

Tuesday 15th June 2010

Transcription of the Question and Answers following the presentations

Session One: Visual Arts and Cross Curricular Approaches to Education – Chair: Clive Gray (De Montfort University)

Irene Baldriga: To John Steers and to Henri- I want to ask something about the European context. I think that in both cases, the new national curriculum in Britain and in the case of the French reform concerning *Histoires des Arts*, we are actually going very much towards the idea that was reported in the strategy, this idea of promoting competencies, the cross curricula system, etcetera. And in Italy, our main concern is to go toward or to match the expectations of the European Union with regards to the educational systems. I would like to know how much the European context is a concern in these two cases. Firstly, is this a concern, and secondly, has it contributed in some way, this European trend to move forward, in influencing these two reforms?

John Steers: I don't think that Europe has been taken on board as a particular issue other than in the sense of trying to avoid the art and design curriculum becoming too Eurocentric. So the emphasis is on a wider global perspective and looking at art and design and work of other cultures across the world from this time and times past. Of course that includes Europe, but I don't think that Europe is privileged in the way that it's presented. And in a way it doesn't have to be because most teachers would privilege it anyway and the message is probably about making the approach broader than just a European, for example, history of art.

IB: My question was more general than just about the art and design and the art history. I was just wondering if the European recommendations, in terms of adopting the eight key competencies have been taken in consideration in creating the curriculum or not. In Italy it is a major priority, so for instance in our reform, which is very weak on some aspects --but we consider it as quite interesting in the sense of promoting competencies--the European context is very important to the point, for example, that Italian teachers are very much encouraged to think not just in a European culture, not just in a sense of thinking European, but promoting a European type of education. So are all the twenty-seven members adopting this new trend of the eight key competencies, which are promoted through the European recommendation? For my country, this is something that is taken in consideration as a national priority. (But it is just a recommendation from the European Union.)

JS: The simple answer is no. One reason for that is the development of the National Curriculum (it started with some consultations in 2003 until 2007 when it was published), predates some of that. I would very much believe that the key competencies are there but if you are asking are teachers aware of that and would they be very conscious of that in their teaching, then the answer is no. This is England after all.

Henri de Rohan Csermak: I think it has influenced teaching in France but not directly. Regarding our education system, whatever people may say we are all Eurocentric, maybe for worse. I'd be very surprised if you told me that you'd invited Finnish teachers or Spanish teachers or British inspectors or French administrators to participate in the Italian curriculum. We couldn't in France, I'd like to, but I know it is impossible. On the

other hand European evaluations and recommendations drive every country to look at its system with a critical eye. What brought us French to the bitter statement that the main aim of our educational system since the Revolution, that is to better social status, was increasingly becoming a failure. That's the main reason why we began to reflect on these terms of competitive abilities. [...] Knowledge being not only a way to acquire such abilities, but being one of those abilities which makes the citizen better and also, remaining at the core of our educational system. So it's a reform from within maybe unfortunately not from without. I think the European context has helped.

Question: Our school along with many others in England has recently been invited to become an Academy. I suspect quite a few schools would take that opportunity. Amongst other things it means you would no longer have to adhere to the national curriculum. Do you see that as a challenge, an opportunity or a potential pitfall? What are your views on that?

JS: It could be either of those things. If it is an excuse to drop some subjects that I think most of us would consider essential in the curriculum it would be something of a disaster. To give you an example: the Church of England runs about 400 secondary schools, who would want to tap into the money that's available if those schools become Academies- as a number of C of E schools are. It's interesting that the guy who in charge of education at the C of E schools is an art and design person. We've been talking for some time about how interesting it'd if you really set up a school that tried to put the ideas of education through art into practice, a school where art and design is absolutely at the centre of the curriculum. Several schools and dioceses were interested, a school has been identified, and ministers approved the setting up of that Academy. It's due to open in 2011 but it hadn't gone quite far enough in the system for us to be certain that the new ministers will allow it to go through but if it does it might be a model for many more. So therefore, if Academies can do work like that and we can approve that this is an approach that works and is of real value then I am all for Academies. If this is a way of limiting the curriculum in some way then I'm not. The other big worry is that these schools will be increasingly isolated as they become more divorced from local authorities, networks and support. And whereas organisations like mine will do what they can to support teachers in those schools, the tasks just might be too great and the schools also might be too reluctant to pay for the kind of support that they need. I'm not sure about it; it can still go either way. While there are a few, I think it's all right. If we get to have a majority of Academies it might become a problem.

Question: Gabrielle mentioned the flexibility of the British system and the opportunity for British teachers to actually adapt to their audience. I was wondering how Dinah was asked to work on this Islamic art and adapt to a special audience. My question is two-fold. How British artists are asked to work in schools?

Dinah Kelly: This came about by Creative Partnerships in art, so it's their idea, they funded it with the school. So, I saw an advert and went for an interview. It was their idea for the maths and art. But I do Islamic art in my own artistic process so it was my idea to design this particular project.

Question: How were you appointed?

DK: Creative partnerships appointed me. They do a lot of artistic residences in different schools and work with a lot of cross-curricula ideas with artists. Artists go into schools

and use their practice with different subjects. I think the maths one is quite unusual, in that I didn't go into the art department at all, just working with the maths department but I think it was very successful.

HRDC: It is another common point between our two systems. Artists' residences have, in fact, been common in France since the year 2000, but are now increasing between the two departments, culture and education. There are many programmes especially around photography. It is very interesting not only because it is cross-curricula but also because it involves the art practice inside school and the personal practice of the pupils outside school especially with photography. The presence of the artist in the school draws the students to cross boundaries between school and their personal practice and also makes them gain in the intellectual consciousness of their artistic practice.

JS: Creative Partnerships was a project set up by the government and is now called Creative and Cultural Education and is no longer directly funded.

Question: I'm a primary languages consultant and I find there are a lot of parallels happening with languages and the arts at the moment. One of the things is that the primary curriculum is driving the secondary curriculum in terms of creativity. One of the things that I am particularly interested in is the content and language integrated learning CLIL- it's really to talk about creativity and to draw out those threads about creativity.

Alice Odin: We do actually quite a lot of work with primary schools as well. The actual target language is very important in what we do. For every lesson and visit that we have there will always be a workshop planned. The creativity aspect is definitely what backs every workshop and visit that we do. Primary school children do respond really well to that. At the Courtauld Gallery we have an emphasis on secondary schools at the moment because it feeds into our practice of widening participation, because we are also a university. But I work with a lot of primary schools and they work really well.

JS: I think you are right to remind us that primary schools have worked in cross-curricula ways for centuries past and I'm sure they'll continue to do so. The proposed new primary curriculum clearly had that in mind. I'm not sure about the presentation of it and I'm not actually devastated that the government has rejected it but I'm sure that cross curricula work will continue.

Philippe Bordes: I'm not very impressed about the applications and the reflections that are behind these initiatives, which are extremely promising. I was wondering whether these initiatives could be considered as Art History at a high level, whether they are under pressure to put the image as opposed to the art in the foreground, that is to prepare the children to analyze all sorts of images as opposed to only those that are designated to art. A number of contemporary artists are working on how images functions so I suppose they will be exposed to this kind of critical experience through that or many other ways. With respect to equipping these younger children with the means to assume these critical responsibilities as citizens, has there been a reflection on this distinction between, let's say, the object as the corpus? We mentioned the interests of everyday objects of material culture in the larger sense of the term, which is not exactly the object of art history. Could you generally reflect on where this *histoire des arts* category is in some way under pressure in your work?

HRDC: I think the creation of *histoire des arts* was a great opportunity to free us from the

burden of the education *à l'image*. It has grown into a kind of cliché of the French education. All work of visual arts or even of any artistic language, being a kind of formal discourse that we can decipher and translate into words, that's been at the core of education *à l'image* for several years. This wasn't the primary intention of the promoter. It is also a kind of specialisation inside the French course. So the work of art could be instrumentalized as the image, to be translated into French during the French course. It is interesting that *histoire des arts* promotes global vision of the work of art as an image, but also in its materiality, in its specificity of its formal language, as a cultural fact, maybe as its historical documents. It promotes a very polysemic vision of the work of art.

JS: Yes definitely in terms of the English national curriculum, the vision is a wide spectrum of art, craft and design. That is clearly set out in the statutory. In practice you may find that many teachers privilege fine art but they won't entirely ignore the other things. There is also a tendency, almost a split in schools when they tend to look at images. There is a kind of orthodoxy in working with images that we're quite familiar, Post-Impressionism through to Late Modernism, 1870-1930 is fairly comfortably to work with. Other schools are very keen to work with contemporary work. What was worrying when research was done was that very few schools deal with anything that predates about 1850- of course there is a huge pressure of time.