by TV. The couple's sons have taken to construction jobs to make ends meet.

Source: <http://www.domalpalli.com/Documentaries.html>.



Figure 4. An Eritrean Ethnic Dance. Photograph: Sudhir Duppati.

are valuable in one or more cultural setting. He believes that people are not born with all the intelligence they will eventually have – we are able to keep on learning and improve our intelligence throughout our lives. This theory dovetails with my vision of information-literate students as lifelong learners.

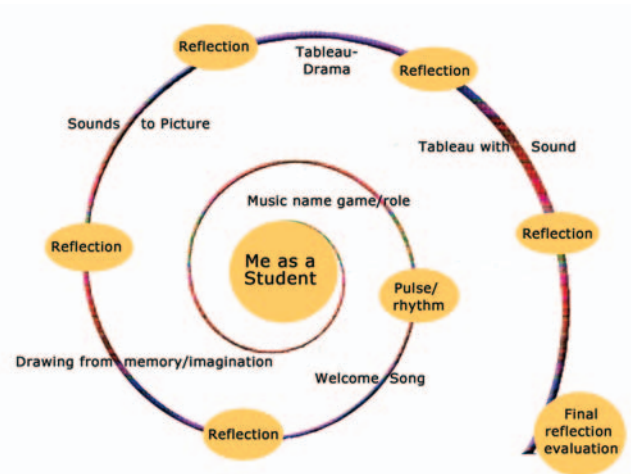
When interpreting the world in terms of perceptions and concepts, the arts become a learning tool through which learners can experience, reflect upon, express and communicate their thoughts creatively and holistically, while challenging their imagination and fostering reflective thinking. These competencies are essential to all learning processes.

Gardener's multiple intelligences distinguish between several different types of intelligence or strengths in learning. The body-kinaesthetic the visual-spatial the musical and the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences are of special interest for arts education, which integrates visual art, music, drama and dance at primary school level. These intelligences can be developed systematically through planning a learning process that enriches children's art "languages." Each expressive form has its own language, which must be learned for conscious integration to be possible.

Figure 5. A flow chart illustrating the renewal of thinking about and integration of the arts in the European context.
Courtesy Dr Roger Antwerp.



Figure 6. The spiral pathway reflecting Balkin's Theory of Integration and Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences.
Courtesy: Eritrean Arts Education Curriculum Development Panel.



This theory is significant and applicable in addressing individual student performance, which is basically assessed via a set of discipline-oriented tasks in drawing/painting, music and drama. Figure 5 depicts how an integrated model can combine various elements of the arts to form a new whole. This integrated whole is further extended to inter-relate disciplines at various times within a course curriculum, which is depicted in the spiral diagram in Figure 6. At planned intervals during the year; each discipline contributes its own fundamental course which will be applicable to the final project. This final project involves learners integrating concepts, and is thus a holistic learning situation.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

In their appreciation of the arts, children have encountered many kinds of artistic, musical and dramatic events and activities long before they enter school, and have begun to form their own opinions about them. These early experiences need to be used and expanded on in school. Responses to artworks need to be placed in a broader social context so that children can understand that there are many approaches to art and cultural appreciation. Cultures are not static. They have histories and contexts, and they change, especially when they come in contact with other cultures. Interaction between different cultures should play an important role in arts education, so that learners recognise the value of their own culture and arts as well as that of others. Art education has to operate in a curriculum which reflects the social, political and, if appropriate, religious background of learners. These conditions have always affected how artworks are made, what forms they take, and how they are interpreted and used. Thus, the process of identifying the conditions which are considered essential to forming and maintaining a given culture, and appreciating the artistic forms existing in a particular society, becomes a significant aspect of artistic practice, which reflects social conditions while at the same time stimulating learning activity. For example, we can compare songs sung by children to those recorded by popular singers, pictorial symbols made by a child to patterns produced by a designer, or role-plays within the family to situations depicted on TV shows.

The transition of fine arts to visual arts in education and practice not only reflects an expansion of terminology but also a new conceptual inclusiveness in the arts. Social and pedagogical changes in the European concept of

Figure 7. Flow Chart depicting Design and Technology paradigm reflecting integration of Arts and Crafts. Courtesy Dr Roger Antwerp.

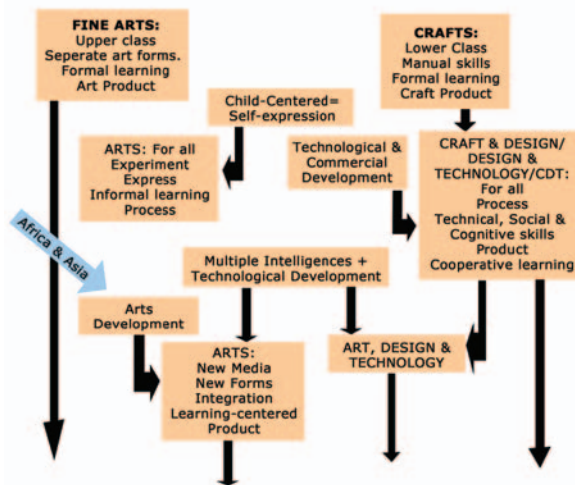
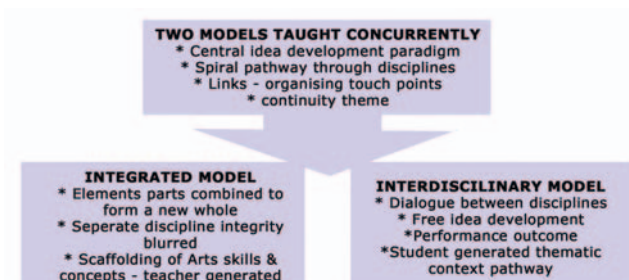


Figure 8. Model of Balkins' creative learning process suggesting collaborating individual discipline-based activities into a single-end performance outcome.



the arts during the twentieth century challenged the traditional paradigm of education whereby the fine arts were mostly the preserve of the upper and middle classes from which they originated.³ The new skill-based approach to the arts was popularised in order to establish greater equity in education while, on the other hand, crafts were defined as a lower-class form of manual production (Figure 7). The European model presupposes the separation of art forms and emphasises three major traditional paradigms: the aesthetic paradigm, dealing with teacher-directed formal learning of the separate art forms; the skill paradigm as a learning mode, either teacher-directed or teacher-facilitated; and the developmental paradigm whereby learners express themselves freely and become competent in the use of art forms, media and skills through teacher facilitation.

On the one hand, art education models commonly arise out of the diversified streaming of disciplines with little or no interrelation (the European model), while on the other hand we have contemporary art practices which reflect interdisciplinary art concepts that are rooted in both indigenous and popular cultures. A major challenge in the current educational system is developing a curriculum, which addresses contemporary issues in art and culture while incorporating it into art education. However, despite the persistence of a few conventionally separate art forms, there has been a major shift to integrated art forms both in the experimental arts, mass media and the popular arts such as film, music, performance art, happenings, installations, multidisciplinary arts, comics, graphic novels, environmental art, music videos, and computer graphics.

It is important to note at this point that industrialisation – as the most historically significant movement of modern times – has given way to technological advances in which design has emerged as essential to a sustainable future. This phenomenon has been identified as a fusion of art and function in technology, ergonomics and commerce, providing the potential for some systems to shift their focus from “the arts” to art, design and technology/craft. Integrated art concepts are being processed using efficient technology. This meeting of art, design and technology is regarded as the product of a change of paradigm in technology and technical applications. The traditional skills and processes required in the past to produce a finished product using varied materials and media have now been replaced with technology. The weaver; quilter; designer; artist or architect has been freed from the need to produce complex technical drawings and need only sketch their ideas and enter them into a computer to see an emerging finished product. “In these approaches it is not only the integration of skills and forms which is characteristic, but also the emphasis on creativity through processing skills of idea-design-modelling-testing-production, and cognitive skills of analysis, evaluation and decision-making.”⁴ This is the design and technology paradigm which reflects the integration of arts and crafts using a process approach, developing cognitive, affective, technical, aesthetic and social skills (Figure 7).

Roger Antwerp has drawn attention to the ways in which the inclusion of crafts (traditionally a lower-class skill) in African and Asian art practices culminates in “artistic” performances and drama. According to him, the closest African expression for the arts – which for them is totally different from the European concept – is the term *ngoma*, which integrates story, song, music, drama, mask and costume into a single performance. This phenomenon exemplifies the African influence in the renewal and integration of the arts in the European context. Namibia, South Africa, Eritrea and other African nations have redefined their arts curriculum to include “the arts in culture” or “art and culture” (Figure 8).⁵

Within the Asian context, this development can be compared to Indian dramatology where, in the *Natyashastra*, an ancient treatise on the Sanskrit drama (200BC to 200AD), the author Bharata explains performance as the culmination of all art forms. He discusses every aspect of the theory and practice of drama, which for him is a composite art. He laid down some key aesthetic concepts and conceived the art of the actor according to a fourfold scheme – *vachik* (speech), *angik* (bodily movement), *aharya* (costume, makeup and scenic design) and *sattivika* (psychic states), see Figure 9.⁶ Despite this, arts education in India is yet to revise its curriculum to make sense of its traditional culture, as it still follows the British colonial model of discipline-oriented curricula at school level.



Figure 9. Kathakali, a traditional Kerala dance – one of the oldest forms of theatre performance in the world. The dancers take various roles in performances traditionally based on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* (stories from Hindu mythology). Photo Credit: S Chris Chopp source: <http://www.fullstopindia.com/> and Rahul Sadagopan source: <http://www.photoscape.co.in/blog/posts/11>

OTHER SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH ON AN INTEGRATED ARTS CURRICULUM IN NEW ZEALAND

In 2005 Dr David Best, Professor of Philosophy, University of Wales, Swansea, in his draft curriculum on arts education in New Zealand stated that “the important point is that there can be no general rule here: the value of a multi-media performance, or combined arts activity, will always relate to a particular case. It will depend ultimately upon the informed, imaginative judgement of teachers as to whether combining the relevant art forms is likely to produce a worthwhile result.” He advocates interdisciplinary learning (learning transfer) but not integration, as applying concepts proper to one culture to other cultures can generate semiotic disparities through the use of terminology. What constitute distinct art forms in Western cultures may not do so in other cultures.

In New Zealand, a team of researchers from Waikato University experimented with an interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum model at school level by assigning undergraduate student teachers to art classes, a tactic which proved that a concrete approach can foster arts skills, knowledge and concepts while deepening ideas (Figure 3).⁷ The study found that the “spiral pathway” form of the idea development paradigm is workable and replicable; the “re” factor, as embedded in Balkin’s creative process (re-reflect, re-do, re-fine), could be applied for further refinement (Figure 4).⁸ This approach suggests an amalgamation of activities pertaining to individual disciplines (drawing/painting/sculpture, music and drama) into a single end performance. At each stage of the learning process, these disciplines are introduced as a collaborative component into the main task, which contributes to the end project. This kind of integrated arts model risks jeopardising the integrity of independent disciplines.⁹ Collaboration in the creative process, performance and teaching strategy demanded time from students and teachers alike for planning and reflection. Research has shown that few teachers are equipped to teach beyond an initial skirmish with this approach in any arts discipline. Hence, a new course structure is needed to train New Zealand teachers to become competent in teaching all four arts disciplines in an integrated way from Years 1-10.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

If concepts and ideas make art forms, the various media tend to become modes of expression. Within such multidisciplinary artistic activity, process takes precedence over the finished form. "For the purposes of the course, *integration* was defined as the bringing together of elements or parts to form a new whole. Within this paradigm, boundaries are not evident between the parts, and these may well be subsumed within the whole."¹¹

In my understanding, the process of art lies in *making a mark on a surface with a tool = event/performance*. (*Making* = process, application, performance, act –time. *Mark* = objects, images, pictures, sensations (like feelings, emotions, taste, touch and smell), illusions, imagination – virtual and physical. *Surface* = space and anything contained by it. *Tool* = that which can make a mark – from a whisper to anything that can be contained or animated.) In 1954 British conceptual artist John Latham said of his use of a spray gun filled with black paint: "The instant mark is created by a spray-gun; it signifies an 'event' which represents a form of inherent energy, while the surface on which it is made represents space in time. The result of this is not a static object, but the trace of an event, or several events made at different times."¹² The concept of a contemporary multi-disciplinary art practice, together with this expanded notion of a contemporary art "form," comes close to the indigenous African and Indian concepts of the art form. In a way, what is proposed here as an integration of art forms and disciplines is already present in our cultural practices.

The above considerations all point to a paradigm for art in the curriculum which results in an integrated arts/crafts model given an important place, where painting, drawing, music, dance, drama, craft, design and technology are combined using a process approach, developing cognitive, affective, technical, aesthetic and social skills. This revolution includes a learner-centred education model with an education-for-all policy which could be identified as either "arts in culture" or "arts and culture" (Figure 8).

An arts education which enhances concentration, self-awareness and self-confidence prepares the learner for life – both for living and lifelong learning – placing a key emphasis on cooperation, problem-solving and inventiveness. This will be an essential and significant contribution to education and society as a whole, as it keeps alive the spirit of adventure in learning.

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- 1 New Zealand Ministry of Education, *Arts Curriculum Document* (Wellington: Learning Media, 2003).
- 2 H Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
- 3 Educational consultant Dr Roger Antwerp from Denmark has developed a flow chart depicting social and pedagogical changes which he used to analyse various European and Non-European paradigms. See Figure 1.
- 4 Roger Antwerp, *Proposal for Integrated Arts Education* (2004). Eritrea.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ajit Hari Sahu, *Performance Tradition: Aesthetics and Practice*, 29 August 2005, <http://www.whereincity.com/articles/traditions-and-customs/1699.html>. K. Krishnamoorthy, *Aestheticians - Cultural Leaders of India*, (The Director, publications division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, GOVT. of India. 1990)
- 7 J Burton, R Horowitz and H Abeles, "Learning in and Through the Arts: Curriculum Implications," in *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, ed. EB Fiske (Washington, DC: The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 1999), 35-46.
- 8 A Balkin, "What is creativity? What is not?," *Music Educators Journal*, 76:9 (1990), 29-32.

- 9 P Dunn, "Integrating the Arts: Renaissance and Reformation in Arts Education," *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96:4 (March/April 1995); J Lovano-Kerr and N Roucher, "Can the Arts Maintain Integrity in Interdisciplinary Learning?" *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96:4 (March/April 1995).
- 10 Clare Henderson, Graham Price and Viv Aitken, "Interdisciplinary Arts: Old Wine in New Bottles," *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 3:6 (2001), <http://ijh.cgpublisher.com>. The project was based on experiments with student teachers and model classes. The analysis reveals significant findings about the Integrated and Interdisciplinary Arts Curriculum. Henderson explains that, in a pressured curriculum, the four compulsory disciplines in the arts are competing with each other, resulting in a reduced amount of time available. In these circumstances, the integrated curriculum could accommodate multiple disciplines based on a final performance outcome, thus reflecting arts practices found in real-world activities such as formal and informal multimedia presentations. Such integration would reflect the postmodern approach to the NZ arts curriculum with its tolerance of multiple perspectives, and also acknowledge that engagement and empowerment can be heightened when learning is embedded in one's personal life-world and cultural ways of knowing. On these last points, see A Efland, *Art and Cognition: Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002); R Bishop and A Hall, "Teacher Ethics, Professionalism and Cultural Diversity," paper presented to the First Conference of the Teacher Education Forum of New Zealand, Christchurch, 2000.
- 11 J Beane, *Curriculum Integration: Designing the Core of Democratic Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997); R Irwin and J Reynolds, "Integration as a Strategy for Teaching the Arts as Disciplines," *Arts Education Policy Review*, 96:4 (March/April 1995).
- 12 *John Latham: Art after Physics*, exhibition catalogue (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art and Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 1991).