

2. ARTS TEACHING - THE CYCLE OF NEGLECT

‘The most common obstacle to effective arts teaching in the primary school is a lack of confidence among teachers, combined with - or resulting from - a feeling that they are not themselves artistic.’

Australian Society for the Arts in Education, submission 70

The plight of primary classroom teachers attempting arts

Effects of their own poor arts experiences in school

2.2 A 1985 report (itself updating a 1977 report) commented -

‘The general quality of primary teaching in the arts has been described as unsatisfactory. There is no doubt that there are many primary teachers interested and well qualified to teach aspects of the arts. However, it is our impression that the majority of primary teachers are ill equipped by their preservice training to teach the arts and because of their own limited or negligible experience of the arts lack confidence to do so. The difficulty is compounded by the need to provide broad experience for primary children in the visual arts, crafts, dance and movement, drama and media studies.’
(Task Force on Education and the Arts, *Action: Education and the Arts*, report to Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Canberra 1985)

2.3 On this subject submissions to this Committee were unanimous: nothing much has changed. Generalist primary classroom teachers, because of their own poor arts experience at school, and because of inadequate teacher training, lack confidence to teach the arts. As a result, through no fault of their own, there is a strong impulse to marginalise the arts in their teaching; their own students - among whom are the teachers of the future - suffer; and so the vicious cycle is renewed. (The Committee means no slight on the dedication of teachers who do their best often with inadequate resources. The discussion is about averages.)

2.4 And yet it was stressed that experiences in primary, and particularly early primary, are crucial -

‘Research indicates that the foundations of confidence in the arts and artistic/musical ability are laid down in the primary school years.’ (Dr Diana Kendall, submission 30a p365)

‘As the age of the children increased, so the amount and quality of music education decreased significantly.... In secondary school the success of the general music program depends on all students entering with a good preparation in primary school.’ (Australian Society for Music Education, submission 118 pp1400,1410)

2.5 Curtin University Faculty of Education saw in its teacher trainees the effect of lack of continuity in their own schooltime arts experiences -

‘[There is] a lack of *continuous* experience of the arts through Primary and Secondary school in many cases... Students teachers are unlikely to develop interests in those disciplines in which they have little familiarity developed through their schooling. It is also important to point out that after graduation there is little likelihood that these teachers will engage in further formal study of the arts.’ (Curtin University Faculty of Education, submission 113 p1354)

2.6 The problem for the university teacher education faculties lies in the need to bring trainees up to speed in basic subject skills, skills which can be taken for granted in other areas such as numeracy and literacy -

‘Most primary teacher trainees come to their training with an inadequate or non-existent personal background in the Arts, and minimal skills. In other learning areas, there is a skill base with which to work, for example, we expect a reasonable level of personal literacy and numeracy from students as a background to undertaking units in language and mathematics education. To expect to equip students with both personal skills and classroom methodology through a single compulsory unit in Music or Visual Arts is an impossible task. Indications from the 1994 trials of the Western Australian Education Department Student Outcomes Statements (working edition) are that generalist primary teachers, although intellectually understanding the concepts, framework and language of the Arts outcomes, are unable to effectively apply them to improve the quality of their programs. This is due to lack of personal competence, confidence, diagnostic skills and appropriate methodology.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1077.)

2.7 There was general agreement that the universities are not coping with this problem -

‘There have been a number of national surveys and reviews of pre-service training of teachers in the Arts in the last 20 years, all of which have come to the conclusion that what is offered is inadequate to meet the needs of student teachers in training. Recent years have seen further cut-backs in provisions for pre-service training in arts education, particularly for generalist primary teachers. To meet future needs, a restructuring of pre-service training in arts education will be necessary.’ (Education Department of Western Australia, submission 117 p1391)

2.8 By way of example -

‘In most primary schools, music is taught now by the classroom teacher. Primary school teacher trainees can be offered as little as six hours instruction in music pedagogy. Unless they already have musical skills, probably this serves mainly to confirm their own sense of musical inadequacy.’ (Music Council of Australia, submission 59 p682)

2.9 The trainees’ wider attitudes to the arts, not just their skills base, bear on the problem:

‘Most teacher education students have not gone beyond Year 8 in their art(s) study, therefore they lack any substantive background or sensitisation to the subjects. Most teacher education students already are of the opinion that the arts are not important because of their limited and often negative experiences at school.’ (Australian Institute of Art Education, submission 17 p228)

‘The most common obstacle to effective arts teaching in the primary school is a lack of confidence among teachers, combined with - or resulting from - *a feeling that they are not themselves artistic.*’ [emphasis added] (Australian Society for the Arts in Education, submission 70 p748)

2.10 If generalist primary teachers see themselves as non-artistic, this probably has something to do not only with their own school experiences but also with attitudes in the community at large - the view that ‘the arts’ is for ‘talented’ people, or is the specialised activity of ‘the arts community’.

Cutbacks in teacher training

2.11 There was evidence that preservice training in the arts has actually declined since the introduction of the National Curriculum bundling all the artforms in one Key Learning Area.¹ (The National Curriculum is discussed from paragraph 3.59)

‘Whereas a decade ago in most tertiary institutions student teachers had opportunities to develop curriculum knowledge and skills in the individual discipline areas of the arts, in many tertiary institutions currently student teachers receive an amalgam of ‘arts’ experience in a single curriculum unit. This has the inevitable effect of reducing teacher confidence, knowledge and skill in addressing the individual art forms within the school setting. It should be recognised that the all-encompassing expert in the ‘arts’ is an educational myth.... there is an urgent need for teachers in the primary and secondary sectors to have pre-service and in-service courses available in the specific arts disciplines.’ (Ms M Barrett & Ms H Smigiel, submission 60 p691)

‘It is generally agreed by most arts educators that the integration of the arts disciplines has resulted in the watering down, marginalising and downgrading of the teacher education provision for the field. With all the arts disciplines amalgamated into, say, the ‘expressive arts’ the end result is a diminished acquisition of essential competencies for expression, performance and dialogue even at entry level or any of the individual disciplines.’ (Australian Institute of Art Education, submission 17 p228)

2.12 Of course this correlation does not prove a cause-effect relationship. Possibly the bundling (‘generic arts’) approach which some critics see as implicit in the National Curriculum, and the rationalisation of teacher training in the universities, spring from the same conceptual source. However there was some evidence that

1 Art Education Society of New South Wales, submission 84 p991.

universities are using the bundling approach of the National Curriculum as an *excuse* to rationalise their own offerings -

‘For example, in January 1994 an Australian university [Australian Catholic University in Victoria] reduced the number of hours devoted to the visual arts in its revised Bachelor of Education primary degree from two units to one. The University cites the National Curriculum as one of the reasons for this reduction, which was brought about by collapsing individual subjects into a form of related arts.’ (Dr Neil Brown, submission 15 p181)

2.13 Amalgamation of universities and tertiary colleges under the Unified National System (the ‘Dawkins reforms’ of 1988) has also had detrimental effects -

‘...the impact of amalgamations between Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education has reduced the diversity of offerings and limited possible career options [in dance]. Education faculties have been severely cut back at both Melbourne and Deakin Universities.’ (Ausdance (Vic) Inc., submission 79a p898)

‘...given the almost complete take-over of teacher education by the University sector in some states it could be argued that the more practical aspects of teacher education in the visual and performing arts (once a significant characteristic of the College of Advanced Education system) has now been weakened and undermined by the more theoretical and academic approaches... associated with traditional university education.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p93)

2.14 The squeeze has affected teacher training generally, not only teacher training in the arts -

The response of most universities to the recent wave of cuts in the number of teachers employed in government schools in some States and to the Commonwealth’s offer of a financial mechanism to effect ‘faculty renewal’ has been drastically to reduce the provision of undergraduate places in their teacher education faculties.’ (Schools Council [of National Board of Employment, Education and Training], *The Role of Schools in the Vocational Preparation of Australia’s Senior Secondary students: Final Report*, December 1994, p31)

2.15 - but in this situation the arts, already a small player, are likely to be disproportionately affected. Core units or large electives in teacher training courses can more easily be marginally curtailed; small units or small groups are more at risk of falling below a viable level and being dropped altogether.

2.16 For a summary of the declining trend in provision of preservice training in music education in New South Wales, see Figure 13.

Lack of support in school administrations

2.17 According to the submissions, ignorance and lack of support in schools compound the problems of the generalist primary teacher attempting arts. For example -

‘There is a lack of understanding among most primary school administrations and teachers of the nature of music education in the primary school, the high level of skill needed by the teacher, the demands of a properly constructed music education program and the length of time necessary to see worthwhile student development.’ (Australian Society for Music Education (WA Chapter), submission 39 p455)

2.18 This ignorance probably arises not least because arts people tend not to rise high in education hierarchies. This seems to be partly for structural and organisational reasons: arts teachers are more likely to be sole practitioners in the school, so less well placed to become Subject Heads.² But as well there are probably reasons to do with outlook and attitudes, which may make arts people less ambitious to climb the hierarchical ladder -

‘The arts represent a creative and liberating force within society, non-conformist and anti-bureaucratic by nature, and dynamic in terms of their capacity to challenge and change. Schools on the other hand are the products of bureaucracy.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p96)

Declining centralised curriculum support

2.19 Other recent trends are compounding the difficulties of primary arts education. Firstly, in recent years there has been a reduction in employment of centralised curriculum advisers and consultants (the trend to devolution of power to individual schools, considered at paragraph 2.27, accompanies and rationalises this move) -

‘State/Territory Education Departments now only employ *one dance educator in Australia* (in Queensland) to service the curriculum and resource needs of dance teachers in schools. The other seven education departments employ consultants to service the whole performing/visual arts area, having actually *reduced* their commitment to arts education since the 1984 Task Force Report [*Action: Education and the Arts - report of the task force on education and the arts to the Minister for Education and Youth*]

2 ‘Nowhere is the low status of the arts in educational programs better demonstrated than in the organisation of secondary schools. Although there are some exceptions, most Australian secondary schools remain organised around a subject department pattern with subject masters/co-ordinators as the middle level executive staff. Career and power structures are based on this organisational pattern, yet... less than 25 per cent of schools have subject masters for any arts subject (other than English).’ *Education and the Arts - A joint study of the Schools Commission and the Australia Council - national report*, 1977, p13. The Committee doubts whether this situation has changed much since 1977. The Northern Territory Government referred to the problem of ‘not having specialist Arts teachers as heads of Arts Faculties; instead, non-specialist teachers tend to head amalgamated faculties.’ Submission 27 p331.

Affairs, 1985].’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p834)

2.20 This takes away a former source of support to the classroom teachers - support which is particularly necessary for arts teachers because they tend to be sole operators, relatively poor in support and networking opportunities within the school. This applies at both primary and secondary levels -

‘Support services for Visual Arts have been cut back with industry restructuring and devolution of responsibility to schools. Today there are no Personnel Officers in Regional Support Centres and only one Principal Education Officer for the Visual Arts for the whole of Queensland.’ (Alexandra Hills State High School, submission 71 p762)

‘When I came to South Australia in 1979 there were about 12 or 14 art advisers and there were three superintendents of art and design in the state. They provided a very good professional service to teachers to enable them to exchange their ideas, to question their judgments and to develop the arts in a way that was productive. We now have no advisers and no superintendents. We have one curriculum officer who is responsible for all of the arts in the state. So we do not have the kind of sustenance that assists in teachers making their professional judgements about the quality of students’ art work.’ (Prof. Doug Boughton, evidence p859)

‘The primary specialist [arts] teacher is often isolated and lacking in collegiate support within the school. The role of the primary specialist teacher is very different from that of the classroom teacher, and the resultant pressures are often not widely understood or accommodated.’ (Arts Action Coalition of Western Australia, submission 35 p413)

Declining use of primary specialists

2.21 Secondly, the position of arts is crucially affected by the wider debate on the proper place of generalist classroom teachers versus subject specialists in primary schools.

2.22 This is a large issue with ramifications far beyond the arts, and the debate is a never-ending one. The Committee will not try to canvas it here. Suffice it to say that the 1970s trend towards increasing use of primary specialists³ now appears to be reversed. The Committee has not tried to research the details; generalisations about the different states should be made with caution. In Western Australia, for example -

‘Since the closure in 1987 of specialist branches such as Art and Craft Branch and the Music Branch [of the Western Australian Education Department] it has been difficult to obtain accurate statistics on primary specialist appointments. Many schools have also used support and

3 Education and the Arts - A joint study of the Schools Commission and the Australia Council - national report, 1977, p12.

administrative relief time allocations to provide additional specialist teachers, and these teachers do not show on current staffing returns as specialists.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1073)

‘There is a lack of clarity in regard to a consistent appointment policy for arts specialists or an equal accessibility to their services for all [Western Australian] schools.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1357)

2.23 Queensland has no primary visual arts specialists⁴ but does use music specialists

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‘Generally speaking almost 80 per cent of [Queensland government] primary school children receive approximately 30 minutes a week of music instruction from a music specialists and a further 30 minutes with the class teacher.’ (Queensland Department of Education, submission 115 p1369)

2.24 Victoria has tended to use primary specialists in art/craft and music, but a 1994 survey shows that they have been high on the list of recent cutbacks.⁵ By contrast, in New South Wales the new primary music syllabus of 1985 was accompanied by an injunction that it was to be taught by classroom teachers, not by music specialists.⁶ The Music Council of Australia summarises:

‘Once there was a provision for regional music specialists who could assist with on-the-job training. In most states, they are no more, or are being phased out. We have here a situation in which uneducated children are entrusted to the teaching of uneducated adults, a betrayal of educational principle.’ (Music Council of Australia, submission 59 p682)

2.25 There is no consensus among educators in general about what the right balance is between the use of classroom generalists and specialists in primary school; but there seems to be a strong consensus among arts educators that, one way or another, they need specialists - not merely as a practical way of compensating for teachers’ poor grounding in the arts, but also because the arts do involve quite specialised *physical* skills. As it was put to us: ‘you [the teacher] can learn maths from a book, but you can’t learn music from a book.’). General policies to reduce primary specialists (like general policies to cut back on centralised curriculum advisers) seem to be having a disproportionately bad effects on arts education because of the particular problems and needs of arts subjects.

2.26 We say arts needs specialists ‘one way or another’ because exactly how is a matter of debate, considered further from paragraph 2.66 below.

4 Queensland Art Teachers Association, submission 120 p1450.

5 Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1116. D. McRae, Victorian Primary Principals Workload Study, unpublished data 1995. D. McRae, Into the Bone - the Impact of Cuts to Victorian Government School Education 1993-94, 1994.

6 Australian Society for Music Education, submission 118 p1408.

Devolution of decision-making to schools

2.27 A third recent trend is the widespread policy of devolution of decision-making to individual schools. The Committee will not try to discuss here the merits of devolution in principle - we simply report, in relation to its effects on arts education, that the general tenor of submissions to the inquiry was negative -

‘Devolution to schools has sometimes enhanced music programs, but has sometimes mitigated against continuity through the music specialist being replaced by a physical education or art specialist after a period of one or two years, before any substantial benefit from the music program can be felt’ (Australian Society for Music Education (WA Chapter), submission 39 p463)

Policies articulated by employing authorities sometimes make it difficult to plan effectively. For example, while the Education Department of WA has a policy that it does not employ primary subject specialists, primary schools in fact do employ specialists in the areas of Art, Music, Science and Physical Education. Because primary schools may (and often do) decide to switch from a Music Specialist to a Physical Education Specialist (or vice versa), continuing development in an Arts area may be thwarted.’ (Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University, submission 25 p310)

2.28 Arts educators seemed to feel that the arts, because of their special handicaps - particularly negative attitudes in school administrations - deserve a leg up from head office to affirm their place in the curriculum; devolution weakens this and makes the arts, being near the bottom of the pecking order, more vulnerable to *ad hoc* local rationalisation.

2.29 This view may be characterised unkindly as telling the local school community ‘we know what’s good for you better than you do, and arts is good for you.’ In essence it is advocating a central positive discrimination to counteract negative local attitudes for the sake of a claimed greater good. The Committee is inclined to agree that the arts does deserve some positive discrimination, in the light of all the problems raised here; but the issue raises thorny questions about sovereignty - people’s right to be wrong - which must be faced squarely. Unfortunately the unkind paraphrase springs to mind readily in a society where a creative life is narrowly defined and suspiciously regarded as the activity of a special few.

2.30 Devolution was seen as part and parcel of the dismantling of centralised curriculum support, a matter of particular concern to arts teachers since, as noted at paragraph 2.20, they are more likely to be sole operators in the school and relatively poor in the support of informal local networking -

‘With the current devolution of financial management to schools there is an alarming reduction in the resources now available for music education. Centrally co-ordinated instrumental programs are being dismantled and the positions for music consultants who supported teachers in the field have

virtually disappeared.’ (Australian Society for Music Education Inc., submission 118 p1400)

2.31 Some feared that devolved budgeting would increase funding pressures on arts materials and equipment, particularly large items -

‘Even in a devolved school system, schools do not necessarily have the expertise to maintain and replace capital equipment or to provide for amortising replacement costs. Some of the items initially placed into schools as capital equipment - such as kilns - should be the responsibility of the school system to maintain and replace.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1081)

2.32 Some feared that devolution will entrench the gap between the privileged few and the rest -

‘There is a vast gap between this small elite [of talented music students] and the rest of the community. While Australia nurtures its talented musicians (those who are able to afford the cost), the provision of music education in schools and community programs is patchy, of variable quality, and extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the economic climate. And the indications are that recent education policy decisions will result in a further decline. With the current devolution of financial management to schools there is an alarming reduction in the resources now available for music education, Centrally co-ordinated instrumental programs are being dismantled and the positions for music consultants who supported teachers in the field have virtually disappeared.’ (Australian Society for Music Education Inc., submission 118 p1400)

A silk purse from a sow’s ear?

2.33 The average result of these interacting problems and trends, according to the submissions, seems to be a mixture of well-meaning attempts to make a silk purse from a sow’s ear, and demoralised efforts to keep away from the arts altogether:

‘...the cycle of marginalisation and poor perception re the importance of the art(s) to human experience, quality of life and unique applications to the world of work are reinforced. For example, neophyte teachers who see themselves as non-artistic, excuse themselves from teaching art when some critical foundation classes would have equipped them to do so competently and confidently.’ (Australian Institute of Art Education, submission 17 p228)

‘The fact remains that many teachers in this country still lack confidence and experience in the arts themselves; they tend to avoid or ignore the arts in their teaching or, worse still, confuse art with entertainment, regarding arts activity, like play, as a non-serious pastime and therefore to be accommodated only on the fringe of the curriculum.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 p97)

2.34 The Committee was told of ‘appointments of some instrumental ‘teachers’ who can barely play the instrument’⁷ Would school administrators tolerate the appointment of a science teacher who knew no science, or a French teacher who knew no French? That they tolerate this situation in arts speaks of their own attitudes about the marginal status of arts subjects. But the Committee suspects there may be another factor at work here. Possibly in the arts more than in some other subjects it is easier to get away with ignorance - easier to make a show of doing *something* - particularly if the school hierarchy has little sympathy for the arts and little understanding of what a good arts education outcome would be.⁸ Presumably schools do not roster teachers without French to teach French because they would be quickly exposed: the class cannot proceed. A classroom teacher told off to teach art will probably be able to occupy the children somehow, however inadequately - probably producing the ‘product oriented and trite’ outcomes that one witness observed as the norm -

‘The majority of these activities involve some kind of ‘craft’ work in the visual arts and some type of ‘performance’ work in music, often ‘one-off’ activities, trivial in nature. In each case these prospective teachers perceive visual arts and music in terms of adult forms of performance/exhibitions and resultant technical *products*; whereas visual arts/music for young children should focus on drawing/painting activities and singing/music making as *process-oriented learning*, involving basic perceptual skills congruent with children’s level of ability.’ (Dr Diana Kendall, submission 30a p366-7)

2.35 By contrast, good teaching does show results - in arts as in any subject. The Committee heard of Canberra School of Music’s primary school project - a 15 year project aimed at breaking the cycle of neglect by giving one group of children a quality music education throughout their school years⁹ -

‘It was clear that the cycle of no music education at the primary level and poor music education at the secondary level led to uninformed, musically illiterate people going into music education programs at the tertiary level and going back into the system as teachers. We felt that it was essential to try to break into this cycle at every level possible.... We now have children who began in kindergarten who have had music as part of their daily school curriculum in prime time, as part of a government school, and who are now going into Year 11. They are looking towards careers in all sorts of areas, not necessarily music, but they are musically much more literate than most of the applicants who we have coming into our tertiary courses. Even the people at the end of Year 6 are more musically literate than the present applicants we have to come into our tertiary courses. I believe that music as a teaching tool in the primary school onwards is an enrichment to all children... They may or may not go on to take instruments and they may or may not go on to become a musical performer but they will never lose that

7 Australian String Teachers Association, submission 42 p472.

8 Or perhaps it is easier to keep the children occupied somehow in *some* arts activities. We are not saying that teaching a musical instrument is any less exacting than teaching a language.

9 Staff on the Canberra School of Music’s payroll teach a special music program at Ainslie Primary School and Campbell High School, ACT.

enrichment they have had to begin with' (Prof. John Painter, evidence p1230-1235)

2.36 This demonstration project involves extra time *and* quality teaching. Given the demands of the crowded curriculum the minimum aim for any subject should be, at the least, the best possible teaching in whatever time is available. In primary arts the most common reality, according to the submissions, seems to be little time, little resources *and* (in spite of teachers' good intentions and best efforts) relatively poor teaching.¹⁰

2.37 Needless to say this is a totally unsatisfactory situation. The Committee has been mindful of the need to balance the complaints of arts educators against the needs of other areas of the curriculum; but in this case we have no hesitation in agreeing with their concerns. It is intolerable that arts - or *any* subject - should be taught by teachers who, however well-meaning, know themselves that they cannot do the job properly. It is a betrayal of our children.

Arts teaching in secondary schools

2.38 The previous section focussed on the plight of primary school teachers attempting arts because, according to most submissions, it is in primary school that the children's need for a good grounding is greatest, and it is in primary school that the greatest problems occur with ill-prepared and unconfident teachers.

2.39 Most of the problems mentioned above apply also in secondary schools, perhaps with slightly different emphases; except that the question of specialists versus generalists is not such an issue in secondary school since use of specialists is unquestioned.

2.40 A few extra points worth mentioning particularly with reference to secondary teaching are -

2.41 Firstly, elective enrolments in arts, as a proportion of total enrolments, have grown noticeably in the last decade. Year 12 enrolments in visual arts and music, the traditional big two, have roughly kept pace with general growth in Year 12 retention rates, while enrolments in newer offerings - dance, drama, media - have mushroomed. (Details at paragraph 1.102 and following. Our evidence was unclear on the state of elective enrolments below Year 11.)

2.42 No doubt this trend is partly the reason for the complaints of many submissions about inadequate resources and support -

'A combination of timetabled arts teaching and extra-curricular expectation often results in overworked and highly-stressed teachers.' (Victorian Schools Music Association, submission 129 p1586)

10 And as a result, we note in passing, not insignificant problems of occupational health and safety - as, for example, when untrained teachers try to teach dance or drama in inappropriate spaces, or strain their own voices trying to teach singing.

2.43 Again, negative attitudes to the arts intervene. Administrators adjusting resources will always tend to lag behind a trend; but this lag is likely to be more severe in a case where, in spite of the facts, there is an *attitude* that the subject is unimportant.

2.44 Secondly, there is increasing pressure to teach all the artforms, not just the traditional art and music. This is usually put in words like - ‘All students should experience all of the arts forms during their time at school.’¹¹

2.45 Putting this into practice in a crowded curriculum is problematic, a matter considered further from paragraph 3.40. The point here is that the problems are likely to be greater in secondary school. There are matters of principle - what exactly does ‘experience’ mean in the context of secondary school, where a reasonable depth of study is assumed? - and the practical problems of marshalling viable-sized classes, specialist teachers and timetable slots in a timetable structured around electives, particularly in smaller schools.¹²

2.46 Thirdly, there is a general lack of suitable inservice training courses that balance pedagogy and artistic practice (see paragraph 2.78 and following) -

‘A professional arts education association survey of Arts teachers (1993) shows a widespread desire among specialist teachers in all states for: • more skilling in their own specialist art form - each art form has its own particular needs; • knowledge of and basic skilling in other art forms. The ability of tertiary institutions to provide post-graduate training which is accessible and relevant to the needs of teachers is varied.’ (Department of Education, Western Australia, submission 117 p1391)

2.47 This need may be felt more acutely by secondary teachers in proportion as they feel themselves to be specialists in a particular artform requiring a high level of practical skills -

‘In the secondary schools in NSW, Visual Arts is taught by teachers who generally perceive themselves as practitioners who have skills and concepts to be imparted.’ (Mr Robert Waters, submission 26 p314)

11 Curriculum Corporation, *A Statement on the Arts for Australian Schools*, 1994, p26.

12 In Years 11 and 12 subjects which tend not to be offered in smaller schools are most commonly in the arts, closely followed by studies of society and environment, and to a lesser extent languages. Arts subjects are the most prominent among the subjects that students report they would like to study but cannot because they are not offered or because of clashes in the timetable. J Ainley and others, *Subject Choice in Years 11 and 12*, Department of Employment, Education and Training and Australian Council for Educational Research, 1994, pp xxi,19,153,168. This appears to contradict the finding that, where not all Key Learning Areas are taught, the first to drop out is most commonly languages (paragraph 1.109, footnote). The apparent contradiction is explained by the distinction between Key Learning Areas and individual subjects. Many schools offer no Year 12 languages; few schools offer no Year 12 arts subjects. Most schools offer at least one Year 12 arts subject; smaller schools are less likely to offer more than one.

2.48 Fourthly, the Committee suspects that in secondary schools, in proportion as vocational training looms on the horizon, teachers are more affected by the underlying uncertainty about what the purpose of arts education is. Is it to enrich the school experience of all, or to nurture the talent of the few? In primary school the answer is clearly the first; in secondary elective classes it is not so clear. Tensions arise - tensions which correspond to the tensions among arts educators, alluded to several times in this report, between the 'education' viewpoint and the 'professional arts' viewpoint.

'Another problem... is the dominance of the professional model. This dominance can lead to arts educators being reluctant to award the highest grade to any students who are not performing at a standard comparable to that observable in the professional world of arts... This problem does not seem to affect students in other disciplines and can be seen to stem from the misconception that arts education is only about training future artists.'
(Queensland University of Technology, submission 23 p 294)

2.49 And it is not only a matter of attitudes to vocational training. In proportion as *other* subjects in the curriculum march towards more instrumental, measurable, outcomes-based modes of learning which naturally accompany growing depth of subject knowledge, the arts lose status, relatively, because of suspicion and misunderstanding about their immeasurable outcomes and their different 'ways of knowing' -

'Many educators and a large number of parents have a problem with the assessment of Visual Arts. [While] many subjects may be assessed by their outcomes or their products, the value of Visual Arts lies primarily in the development and processes explored by the student.' (Mr Robert Waters, submission 26 p314)

2.50 This is a major theme in arts educators' complaints about the National Curriculum for schools, a matter considered from paragraph 3.72.

Teacher training - a case for positive discrimination?

2.51 The general question of competency standards for teachers has been addressed through the Commonwealth co-ordinated National Project for the Quality of Teaching and Learning. Outcomes of this project included the establishment of the Australian Teaching Council and the development of a draft competency framework for the teaching profession, which is now being trialled through case studies, pilot projects and field testing.¹³ The draft competency framework is concerned with the generic skills of teachers in all disciplines - it has been referred to the State and Territory authorities for more detailed development according to their priorities.

2.52 Balancing the needs of different subjects for school time is a contentious matter; but there should be no need and no demand to balance their need for

13 Department of Employment, Education & Training, *Annual Report 1993-94*, p64.

competent teaching in whatever time is available. Competent teaching should be available at *all* times. The Committee heard nothing to suggest that generalist primary teachers teach most subjects poorly.¹⁴ We heard strong evidence that they teach arts relatively poorly. (We stress again that this is not intended as a slight on the good intentions and best efforts of teachers working under difficult conditions. The reasons for the problem, as discussed above, are systemic.) That is sufficient reason to recommend that arts should have a high priority in the development of competency standards for newly graduated teachers.

Recommendation 2

The Commonwealth, as part of the outcomes of the competency standards element of the National Project for the Quality of Teaching and Learning, should encourage the States and Territories to give priority to development of more detailed competency standards both for specialist arts teachers and for generalist primary teachers teaching arts.

2.53 Setting standards will hopefully be a spur to reform, but of course setting standards does not, by itself, magically ensure that they will be met. To break the vicious cycle something more is necessary. It must lie, in the first instance, in the University teacher training faculties.

2.54 One must sympathise with the constraints the universities face. The poor arts experiences and negative attitudes that the trainees bring are a matter of lifestyle and self-image, built up over a lifetime: it is hard to expect the universities to turn them round in a few years working only in class time. As well, universities have other demands:

‘At a time of constraint the opportunity for expansion of the arts as an activity within the framework of education courses is difficult to sustain given the legitimate demands of many competing interests. The circumstances which diminish the opportunities at the level of higher education though are likely to have a ‘pipeline’ effect on the continuity of

14 Another problem area sometimes mentioned is primary school science, for reasons that are interestingly similar to those put to this inquiry in relation to arts. ‘... the Schools Council has observed that science and technology are still not being accorded the importance which they warrant in primary school. the reasons for this are varied, but amongst the most important is that of primary teachers’ own lack of confidence in these areas of the curriculum: some people teaching science in primary schools have undertaken no studies in these disciplines during their undergraduate or preservice courses. Secondary teachers often lack experience in the practical applications of science.’ Schools Council [of National Board of Employment, Education and Training], *Five to Fifteen - Reviewing the ‘Compulsory’ Years of Schooling*, Canberra, 1993, p19.

the arts within the school curriculum.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1356)

2.55 But universities must at least acknowledge these problems and design courses appropriately -

‘For generalist primary classroom teachers, pre-service training in arts education is lamentably inadequate. *There is no recognition of or allowance made* for the fact that, thus far, few teacher education students have personal skills in the arts.’ (Arts Action Coalition of Western Australia, submission 35 p410) [emphasis added]

‘The development of individual interests is paramount in the context of generalist pre-service teaching courses.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1355)

2.56 Universities rely on trainees bringing basic skills of numeracy and literacy with them; they cannot rely on them bringing basic arts skills. It is not unreasonable to ask for some positive discrimination to tackle this problem. It seems that to ensure adequate teaching, arts needs more time in teacher training courses than its time in the school day would suggest at first blush. Unfortunately, the reported trend towards ‘generic arts’ units, replacing a fuller treatment of the individual artforms, as a means of rationalisation in teacher training courses, seems to be the opposite of what is necessary.

2.57 This is not a partisan argument on behalf of arts: it is a partisan argument on behalf of adequate and equal standards of teaching in all subjects that are regarded as worthy to be included in the curriculum. It may apply to any subject. It probably will apply to *new* subjects. The introduction of computer technology into schools, for example, may raise a need to give extra attention to it in training the coming generation of teachers, to bring them up to speed in light of the fact that they did not have the basic grounding in their own school days. The position of arts, unfortunately, tends to be confused by this analogy. The arts are *not* new - they have always been taught and always, it seems, relatively badly. They must be *seen* as new in order to break out of this situation.

2.58 Of course, this principle of positive discrimination in case of need should also apply to inservice professional development - more so in fact, since a particular role of inservice professional development is remedial action. All submissions saw an urgent need for better inservice professional development to help remedy the inadequate preparation of newly graduated teachers and the inadequate curriculum support for teachers generally. This issue is considered further from paragraph 2.96.

2.59 How can university teacher training faculties make better generalist arts primary teachers? Universities themselves are constrained by attitudes - their own and other people’s. Universities are renowned for their internal politics; arts people are a

small voice, and tend to be under-represented in university hierarchies.¹⁵ If Education faculties ‘vamp up’ their arts units, will their students regard it as a waste of time? Will school councils complain that their graduates are not giving enough time to the three R’s? Note that here the issues of quality of teaching and time allocated in the school week, though they have been simplistically separated in the discussion above, do intersect: generalist primary teachers will naturally have a motive to spend more time on a subject (within the margin allowed by the curriculum) if they feel comfortable with it.

The Commonwealth’s responsibility for teacher training

2.60 To what extent should the Commonwealth demand change? This raises the thorny and constantly argued issue of the right balance between the academic independence of universities and their accountability for the public money they receive.¹⁶

2.61 The Commonwealth, as guardian of the public money that universities receive, must bear some responsibility for overseeing the quality of universities’ results. Probably most university people accept this principle; the argument, of course, concerns what *level* of supervision is appropriate.

2.62 The result of a generalist primary teacher training course is - or should be - a graduate who can teach all areas of the curriculum satisfactorily.¹⁷ To give definite meaning to that statement requires defining ‘the curriculum’ and ‘satisfactorily’. As it happens a major purpose of the National Curriculum for schools is to do just that. The National Curriculum has been developed as a joint Commonwealth-State project, on the Commonwealth’s initiative. It defines eight ‘Key Learning Areas’ one of which is ‘the arts’; it describes desired outcomes in each area for each level of schooling (more details are in chapter 3).

2.63 The States employ teachers; the Commonwealth, through its funding of universities, is ultimately responsible for the quality of new graduates available for employment. The Commonwealth, having initiated the National Curriculum project and approved the resulting documents, has a duty to ensure that the universities produce teachers satisfactorily able to teach *all* its Key Learning Areas.

15 ‘Arts education [in universities] has generally suffered from the fact that people with real experience and insights in the arts have seldom been in administrative positions... where final policy and funding decisions are made.’ Prof. Richard Dunn, attachment to submission 114. The reasons for this are presumably similar to the reasons suggested at paragraph 2.18 in respect of school hierarchies. As a well, advancement in university tends to be by research, a field less open to arts teachers.

16 See also Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995. That report is focused on school education, but is broadly relevant.

17 Or at least, all areas except those that are the explicit responsibility of specialist teachers - a matter of changing policy and different policy between states, which considerably complicates the situation. See discussion from paragraph 2.66.

2.64 The Committee is aware that any recommendation on this score will probably come up against the Commonwealth's 'hands off' policy in respect of universities' internal decisions. Most of the Commonwealth funding of universities takes the form of a 'block grant' to the institution over a rolling triennium; the university is free to spend its grant as it pleases within an agreed student profile; the Commonwealth does not delve into the problems of individual faculties. There is no point in recommending 'extra money for teacher training in the arts' if that money simply disappears into a block grant which the university distributes as before according to its own internal politics.

2.65 Yet still the situation is unsatisfactory. It raises the general question of how the Commonwealth should assess the performance of universities and - a trickier question - how it should act upon the results of assessment. This sort of assessment is necessary in any case to assess the performance of the Unified National System since 1988.

Recommendation 3

As part of the National Curriculum for schools project, the Commonwealth should survey university teacher training courses to identify any deficiencies or systematic biases between disciplines. The Commonwealth, in consultation with the States and Territories, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and teacher organisations, should develop guidelines to remedy any deficiencies so that all the Key Learning Areas of the National Curriculum can be taught with equal high quality.

Specialist teachers and visiting artists

More specialists or 'skilled-up' generalists?

2.66 The basic options for improving arts teaching are to 'skill up' generalist classroom teachers, or to use more specialist teachers. The 'skill up the generalists' view will tend to stress the inter-relatedness of the subjects of the primary school curriculum; the 'more specialists' view will tend to stress the need for quality experiences in the various artforms. This is mostly an issue about primary schooling, since secondary schooling mostly relies on specialists already.

2.67 A few submissions favoured skilling up the generalists¹⁸. Most saw a need for more specialists - particularly those who stressed the need for *excellent* arts experiences -

'Who should provide arts education - trained teachers with an interest in the arts or trained artists with an interest in teaching? We strongly feel that effective arts education can only be provided by trained and experienced

18 For example, Western Australian Department of Education, submission 117 p1388.

artists. By encouraging trained teachers to enrol in three-week workshops on dance in order to teach dance in schools is, in our opinion, an absolute mockery of arts education.’ (Odissi Dance Company and School, submission 80 p908)

2.68 Others foresaw the need for more specialists if children are to be given an adequate experience in all the five ‘key’ artforms of the National Curriculum (dance, drama, media, music and visual arts).

2.69 However, most recognised that the use of specialists is a two edged sword. It may entrench the perception of the arts as ‘different’, and encourage the classroom teacher to opt out altogether -

‘Ideally, specialist teachers working in conjunction with generalist teachers would help to increase their skill levels and integrate the subject into the total curriculum. Given current circumstances, this collaboration requires considerable time and effort on both sides to accomplish, and responsibility for the specialist area is more generally left totally to the specialist teacher. There is also a widespread attitude that, as we have specialist teachers in the Arts, we obviously need specialist teachers to deliver arts education adequately. Thus generalist teachers are seen to be absolved from serious responsibility for the Arts. This problem has been compounded by the reductions in time given to the Arts in primary pre-service training over recent years.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1073)

2.70 As well, the logistical problems of providing specialists are likely to be more difficult in smaller schools, disadvantaging the country.

Or a mixture?

2.71 Many submissions, recognising these problems, suggested a mixed use of specialists and generalists -

‘It is important that the work of primary classroom teachers in the arts be supported by the provision of specialist arts teachers as well as engaging the students in other direct arts experiences such as participation in the artists in schools programs, excursions and programs of visiting performing and visual artists.’ (Cross Arts Victoria & others, submission 96 p1136)

2.72 A promising suggestion is that schools should use ‘specialist advisory teachers’ to provide specialist teaching and *simultaneously* improve the skills of the classroom teacher -

‘There needs to be ongoing school-based professional development programs which would have a more substantial and longer lasting impact on changing teachers’ practices than would one-off external inservice courses. This form of professional development activity could be activated by the employment of a music advisory teacher in every school who would provide ongoing inservice assistance and support to generalist teachers. As they

programmed and taught lessons in conjunction with the advisory teachers they would be developing knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist them in the effective implementation of the syllabus. Other methods of assisting with this professional development program would include the use of a specialist consultant visiting with reasonable frequency a limited number of schools or a relatively large pool of university staff who could provide this assistance.” (Australian Society for Music Education, submission 118 p1424-5)

‘Ideally, generalists should do it better through integration and being holistic like pre-primary teachers, but because of their lamentable lack of skills and training, I propose that specialist teachers (properly trained) should work in tandem with class teachers - not replacing them - in a team teaching effort that combines the class teacher’s knowledge of the kids with the specialist’s knowledge of music. This can be done - I did it as part of a scheme in the mid 70s and it was a brilliant scheme for developing maximum mileage with the kids and skilling generalist teachers at the same time. The results were far better than those achieved through our current specialist teachers scheme, where the specialist replaces the classroom teacher. However, it has to be done with *voluntary co-operation* on the part of the generalists - if it compulsory they will duck out from under and leave the specialist to carry the can.’ (National Affiliation of Arts Educators, submission 22 p288)

2.73 The general theme of such suggestions is that more flexible staffing arrangements are needed -

‘A suggestion which emerged from the survey was for increased articulation between primary and secondary schools so that secondary specialist teachers might teach some primary and vice-versa, as appropriate.’ (National Affiliation of Arts Educators, attachment to submission 22)

Need for ‘visiting artist’ programs

2.74 The theme ‘more flexible staffing arrangements’ is closely related to the need that many felt (mostly in the context of secondary school) for expanded ‘visiting artists’ programs.

‘Visiting practitioners provide exposure to a range of approaches to practice greater than that which can be provided by the teaching staff of any single institution.’ (Crafts Council of South Australia, submission 11 p133)

‘There needs to be a reversal of the current trend to cut out part-time and guest specialist teachers. In dance these are desperately needed.... The dance professional needs to make himself or herself more available as a resource for teachers, students and educators and take on some responsibility within their area of expertise for working in an educational context for part of their year.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p844)

2.75 This need is the greater because the population of teachers is aging, and there are few practical opportunities for teachers to take leave for further education or artistic practice during their careers. In this situations teachers risk becoming out of

touch with developments in their field; some cross-fertilisation from practising artists could help keep them in touch. (The increasing average age of teachers is also relevant to professional development needs generally, a matter mentioned at paragraph 2.97.)

2.76 However it must be understood that such initiatives should enhance, not replace the normal arts program -

‘The opportunity for practising artists to work in schools has many beneficial outcomes for teachers, students and the artists themselves. Artists can provide a valuable resource for classroom teacher by supporting arts education programs but *not* replacing teachers. This support is particularly important for generalist arts teachers.’ (National Affiliation of Arts Educators, submission 22 p285)

2.77 Some states have ‘visiting artists’ programs - but naturally this requires times, money, and support from higher up - which is being threatened by devolution and cutbacks in central curriculum support -

‘Other members of the community who have expertise in specific arts areas sometimes are employed as part-time workshop tutors. The bringing in of community members is severely hampered because of the expected payment and also insurance factors are a bugbear.’ (Department of Arts Education, University of New England, submission 10 p123)

‘Artists in Schools is another program which operated as a partnership between Federal and State funding bodies and the Department of Education and the Arts. The relationship between personal professional artistic development and the communication of ideas and experiences to students was perhaps its most significant feature.... However, the capacity to continue such an enriching program has been compromised by the removal of key arts curriculum leadership.’ (Ms Amanda Wojtowicz and Ms Julie Allen, submission 12a p140)

‘Artists, craftworkers, designers and allied industry personnel have much to offer educators and learners, but their employment in the educational setting is very much limited by a lack of systems funding and industry infrastructure to resource residency programs and industry links.’ (Queensland Art Teachers Association, submission 120 p1453)

Need for more tailored teacher training

2.78 The need for arts specialists must be reflected in the design of teacher training courses, both preservice and inservice. Examples on the positive side are -

‘The integrated programs at the College of Fine Arts [of the University of NSW] allow students to graduate into art and art teaching with a depth and commitment to their subject which is born of a sense of their role as both artists and educators.’ (Dr Neil Brown & Ms Penny McKeon, submission 15a p191)

‘[In Queensland] Classroom teachers with sufficient music skills and ex-secondary teachers are retrained as primary music specialist teachers in ten week (300 hour) inservice courses for primary music teachers.’ (Queensland Department of Education, submission 115 p1370)

2.79 But the general situation is not so happy -

‘Primary specialist arts teacher trainees (that is, those with an arts background) can generally choose to take extra units as a ‘major’ in the art form of their choice. This, however, is generally inadequate to prepare them for a primary specialist teacher role. There are no specific training courses to prepare primary specialist teachers in any of the arts, with the partial exception of the BMusEd course at the University of Western Australia, despite the fact that there are currently over 420 Full Time Equivalent positions for primary specialists in the arts [in Western Australia] (and probably more teachers fulfilling that role who do not feature on official statistics).’ (Arts Action Coalition of Western Australia, submission 35 p410)

2.80 Some saw problems with the current trend, in secondary teacher training, towards replacing integrated Bachelor of Education-type teacher training courses with ‘end-on’ courses (such as a one-year Diploma of Education following a mainstream undergraduate degree). This problem has two aspects. Firstly, are the needed subjects to be found among the universities’ mainstream offerings?

‘With the preference now for an end-on mode of study for all secondary teacher education courses it is essential that there is adequate and appropriate provision of arts discipline studies in initial degrees. In the areas of drama, media and dance there is inadequate provision of initial degree programs within Victoria’s higher education sector.’ (Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1134-5)

2.81 Secondly, where they *are* found, is the necessary training in *pedagogy*, as related to the particular subject, included? The submission just quoted continues -

‘With respect to the provision of appropriate programs, arts teachers in secondary schools require a broad range of knowledge and skills to ensure flexibility in different school settings. For example, the highly specialised and fragmented nature of specialist degree courses in art and design in many cases provides an inadequate discipline preparation for teaching the visual arts in schools. In such courses, there is often a heavy emphasis on practical work and a comparative neglect of theoretical aspects.’ (Cross Arts Victoria and others, submission 96 p1134-5)

2.82 This - the problem of giving enough pedagogical skills to secondary specialists in the context of a practical arts course - is the converse of the problem discussed earlier of giving enough artistic skills to primary generalists in the context of an integrated Bachelor of Education-type program.

2.83 There is a lack of suitable mid-career courses, both for teachers who might want to improve their practical skills -

‘An art educator wanting to do further study for personal development as artist, art educator and researcher finds a shortage of programs that offer course work tailored to their needs:

- available programs in visual art education generally focus on research only
- coursework assisted programs in the visual arts are rare; would-be students encounter extreme difficulty in finding coursework in studio practice and art education.’ (Australian Institute of Art Education, submission 17 p228)

‘Teachers within the arts acknowledge a discernible gap which exists between professional arts practice and the arts educator, which may not be addressed by the nature of further studies in education.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1354)

2.84 - and for struggling artists who might want to teach -

‘Many private studio teachers still have little access to practical means of improving delivery of curriculum (teaching methodology); for example, asking them to ‘give up’ teaching (their livelihood) for a year or two to undertake post graduate training (a course which may be designed for classroom science teaching) does not seem appropriate.’ (Australian String Teachers Association, submission 42 p472)

‘Colleagues in the symphony orchestra have had to do their Diploma of Education [to get work as instrumental teachers in government schools]. They said it was a waste of time. It would be good if you are 18 and have never taught before. But if you already know how to teach it is nothing new. There is this formal requirement of a year of study.’ (Ms Helen Tuckey, evidence p1119)

‘The majority of artists in Australia supplement their earnings in the arts with other jobs. One solution to the limited number of qualified arts teachers might be to offer artists bridging courses in education, and create opportunities for them to teach their art form.’ (Arts Action Australia Inc., submission 102 p1248)

Need for more crossover between doing and teaching -

2.85 If there is a lack of suitable courses combining practical skills and pedagogy, part of the problem may relate to underlying attitudes - the attitude that ‘doing art’ and teaching belong in separate boxes. The following point, made in 1977, was thought to be still relevant:

‘At present there is no interplay between performing and teaching. There is need for an Australian equivalent of the European tradition, an acceptance by even the very best performers that they are almost always also destined to be teachers.... Part of the present problem lies with those students who regard anything less than a professional career with star status in their chosen artform as falling short of their objective. Part also lies in the

training orientation, since the preparation for performing and that for teaching are difficult to reconcile... We need to make arts skills and experiences more accessible to teachers during their teaching career, and teaching skills more accessible to artists during their artistic career.’ (Mr John Deverall, submission 6 pp97-8, quoting *Education and the Arts - a joint study of the Schools Commission and the Australia Council*, 1977, pp45-6)

‘At some stage all performers need to teach, whether it is only to teach themselves and maintain their own technique.... The big tragedy in our education system is that we split off the teachers from the practitioners way too soon. Music is a practical art and there should be only one course called music with properly organised pedagogy a part of that course, well taught, with the practical and skill levels. That is not in any Australian tertiary institutions at present.’ (Ms Helen Tuckey, evidence p1132)

2.86 The Committee suspects that this attitude is closely linked to a major theme of this report - ordinary people’s sense of disconnection from the arts when ‘the arts’ is defined only as professional performance. By this view the arts are special, but schools are ordinary; the arts are non-conformist, but schools are the product of bureaucracy. As a result -

‘It is with alarm that I note that although requests for going into schools and colleges to teach workshops are always more than we can handle, bookings to go to the theatre to see a fully professional performance are dropping off... due to the perception that viewing, discussing and analysing professional art-works in their proper context are for some obscure reason not regarded as part of the curriculum or part of the education process.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p843)

2.87 At a higher level such attitudes are manifest in the gulf between education people and arts people and their respective bureaucracies - the problem of ‘falling between two stools’, in policy responsibility and grant support, which many submissions referred to -

‘Music is often thrown between the education and arts portfolios at state and federal levels. Funding from the Australia Council and State arts ministries tend to concentrate on professional artists. However, the long term benefits of joint arts and education funding initiatives would be immense.’ (AUSMUSIC, submission 75 p790)

‘Arts education in schools traditionally has had a contradictory relationship with the disciplines that it derives from and in many circumstances sits uncomfortably between funding agencies such as Arts Council and Education Departments. If arts education is to develop a profile through performances, exhibitions, projects and events and so on within the wider community it would appear that the various agencies set up to enhance the arts, supported by government departments could be more instrumental and inclusive of the arts in schools. Too often the educative component of the arts has been dismissed as peripheral by the arts community.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1358)

Need for more crossover between arts bodies and education bodies

2.88 Such comments raise the general question: What is the right balance of responsibility for arts education between arts ministries and education ministries?

2.89 Similar boundary problems arise everywhere in government administration, as can be seen by a glance at the varied combinations in the names of government portfolios between states and over time ('Arts, Heritage and Environment'; 'Environment and Planning'; 'Education and the Arts'; 'Education and Youth Affairs'...). In this case the question is thrown into sharp relief, for example, by the contrast between the situation of the three national arts training schools funded, for rather *ad hoc* historical reasons, by the Department of Communications and the Arts¹⁹, and the majority of art schools and conservatoriums which form part of the Unified National System of universities and, in many cases, have serious complaints about that situation (discussed in Chapter 5). As another example, the Committee heard vivid evidence of the travails of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus in trying to survive on a variety of rather small and insecure government grants, when on the face of it the Circus's training wing, in its essential feature of being a specialised national training school, is quite comparable to the three just referred to.²⁰

2.90 The view last quoted above is that Arts agencies should do more for arts education. An alternative view (see paragraph 3.27) is that responsibility for what happens in schools must rest *primarily* with education authorities - particularly since education budgets are huge and arts budgets are tiny. The Committee tends to prefer the second view, which is in keeping with the theme of this report that the arts should be regarded as normal and everyday - part of the everyday curriculum for which schools should feel responsible - rather than as special and extra. Accordingly the recommendations of this report are almost all addressed to the Department of Employment, Education and Training rather than to the Department of Communications and the Arts.

2.91 On the other hand, opportunities for diverse co-operative activities between schools and arts bodies should not be missed. Navigating the right course between these conflicting principles will be a delicate matter which requires overcoming not only the ordinary practical obstacles to bureaucratic communication, but also the different cultures of education people and arts people. The important principles are firstly, that boundaries between portfolio responsibilities should be clearly defined (even if this means that in places they must be arbitrary) to minimise bureaucratic buck-passing; secondly, that appropriate interdepartmental consultative arrangements should exist so that the channels of communication are open and problems overlapping the boundaries do not fall in the cracks.

19 The Australian Film, Television and Radio School, the Australian Ballet School and the National Institute of Dramatic Art. The Commonwealth Government's *Creative Nation* cultural policy (October 1994, pp20,25) adds to these an Australian National Institute for Indigenous Performing Arts and a National Academy of Music.

20 Flying Fruit Fly Circus, submission 131 p1641.

Recommendation 4

The Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Department of Communications and the Arts should establish a forum of relevant government agencies and peak non-government bodies to facilitate consultation on matters of mutual interest to do with arts education so as to prevent initiatives relevant to both from ‘falling between the stools’.

Conclusion on primary specialists versus generalists

2.92 The committee hesitates to make detailed recommendations on the complex issues to do with specialists versus generalists in primary schools, where the status quo seems to differ from state to state and between the various artforms. The submissions were firmly in favour of more primary specialists; but this is to be expected since they mostly came from specialist professional groups. The risks of *relying* on specialists must also be remembered: the risk that the arts will lose out because of the practical problems of integrating specialists into the school timetable;²¹ the risk that they will drop out altogether in small schools or country schools that do not have enough work for a specialist; the risk that they will be further marginalised in the attitudes of the generalist majority, who will be encouraged to continue thinking that the arts belong in a special box - the box with frills on it.

Creative thinking should permeate the curriculum

2.93 This would be a pity. The arts are a medium for creative, innovative thinking, but they should not be the only place for it. One of their chief benefits should be as a site of germination from which the habits of creative and innovative thinking can spread. If people learn to think creatively and innovatively in an area where this is explicitly approved, this may give them confidence to carry over the same habits of thought into other areas of life where, regrettably, those habits are not so common. Making generalist teachers feel more comfortable with the arts is an encouragement for them to feel comfortable with creative and innovative thinking in other areas; it would be a pity to lose the opportunity.

2.94 The Committee considers that a flexible and pluralistic approach is necessary to the role of generalists, specialists and visiting artists. There would seem to be clear benefits in increasing the arts skills of generalists; on the other hand blanket departmental policies like ‘no specialists in primary schools’ are inappropriate for the arts. Big schools may need more specialists; small country schools may need to rely on ‘skilled up’ generalists. The team approach described at paragraph 2.72, in which a visiting specialist is teaching the children and simultaneously skilling up the

21 Submissions described situations where, for example, ‘the music specialist [is] replaced by a physical education or art specialist after a period of one or two years, before any substantial benefit from the music program can be felt.’ Australian Society for Music Education (WA Chapter), submission 39 p463.

classroom teacher, sounds promising. Teacher training courses and inservice training courses must be correspondingly flexible. It must be clearly recognised that all flexible and teamwork approaches need hard work in organisation, including both support and encouragement from higher up and close co-operation in the school. Department-wide policies should be aimed at making it easier to organise creative local solutions to local problems.

2.95 The bottom line is that, one way or another, teachers must be confident and competent in teaching the subjects they are rostered for. The common present situation in primary schools which submissions described to the committee - too few specialists *and* unconfident generalists - is the worst of both worlds.

Inservice professional development for teachers

Better inservice professional development is needed

2.96 All submissions expressed an urgent need for better inservice professional development for arts teachers.

‘There is a terrific teaching resource in teachers throughout the system who need only various degrees of inservicing to become very much better teachers.’ (Prof. John Painter, evidence p1231)

‘A professional arts education association survey of Arts teachers (1993) shows a widespread desire among specialist teachers in all states for:

- more skilling in their own specialist art form - each art form has its own particular needs
- knowledge of and basic skilling in other art forms.

The ability of tertiary institutions to provide post-graduate training which is accessible and relevant to the needs of teachers is varied.’ (Education Department of Western Australia, submission 117 p1391)

‘Professional development mostly occurs through the Art/Craft Teachers’ Association. What they offer is good but it is usually during the holidays or weekends, which limits teachers’ participation. There is a lack of opportunities in P.D., especially for less confident and less skilled teachers. In order to address the misconception of some primary teachers that one is born with artistic skills/talent and that others cannot really do it, there seems to be a basic need for in-service on the nature of children’s arts, the purpose of arts education for children and on concept and skill development.’ (Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, submission 13 p147)

2.97 The Committee did not attempt any comparative survey to confirm whether the needs or problems are any worse in the arts than in other disciplines. Teachers’ increasing average age and length of service was mentioned in several submissions as something that creates a growing need for retraining and professional development so that teachers can keep their skills fresh, and this presumably applies to all

disciplines.²² However, on the evidence we received it does seem that the arts suffer special problems in other respects.

Special problems of arts teachers

2.98 Firstly, the generally marginal position of arts in the school has its effects:

‘Inservice is... limited by the restrictions created by the lack of funding and the restrictive ‘global budgeting’ of schools. There has been a severe slashing to the number of subject consultants in NSW. In the Metropolitan Western Region of NSW, with a vast number of government schools, there is now only one consultant available for creative arts, and her expertise is in drama. The universities are finding more and more need to develop their own consultative services, which has to be a cost to the individual schools. The managers (principals) of the schools, therefore, insist that the teachers must pay for their own inservice, if the principal deems it low on the priority list, and will not allow day release for interested teachers. Subjects seen as ‘basic skills’ may meet with other attitudes.’ (Mr Robert Waters, submission 26 p316)

‘Professional development for teachers also has to be related to school priorities as well as to Department of Education and the Arts priorities, so that adds to the almost impossible situation for arts educators to obtain professional development.’ (Ms Amanda Wojtowicz and Ms J Allen, submission 12a p141)

‘Support by State schools to instrumental [music] teachers’ training and development at conferences is in stark contrast to the support offered by private schools around the nation. I cannot recall any member [of AUSTA] being funded by public monies to attend such events, but most delegates from private school systems attend fully funded.’ (Australian String Teachers’ Association, submission 42 p473)

2.99 Support that Education Departments do provide may be dictated by broader priorities, not by the special needs of arts teachers:

‘Inservice courses are generally much more heavily accented on the more easily quantifiable ‘basic skills’ areas, if they are available.’ (Mr Robert Waters, submission 26 p316)

‘Education Department curriculum consultants are limited in the support they can offer, working only at the district level... or on occasions with a whole school at the request of the principal, and generally with a focus on

22 ‘Relative to the workforce as a whole the teaching service has a very large proportion in the 35-45 age range, and very few under 25 years... most teachers employed in schools today [1993] are likely to be still teaching in the year 2000... There is likely to be a need for retraining and professional development during the next 10-15 years...’ Schools Council [of National Board of Employment, Education and Training]. *In the Middle - Schooling for Young Adolescents*, Canberra, February 1993, p21.

school development planning in a priority area rather than direct skilling of teachers.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1078)

2.100 The arts have special needs in professional development because of their particular emphasis on physical skills. Available courses (whether departmental inservices or university courses) tend not to acknowledge this -

‘The experience of the Faculty of Education [Curtin University] is that it is difficult for example to attract teachers of the arts to in-service courses or to enrol them in courses leading to higher qualifications. The reasons for this may be that the needs of arts teachers are perhaps more closely aligned to the idea of professional practice in the arts than the more academic realms of research and scholarship. It is likely that arts teachers are desirous that the content of their discipline be the basis of professional development to attend to their practical needs within schools.... It is apparent from research and surveys conducted by National, State and professional associations of arts teachers that there is a clear desire for upgrading skills and that this training should be specifically related to the individual art forms.... This specific skills development should best be conducted wherever possible by artists and performers to enable arts teaching to keep pace with arts practice.’ (Faculty of Education, Curtin University, submission 113 p1357-8)

2.101 Because arts teachers in secondary schools tend to be in small departments or sole operators, they have been particularly hard hit by the general reductions in curriculum support staff in the State systems. As well, they feel the lack of support that networking with colleagues provides. This make inservice opportunities especially important for them -

‘Teachers in the Arts, being generally specialists and sole practitioners, have needed to make individual submissions for support to attend professional development activities run outside the school.... As these are not always in line with school priorities, support is not guaranteed. Teachers in the Arts, being subject specialists and often sole practitioners, do not generally enjoy the collegiate collaboration and support within the school that primary classroom and many other subject secondary teachers take for granted.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1078)

2.102 This isolation is liable to be particularly acute in the country -

‘Teachers in regions have little or no access to inservice or teacher support from peers or advisers.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p852)

Teachers’ professional associations try to fill the gap

2.103 Many of the arts teachers’ professional associations who made submissions to the inquiry run their own inservice activities in an attempt to fill the gap -

‘There is a lack of opportunity for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge by participating in things such as school exchanges, networking with colleagues etc. Associations such as the Art Craft Teachers Association are able to provide a broad range of activities to address these problems. They have the expertise and subject are knowledge to address these issues.’ (Art Craft Teachers Association Inc, submission 8 p107)

‘There is now only *one* specialist dance advisory position within the Education Departments Australia-wide. Funding for curriculum resources is very low and there is a general lack of professional development programs. It has been left up to the professional associations in each state (ACHPER and Ausdance) to provide inservice and support to teachers of dance.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc., submission 79 p846)

2.104 But they are hampered by their smallness and their voluntary shoe-string character -

‘The associations feel the pressure to provide more extensive and expert professional development on a more business-like footing - difficult without a secure financial base which provides for paid administration and organisation.’ (Arts Action Coalition of Western Australia, submission 35 p410)

2.105 And their efforts may not be sufficiently recognised at Departmental level -

‘Difficulties can occur with such things as the payment of speakers, hiring venues, taking workshops in country areas etc. Teachers are rarely able to attend activities during school time and need to be given adequate recognition of their attendance.’ (Art Craft Teachers Association Inc, submission 8 p107)

‘The current lack of recognition and accreditation for such training [by professional associations] is a serious limit on the number of teachers participating.’ (Western Australian Association for Drama in Education, submission 83 p986)

2.106 The result of these interacting factors seems to be that arts teachers need inservice professional development more than most teachers, but are less likely to get it.

‘Departments of Education in several states have banned any teacher inservice activity during school hours.... [they] rely heavily if not totally on arts professional associations for inservice of teachers and provision of resources... Teachers are sick of doing all of their inservice in their own time and mostly at their own expense.... Teachers of arts subjects are tired, disenfranchised, unsupported and overall suffer from low morale.’ (Australian Dance Council - Ausdance Inc, submission 79p852)

2.107 The introduction of the profiles and outcomes statements of the National Curriculum may increase teachers’ confidence, but it does not replace the need for professional development -

‘The recent publication and trialling of Student Outcome Statements for the arts has the potential to change this situation [teachers’ lack of confidence]. On their own, however, Student Outcome Statements will achieve little without a program to meet the needs of primary teachers for professional development.’ (Western Australian Association for Drama in Education Inc., submission 83 p983)

The National Professional Development Program

2.108 The Commonwealth has acknowledged the need for better inservice professional development for teachers generally, and to this end has established the National Professional Development Program with funding of \$60 million over three years starting 1993-94. It is focused on national initiatives such as the National Curriculum for schools (see chapter 3), the Key Competencies (see chapter 4) and vocational education.²³

2.109 The National Professional Development Program is a collaborative one, intended to promote co-operation between education authorities, universities and teachers’ organisations. For example -

‘The Arts Action Coalition (combined arts education associations) of Western Australia is part of this program. The funding has made it possible for the professional associations to employ an administrator to organise and administer both its professional development and publications programs, and take care of some of the day to day administration of the associations.’ (Arts Education Association of Western Australia, submission 92 p1078)

2.110 The Committee applauds this initiative. We have three concerns. Firstly, it must not divert attention from the fact that the prime responsibility for maintaining a skilled force of teachers lies with the education authorities that employ them. This responsibility means providing inservice professional development where necessary and, at the least, acknowledging and rewarding teachers who obtain it on their own initiative. In this regard the Committee endorses concerns expressed in the recent report of the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education* (June 1995). This report, speaking both generally and in relation to professional development for teachers, expressed concern at evidence of ‘substitution’ - the situation in which State governments take advantage of a new special purpose Commonwealth program to wind back their own commitment in the area, thus in effect negating the Commonwealth’s aim to raise activity in targeted areas of need.²⁴ Given that the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* lacks suitably detailed information breaking down the costs of State professional development programs by the source of the funds, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the practice.

23 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Annual Report 1993-94*, p66.

24 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995, pp49ff, 89.

2.111 Secondly, for the program to be most cost effective the focus on national initiatives such as the National Curriculum for schools, the Key Competencies and vocational education must be balanced with the need for more targeted assistance to areas of particular need, such as particular disciplines, particular levels of schooling, or particular parts of the country. It would be regrettable if the program came to be dominated by things like ‘how to assess students’ progress against the National Curriculum profiles’ - things that are basically to do with administrative procedures rather than quality teaching. There is some evidence that this is happening -

‘In the [New South Wales] Department of School Education the emphasis for professional development at present is on the implementation of the national profiles within a national standards framework. Arguably, this impetus is working against the professional development of drama teachers.’ (Educational Drama Association of New South Wales, submission 50 p606)

2.112 Thirdly, if it is expected that the program will act as seed money, in the hope that the professional organisations it helps will continue a high level of activity beyond the end of the program, the Committee thinks that this may be unrealistic - particularly in the case of the smaller groups such as the arts educators. There is no doubt that the need is ongoing; it would be a pity to let the head of steam that the program builds up evaporate again at the end of the three years. A longer term view is necessary.

‘The concern is that such paid administration is necessary, and will continue to be necessary after the NPDP has concluded at the end of 1996. Given the small membership base of the arts education associations (in contrast with some other learning areas, such as Mathematics), the capacity of Arts professional associations to sustain their activities is a real issue.’ (Art Education Association of Western Australia, submission 83 p1078)

The role of teachers’ professional associations

2.113 The whole question of the role of the teachers’ organisations in professional development is a tricky one. The Committee agrees that they have a key role in a pluralistic system, a role which is cost effective in light of their grassroots and volunteer character. But we have a concern that education authorities should not take advantage of the volunteers’ dedication to offload their own primary responsibility to budget for maintaining the skills of their teachers. To *work with* volunteers in a pluralistic system is good; to *rely* on them for such important functions is an unacceptable abdication of responsibility, since activities run on a shoe-string are unstable and the volunteers liable to become exhausted. The role of the teachers’ organisations in professional development must be properly funded, and their courses must be properly acknowledged in the school system.²⁵

25 That unofficial or voluntary activities are a two-edged sword - if they encourage those who are truly responsible to opt out - is a theme echoed in comments on extra-curricular and ‘outreach’ activities generally - see paragraph 3.21.

The role of universities

2.114 There remains the role of the universities in ongoing professional development for teachers. Our evidence was that in general their offerings are not particularly useful for the needs of mid-career arts teachers. Probably an underlying reason for this is the regrettable attitude, alluded to above, that 'doing art' and being a teacher belong in separate boxes (paragraph 2.85). The Committee considers that this is a matter which the Department of Employment, Education and Training should consider in the context of assessing the adequacy of the university teacher training courses generally, as recommended above (recommendation 3, paragraph 2.65)

Recommendations 5, 6

5. The Commonwealth's National Professional Development Program for teachers (NPDP) should continue beyond the end of the current 1993-96 three year plan.

6. To better target the expenditure of NPDP money the Department of Employment, Education and Training, in consultation with State education authorities, teacher organisations and the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, should investigate the current state of inservice professional development (including by discipline) and identify areas of need for priority action.

2.115 These recommendations overlap and are consistent with recent recommendations on professional development for teachers by the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee.²⁶ That Committee recommended, among other things -

- in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* each State/Territory should provide details of its policy and performance on professional development;
- schools should be required to specify a level of commitment to professional development and to declare annually the funding to be allocated to it;
- The Department of Employment, Education and Training should commission an evaluation of the extent and effectiveness of professional development for teachers.

2.116 This Committee agrees, as we agree that -

'For professional development to secure a higher profile, it needs to be more adequately accounted for than it is at present in the Australian National Report [on Schooling]. As a minimum, states and sectors should include an

26 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995, pp xi-xii.

outline of their policy of professional development, and support it with data on achievements.' (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Accountability in Commonwealth-State Funding Arrangements in Education*, June 1995, p91)