

WILL THE NATIONAL ARTS CURRICULUM BE STILLBORN: RESUSCITATION THROUGH RESEARCH OR MERCIFUL EUTHANASIA?

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The gestation period for the national arts curriculum has begun. Conception occurred as a consequence of liaison between industry and government, and birth is expected about mid 1993. The future of arts education in Australian schools will be affected significantly, one way or the other, by the arrival of this document. Given its parentage, and motivation for conception in the first place, there are some real concerns about the potential value of such a framework for the well-being of school arts education. This paper examines the political context which gave rise to the national curriculum, with specific reference to the competency debate; describes the difficulties posed by the assumptions underpinning the concept of a national curriculum for the arts; and provides some suggestions for research arising from the debate.

THE COMPETENCY DEBATE AND THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Over the past several years the single most important idea dominating policy debates in Australia has been the notion of "competency-based education and training". The competency approach to employment, education and training is central to the most concerted attempt in the history of this country to define, at a national level, an agreed skills framework for both trades and professions. The national impetus towards competency definitions of performance in industry is linked to the implementation of award restructuring proposals which have been negotiated between various major employers, the government and the ACTU. Since the late 80's there has been a spectacular growth of uniformist definitions of national competency standards for performance in a wide range of major industries.

The effects of the competency movement have already impacted upon education for the years of post-compulsory education within TAFE, schools, and industry training sectors. The first ripples have been felt within universities, which, until now, have been largely situated outside of these developments. The National Arts Curriculum is, at this moment, being developed for implementation within a political climate characterised by nationalist ideologies of corporate federalism, built upon agreements from the various state, territory, and commonwealth bodies responsible for education within Australia. These include both government and non-government authorities. To understand the potential effect upon arts

education of the corporatist policy-making agenda now in place it is important to examine in more detail the recent development of Competency Based Training movement (CBT) and its relation to education.

Restructuring of the Australian workforce, and along with it the education and training system, has arisen from the government's desire to achieve economic resurgence for Australian industry in a context of poor balance of trade figures and high unemployment. There is a clear government view that education does not meet the needs of industry, hence the need for radical change. John Dawkins' said, as Federal Minister of Education in 1988,

The schools play a critical and central role in the nature of our society and economy. They provide the environment through which the children of Australia pass as they move on to technical and further education, higher education and employment. There is little to be gained from adjustment to the structure of our nation and the way we live and work if the central position of the schools is ignored. (Dawkins, 1988) p.1.

Dawkins views were echoed by the National Industry Education Forum in 1991;

If we truly believe that Australia's future depends on becoming competitive then one of the first things which must surely be set right is the education system" (Brian Loton, A.C., June 3, 1991).

The first shots in the education reform initiative were fired by Dawkins with his two government discussion papers in 1987 and 1988, the first dealing with tertiary education and the second with schools (Dawkins, 1987 and 1988). These papers were directed towards exploring ways to reshape education, at all levels, in order to achieve a revival of Australian industry.

Dawkins' higher education discussion paper identified areas of high priority for development in the tertiary sector. engineering; sciences and technology; economics and business studies; and Asian Studies. The arts were ignored. The Dawkins (1988) green paper Strengthening Australian Schools, reflected similar values, proposing a restructuring of the content and focus of schooling that emphasised maths, science, and technology, with a view to achieving higher levels of literacy, numeracy and analytical skills in graduates of Australian schools of the future. Dawkins proposed in that paper the development of a national curriculum framework to bring about the desired improvements. Again the role of the arts was not mentioned in the paper.

The Dawkins' recommendation for development of a national curriculum has been taken up by the Australian Education Council (AEC), the inter-governmental committee of federal and state education ministers. In 1989 this group published the Common and Agreed National Goals for Australian Schooling following a landmark conference in Hobart which resulted in the identification of eight key learning areas. These were English, Health, LOTE, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society, Environment and Technology,

and the Arts. The AEC also established the Australian Curriculum Corporation (ACC) to facilitate and promulgate the outcomes of national curriculum activities; recommended a national approach to teacher education; and established CURASS (the curriculum and assessment committee of the AEC), to negotiate collaboration between the states for the purpose of developing national approaches to curriculum and assessment.

Each of the state and Territory governments and education authorities are currently participating in the development of national curriculum statements in the key learning areas identified by the AEC in Hobart. In June 1992 the Brief for the National Curriculum Statement and Profile in the Arts^o was completed (Emery and Hammond, 1992). This document provides the frame of reference for the writers who will complete the preparation of the Arts curriculum framework and profile statement by June 1993. The recent decision by the Directors-General of Education to support the development and implementation of National Profiles across Australia has added enormous significance to the National Curriculum undertaking.

All this is happening against a background of massive restructuring within the Australian workforce. In 1989 the National Training Board (NTB) was established by the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) as a joint venture with Commonwealth and State Governments to develop an Australian Standards Framework for trades and professions. Also established in 1989 was the National Office for Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), which is charged with the responsibility for developing methods to assess the level of skills possessed by migrant workers, and to develop competency standards for the professions. The NTB has worked in close collaboration with NOOSR to produce the Australian Standards framework which is used to provide reference points for the development and recognition of competency standards within trades and professions Australia wide. Industries are required to align their occupational classifications to eight levels within the Australian Standards Framework in order to define career paths within trades and professions. The National Training Board works with industries to assist in the development of competency levels 1-6, and endorses them once developed. NOOSR similarly assists professions in the development of competency levels 7-8.

NOOSR's role has already demonstrated significant impact within a number of professions. Those in the initial stages of competency development are Dentistry, Optometry, Medical Science, Radiography, Podiatry, and Speech Therapy. Others such as Accountancy, Agricultural Science, Chiropractic, Osteopathy, Engineering, Pharmacy, Psychology, and Social Welfare are well underway, while Architecture has completed competency statements. Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Veterinary Science are developing or completing performance criteria. Nursing is now developing assessment methodologies.

Three recent reports have played an integrative role in connecting restructured career pathways within industry to workforce entry, education

and training. In December, 1990, the AEC commissioned the Brian Finn Committee to recommend on future directions for post-compulsory education in Australia. The Finn Committee report to the AEC and MOVEET (Ministers of Vocational Education Employment and Training) (July, 1991) recommended, among other things, a school curriculum which is strongly oriented to the world of work, defined closer links between schools and TAFE, and recommend the development of "employment related generic competencies". The Finn Report took the view that there are certain things all young people ought to learn which are basic to their preparation for employment. Regardless of the pathway students might follow during the years of post-compulsory education, these employment related key-competencies are essential to the future employment success of all young people, and indeed, constitute the foundation for the future success of Australian industry.

Finn proposed that these key competencies reside within the areas of language and communication, mathematics, scientific and technological understanding, cultural understanding, problem solving, and personal and interpersonal skills (no reference to the arts). Finn also proposed the development of a "national standards framework" for these key competencies which should describe clearly the nature of each of these competencies at a range of levels of performance. This "standards framework" should then serve as a common reference point for teachers across the country, with a view to enabling nationally consistent approaches to assessing and reporting upon students' level of performance relative to the key competencies. In effect the "standards framework" should drive the national agenda in the development of future curriculum and assessment procedures at the post compulsory level of schooling.

AEC and MOVEET subsequently established the Mayer Committee to flesh out the Finn concept of employment related generic competencies. The Mayer Committee discussion paper (Mayer, 1992) proposed key competency strands relative to each competency area, and has also described performance profiles relative to each of these. While the work of this committee is only very recently completed, it is clear that there has already been a significant impact upon the TAFE sector of education, and also upon the schools national curriculum initiative. Of critical concern to the arts is that cultural understanding, which appeared in earlier drafts as a key strand, was removed from the final recommendations. In the absence of any serious reference to expressive arts and critical thinking (ACE News Sept 1992) one could be forgiven for suspecting a deliberate attempt to excise the arts and other forms of critical and cultural expression from the educational reform agenda at the post-compulsory level.

Another key piece in the national competency jig-saw is the National Board of Employment Education and Training (NBEET) which provides advice to the Federal Minister for Employment Education and Training. It is comprised of four councils, the Schools Council, The Employment and Skills Formation Council, the Higher Education Council, and the Australian Research Council. The Carmichael Report (ESFC,1992) produced by NBEET's Employment and Skills Formation Council recommended a new workforce entry system based

upon competencies rather than time served, which will impact upon education systems at all levels. The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System will encompass all industries, will replace the existing apprenticeship and trainee system, will be delivered by a network of schools, TAFE and industry, and will incorporate the Mayer generic competencies. (It is interesting to note that Laurie Carmichael, Chair of this committee is also a member of NBEET, ESFL [Education and Skills formation Council], the NTB, was a member of the Mayer Committee, and is on the Board of the NPQTL).

The NPQTL is directly related to education. It was set up as an outcome of the award restructuring process, and is run by a board comprising representatives from all teacher employers around Australia (government and non-government), all teacher unions, the Commonwealth Government and the ACTU. It is comprised of three working parties which are concerned, among other things, with teachers' professional preparation, and career development. Currently it is looking at the development of competency based standards for teachers, a development which will have clear and unavoidable impact upon university teacher education programmes in all disciplines and at all levels.

What does all this mean for Australian education? It means that an irresistible force for change is now in place. It is a force, with frightening momentum, that is likely to propel Australian educators towards (hasty) description of student achievements in competency-based performance terms, reflecting nationally agreed standards for all subject areas, throughout all levels of schooling. I hasten to add that at present the connection between the national curriculum statement and the competency movement is not overtly identified. Given the concurrent developments I have just described, however, it does not require a great leap of imagination to predict the way in which the national curriculum profiles are likely to be used, not too far down the track, as the effects of the work of Finn-Mayer-Carmichael, the NTB, NOOSR, and NPQTL, and possibly the proposed ATC (Australian Teaching Council) spread throughout the broader community. The current meaning of the national curriculum profiles can be properly understood only when considered together with its twin initiative the employment related key competencies.

Already the HEC (Higher Education Council) has received a reference from the Minister requesting a report on the extent to which universities use competency based methods for the assessment of candidates seeking entry to higher education (Bradley, 1992). The AVCC (Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee) is currently working with the HEC on a report which may assist universities with the development of policies to accommodate these changes. This, together with the recognition that the NOOSR agenda is likely to impact more powerfully upon universities than was first imagined, has caused the AVCC to form a working party to develop a position relative to the competency debate, and to maintain a watching brief on NOOSR's activities.

Clearly, if universities employ competency-based selection procedures, the ripple effect downwards through the school system will be inevitable. Together with the impact of Finn-Mayer upon the years of post compulsory schooling, and the pressure to open pathways between TAFE, Universities, and private education sectors, the effect upon all other levels of schooling cannot be ignored.

Last year the release of the National Industry Education Forum Policy "Declaration of Goals For Australia's Schools" (NIEF, 1992) added further impetus to the progress of a competency approach to education. Consider this goal;

"By 1995, school systems throughout Australia to have in place a comprehensive system of performance and accountability measures which will allow for valid and reliable assessments of student and teacher performance as a basis for national and international comparisons." [emphasis mine] (NIEF, 1992) p.1.

And further

The standards achieved by students, schools and school systems in key areas of knowledge and competence should be measured and reported against a framework of national standards. [emphasis mine] (NIEF 1992) p 1.

It is not difficult to imagine the transmogrification of "National Curriculum Profiles", to "National Subject Competency Frameworks", should the NIEF, and other powerful lobby groups, manage to shift the locus of control over the national profiles project away from educators. What I am suggesting is that the impetus for educational change spearheaded by the Finn-Mayer-Carmichael reforms, and followed by the National Curriculum project is driven by an industrial efficiency concept of education which will shape the social and cultural content of school curricula in the future. Specifically I am concerned about the centrepiece of the National Curriculum, the Profile Statement, as a potential instrument for conformist federal bureaucratic control of the content and practice of Arts Education.

CRITICISM OF GENERAL EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

There are two levels at which analysis of current developments in education are appropriate. I will briefly examine two macro issues, then focus more specifically upon some concerns which relate directly to the arts. The macro-issues have to do, first with the definition of the national educational problem which has given rise to the need for a solution, and second with the solution itself.

How is the Educational Problem Defined?

Let me start with the problem. It is an axiom of policy development that policy agendas are framed to deal with specific problems. Policy analysis has as much to do with examination of the way in which the problems are defined (and who defines them) as it has to do with analysis of the proposed solutions to those problems. There is no question that the educational reforms already underway indicate government definition of a problem which is anchored in an industrial context. The solutions to that problem are built upon efficiency principles derived from economic discourse. Underpinning the competency movement lies a reified definition of

Australia's economic context which allows no possibility for competing constructions of the problem. "In this sense, the definition of the policy problem, as well as its solution, is magisterial (Bordieau and Passeron 1977), presented from a position of authority in a unidirectional way to students, teachers, other educators and the community generally" (Porter, Fazal, Knight, Lingard 1992).

A coherent educational rationale has not been provided for the current initiatives, nor has the particular educational problem being addressed ever been clearly articulated (Kennedy 1992). The political and industrial agenda, on the other hand, has been made very clear. It is claimed that current educational practice is too rigid producing workers who do not meet the needs of industry. The problem with this argument is the implication that graduates from the education system who are more "appropriately" prepared to meet the needs of industry will, in fact, find employment simply because they are more appropriately prepared. Where will these jobs come from? Perhaps I am missing an important piece in the logic of the argument.

I am unconvinced that Australia's balance of trade problem will be solved by the educational reforms we now face. The Pappas, et.al. (1991) report Innovation in Australia for the Industry Research and Development Board makes fascinating reading. One of the major conclusions of that report is that "Australian industry as a whole is unable to capitalise on the results of a significant proportion of research and development. The capability of our science base and our ability to produce technically successful inventions are not the critical factors limiting our technology-based competitiveness. [emphasis mine]"p19. In fact, Pappas and associates found that of AIRDIS funded innovations started between 1976 and 1986 technological barriers were rarely the major cause of project failures. The causes of project failures related to factors such as market judgement; market access and market share; manufacturing expertise; and financial resources. Australia has a long history of highly innovative projects that failed, not as the consequence of a shortfall in the knowledge base or technical expertise, but for problems of infrastructure, market access, financial resources, or political intervention. As Donald Horne (1989) has pointed out, Australian scientists' pioneering work in computing, transistors, wet-colour photocopying, and black-box flight recorders were all discontinued in the past because the Australian government withdrew support in the belief there was no future for such developments. I believe there is evidence that our education system does deliver the knowledge and skills base, the real source of our economic problems lie elsewhere.

What is the Solution?

My second criticism of current educational reforms is related to the solution proposed in the form of "competencies." There has been some recent criticism of the competency concept as an appropriate tool for educational reform (Reid 1992, Porter et.al. 1992). Porter and her colleagues in a recent paper argued,

"The idea that there is one 'single best answer' to what are extremely complex teaching and learning, as well as education and work issues, is neither realistic or practicable. Hanging all reform on a single organizing concept through which all education and training in Australia is to transform itself into worker productivity and career advancement, as well as national economic development, is a rationalist's dream which is unlikely to come true. ...Perhaps it is time to reconsider the educational agenda in terms of its cultural and social, as well as its economic, orientation" p 57-58.

What are the problems with a competency approach to education? On the face of it I have no objection to the notion of "competence" in education... or the arts. After all who would advocate incompetence? The problem arises in the translation of competence into operational terms for curriculum purposes. How is it defined? There are several interpretations offered by Finn, Mayer, the NTB, NOOSR, and the AVCC. The Mayer definition is broader than the Finn statement. It focuses upon outcomes recognizing that performance is underpinned not only by skill, but by knowledge and understanding as well. Competence, according to Mayer, involves both the ability to perform in a given context the capacity to transfer knowledge to new tasks and situations. The NOOSR and AVCC definitions are somewhat less specific.

By and large though "the general perception remains that competence is being addressed in a way that envisages the accumulation of additive or functional skills that are directly observable and measurable against an established set of criteria" (Watts 1992 p2); which brings me to the most serious shortcoming of the competency movement. It assumes a conception of education and training that is premised upon the separation of means and ends. It is an assembly line concept typified by this comment from the Finn Report (1991);

"Educators in all sectors need only to focus on the desired outcomes and develop teaching approaches to suit" pxi.

Outcomes and standards are determined a-priori, a prototype is constructed (competency levels), instructional methods are selected to achieve the desired outcomes, the product is matched to the prototype at various quality control points along the assembly line (measurement and testing), and deviations are reported to the management. If there is a serious discrepancy at any point there is a callback and steps are taken to ensure consistency of product standard. The model is derived from industry.

In business, systems theories have facilitated more efficient approaches to manufacturing and marketing. For business managers concerned with profit margins the aim is to achieve maximum output from minimum input. The application of business practice to educational planning is what the definition of competency standards and subject profiling is all about. The assumption underpinning this model is that learning objectives can be

clearly and simply defined in performance terms, subject content can be divided into sequential units, and appropriate means prescribed to ensure the efficient delivery of these content units to students. In short, the best teacher is the one who is capable of teaching the greatest number of units of knowledge or skill to the largest number of students in the shortest period of time, using the least resources...given, of course, that achievement levels meet the specified standards.

The simplicity, neatness and efficiency of such an approach to education has understandable appeal to those influential committee members, with business backgrounds, who are responsible for shaping educational policy at the national government level. In the national curriculum context this simplistic, economic rationalist view of education has been applied.

Those who are not involved directly in arts classrooms do not understand the dynamic interplay of forces which shape the day-to-day lives of students and teachers. They do not understand the uncertainties, complexities, and subtleties of arts classroom practice, and it is understandable that an efficiency approach to teaching will appeal to them. The problem is that efficiency approaches to a task suit some tasks and not others. They are appropriate for the manufacture of cars, refrigerators, microwave ovens, and other mass produced items, but they are not appropriate to education, and I submit they are particularly inappropriate for arts education.

ARTS EDUCATION REFORMS

Defining the Problem

Let me turn now to the specific arena of arts education. What is the problem for arts education the national curriculum reforms will provide? It seems to me that the arts have been swept along on the coat-tails of the general reforms I have just described, and risk reconstitution to serve industrial/economic goals unrelated to the arts themselves. Should the same solutions be applied to the arts as are applied to the rest of education? Or is it possible that the wrong solution has been provided to solve the wrong problem, or even a non-problem?

If we look at the Arts industry, the most recent figures from the Arts Council (1991) show employment in the Arts increased by 21% compared to 3.5% growth overall within Australia in the period 1981 to 1986. This growth pattern was surpassed by only one other industry group, that of Finance at 24.6%. During the same period employment in the manufacturing industries decreased by 12.4%. While these figures are now six years old, it must be remembered that they were the figures which contributed to the initiation of our current educational reforms...specifically the manufacturing industry figure.

More recent estimates place the value to the Australian economy of arts related goods and services at \$6,165 million for 1990-91, an increase from 1987 of 43%. This represents a value to the total Australian economy of

more than twice that of pharmaceutical products and about a third more than beer and alcoholic beverages. By these measures, the arts industry is clearly one of the most robust in the country. There appears to be little justification for educational reforms to the arts driven by evidence of non-performance of the arts industries within the Australian economy. In any case most arts educators would probably argue that the major focus for education in the arts should not be vocationally directed anyway, and that the personal, social-cultural benefits are more important. Nevertheless, the solution applied to the rest of education to repair the manufacturing industries, like a cure-all universal snake-oil remedy, will also be applied to the arts whether they need it or not!

Criticism of the Solution - Subject Profiles

What then are the shortcomings contained within the solution? The most significant problem, in my view is the notion of subject profiling in the arts, for two reasons - political and educational. The political danger, as I hinted before, is that subject profiles could well be used in the future, in ways the developers could never have imagined in their wildest dreams. At the moment the project retains an educational focus. However, the extent to which the writers will be forced to match level D statements (post compulsory years) of achievement levels with the Mayer Committee recommendations, regarding work related competencies and grade related performance indicators, is not yet clear. Given the broad pattern of reforms which I described before, I am inclined to believe that connection is inevitable. If it is, then the flow-back effect to the other three bands (and six levels of attainment) will also follow, and the arts will be locked into a full blown competency model.

The time to resist subject profiling in the arts has passed long ago, it appears now to be inevitable that we will have an Arts Profile by this time next year. To return to the analogy with which I began, it is much too late for an abortion.

So how can we deal with the infant subject profile when it arrives? Putting aside the political issues what are the educational difficulties posed for the arts?

The first is the reductionist nature of such statements. The arts have been defined as comprising five strands, art and design, dance, drama, media, and music. Each strand contains four components common to each, Transforming, Presenting, Past and Present Contexts, Criticism and Aesthetics. Each strand is divided into four bands of schooling roughly equivalent to lower and upper primary, and junior and senior secondary school. The subject profiles will describe eight successive stages of performance (two for each band), reflecting typical achievement levels for each component within each of the five strands. Statements of achievement levels will be brief and accompanied by exemplars to assist teachers to recognize when students are achieving at each level.

Clearly the statements of achievement levels (I prefer to call them performance descriptors) will be reductionist in the extreme. It is absurd to expect that the qualities which characterise achievement within disciplines as complex as the arts can be authentically captured within in a few sentences at any level. To describe even coarse-grained distinctions between achievement levels across the range of possibilities, strand by strand, will atomise the arts and deny an alternative view of learning. Worse, is the implication that once stated, student achievement levels in the arts (and their exemplars) will represent all that is to be learned in the arts at school.

The problem is particularly terrifying for the Transforming (performance) areas. Take the single strand of art/design for example. Within this strand students may legitimately engage in "transforming" through drawing; printmaking; painting including various techniques surfaces forms of imagery and media; film; computer generated imagery including still, animated, video and possibly interactive video; sculpture; jewellery; fashion design; illustration; architecture and various facets of environmental design; product design in wood plastics, glass, metal, electronics; not to mention multi-media expression; and the list goes on. Each of these sub-strands contain elements which reflect their own particular integrity. A learner performing at a high level in architectural design will exercise very different judgements, requiring different skills and knowledge, to the student producing a computer animation. Those skills and knowledge that are common between the two will be at a level of generality which does not contribute to the determination of excellence in terms of the learning outcome in each case. In other words a good idea well executed in architectural design has to be judged on very different terms than a good idea well executed in computer animation.

To write attainment levels that purport to effectively characterise the learning which typically takes place at eight different levels throughout the years of schooling is to set up a situation of double jeopardy. A statement which is sufficiently general to accommodate the range of possibilities within each strand of the arts will be meaningless, while a statement that is sufficiently precise to describe levels of achievement appropriate to one set of possibilities will exclude more than it includes. To attempt to describe all possibilities at all levels for all strands will result in a document larger than the Sydney telephone book, with obvious limitations of utility.

The second problem with the concept of a profile statement is that it is an instrument which serves to separate means and ends in education. The association of accountability with performance standards sets up those standards as subject goals for each level of schooling. While it might be appropriate in the manufacture of automobiles to focus upon the standard of the product, and to select the means to achieve pre-stated ends, learning in the arts involves a more complex interaction of means and ends. The pathway through a particular production project in the arts taken by one student will not necessarily be the same as that taken by another student,

because the relationship of ends and means have to be constantly reconsidered. It is not appropriate that a model typified by pre-specified outcomes and exemplars should drive arts education, but reasoned insights, thoughtful deliberations and seasoned experience exercised in the context of each student's situation.

A third problem with profile statements is that they will to be written. The translation of aesthetic qualities inherent in aural, performance, or visual qualities into written form is essentially a problematic exercise. The shortcoming here is the same as the problem associated with the behavioural objectives movement of the late Sixties. There is a very real danger that the standards that can be easily written, will be written, and that the complex, subtle, and tacit outcomes that are most valued in the arts will be ignored. Profile statements will trivialize the arts if the major effort in their writing is directed towards readily observable and assessable performance indicators at the expense of the more significant outcomes of arts learning. In short, words do not easily and effectively characterise the qualities we look for in our search to identify attributes and performance standards in the arts.

A fourth problem with profile statements in the arts is that once they are written and become part of the national bureaucratic structure they will be locked in time. The arts are dynamic disciplines which respond, particularly at the senior levels, to changes and developments taking place within the professional arts arena outside of schools. It is also obvious that we are living in a time of incredibly rapid social, technological, ideological, and economic change (Boughton 1989) which has a direct effect, year by year, upon the content and practice of arts education. It is hard to imagine that by the time a student of the arts has moved from achievement level one to achievement level eight, through twelve years of schooling, that the statements and exemplars representing level eight would still be relevant or typical of achievement at that level. It is also difficult to imagine commonwealth resources being provided for regular review of the statements and exemplars.

A fifth problem is that there is no adequate data base to support the development of either prescriptive or descriptive profile statements appropriate to the arts. Most developmental typologies in the arts are based upon untutored patterns of development. Factors which have to be taken into account in the description of students' trajectory through a "typically well taught" arts programme must take into account a host of variables including the nature of different student cohorts, available resources (particularly time), the number of individual arts subjects studied and balance of time allocated to each, the nature of curriculum structure, degree of specialization, entry points to the discipline, opportunity for choice through individualised programs, and the nature of the relationship of theory and practice.

Let me illustrate with some examples of these difficulties. In the arts we deal with two typical cohorts of students. Those with extensive backgrounds

of private instruction outside of the normal curriculum, such as that undertaken by students interested in dance or instrumental music performance, and those without. In music particularly the experienced group at senior levels tends to outnumber the inexperienced groups. What is the typical achievement level in dance and instrumental performance, or should it be necessary to define alternative patterns for different cohorts? The Senior Secondary Assessment Board in South Australia has this year recognized that Dance and Music students possess atypical profiles as a consequence of long-term extra-curricula tuition and should not suffer penalty through grade discounting to bring their high achievement scores in line with typical achievement scores in other subjects. This is a long standing debate within the field and will need to be accounted for in any profile description.

What about the time available for arts study? Any description of student achievement through twelve years must be based upon an assumption about time available to students. If the profile purports to indicate typical performance levels then available time for study will bear direct relationship to those levels incrementally through the years of schooling. Is there a typical national pattern, and do we have sufficient data to assume an optimum allocation? Will the profile reflect an ideal, an average, or a basic minimum expectation of time availability? Other obvious assumptions that must be made relative to resource issues relate to levels of funding, and will have direct relationship to possibilities regarding media and materials to support specific learning expectations.

Related to the time issue is a complex set of assumptions regarding patterns of study for students. Will the profile assume all students will study all the arts for all the years of primary education at Bands A and B? If so what assumptions are made about the time available for each? If this assumption does not hold then what is the typical pattern? Clearly the sequence through the primary years, and the time available should make a significant difference to expectations of achievement levels?

What about the influence of teacher qualifications and backgrounds. Are the subject profiles to be determined in the basis of an assumption that Bands A and B are taught by generalists, or is the pattern to be constructed upon an assumption of specialist instruction? If it is the latter then clearly the levels of attainment throughout the range should be significantly higher than if generalist instruction is assumed, provided the profile is, in fact, predicated upon the notion of systematic progression towards increasing levels of competence.

Will the profile document reflect an assumption of curriculum structure that is a "staircase model" or a "spiral structure". That is, systematic progression demonstrating acquisition of pre-requisite skill and knowledge, stage by stage, or the revisitation of important themes at increasing levels of complexity and depth as students progress through the discipline (Gardner 1989). Will the assumptions be the same for each of the art strands, and importantly what is the typical national pattern?

Will the profile statements at level D be based upon an assumed learning pattern of continuous study from Level A? If so to what extent will level D standards reflect students' opportunity to undertake an unbroken pattern of study nationally. I am concerned here about the extent to which students opt into arts study at different points during their secondary experience? Is a continuous pattern typical for all strands, and if it is not, what will the level D achievement levels mean?

To what extent will the subject profiles reflect opportunities for students to design their own learning patterns? Modular programs, such as the SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) Music program enable students to track through specific specializations, such as history and criticism, or instrumental specializations? The effect of multiple patterning of modular study can have the effect of broadening the range of possible outcomes, increasing standards within narrowly defined units of study, and reducing the links between those units. For example a student choosing to specialise with three modules of music theory in Years Eleven and Twelve will develop significantly different competencies to the student who chooses to specialise with three modules of individual instrumental performance. What is the national pattern with respect to modular study?

Finally what assumptions will be reflected in the profile regarding the nature of the relationship between theory and practice. The balance of time spent in each area will clearly affect levels of achievement. Will the statements of achievement assume engagement in both areas, and in what proportion? What is the national pattern? Is there a "typical" pattern?

An interesting sequel to this question is the degree of connection assumed to exist between theory and practice. In South Australia the Year 12 PES Art results indicate no correlation between the theory and practical grades, whereas the Music results demonstrate high correlation. Is this a problem for the integrity of Art as a discipline, and to what extent is this pattern reflected nationally.

I could go on. My point is that the research has not been done to support development of a descriptive typology of student achievement in the arts, and that if it was done a multitude of patterns would be revealed. What will the arts profile actually describe when it arrives in July next year?
RESEARCH ISSUES

Finally, what are the research issues arising from the National Curriculum and Profile Statement? I can suggest four sets of research issues.

First is the perennial set of philosophic debates concerning the nature of the individual arts and their relationship to each other. The search for adequate prescriptive theories will continue irrespective of the national curriculum framework. Two key points of tension in the Draft Document (Formal Consultative Draft, Oct 15 1992) deserve immediate analysis and debate. One is the connection of art and design within a single strand. The traditional function of design has been to serve the needs of clients

usually in the context of the marketplace, while visual art has tended to perform more personal and reflective roles, often contributing to socially critical debate.

The other point of tension is the force-fit of the four curriculum components "Transforming", "Presenting", "Past and Present Contexts", and "Criticism and Aesthetics" to all five curriculum strands. There is a clear distinction between visual and performing arts in the component called "Presenting". There is no evidence in the literature of a substantial sequence of content sufficient to justify the identification of "Presenting" as an component of learning for Art/design in its own right. At best it may be an integral, but minor subset of content contained within "Transforming" and "Criticism and Aesthetics". There is no question of its significance as an independent entity to the Performing Arts. In my view it exists within the curriculum structure for political reasons, and is no more than a palliative measure to provide a superficial appearance of cohesion between the visual and performing arts. This issue is worthy of sustained critical analysis, although I believe the attempt to develop art/design profile statements for this component will reveal its limitations.

The second set of research issues addresses the questions I raised before in terms of gathering of descriptive information related to the practice of arts education in Australia. This kind of data base would provide at least some evidence for better judgement in curriculum development. Answers to questions about study patterns, curriculum structures, teacher qualifications, time and resource allocations, typical outcomes, student choice and individualized programs, typical student cohorts, the relationship of theory and practice, and so on would at least provide a basis for judgement. Even more useful would be the collection of electronic records of student products and performances at each level. New technologies such as CD-ROM now enable the efficient storage and recall of various configurations of images and sounds that enable comparisons of student achievements in the arts that have previously been impossible. If we have to have profiles and exemplars CD ROM Data Bases may play a productive role.

A third set of research issues could focus on an examination of assessments practices, particularly portfolio analysis, in the states and territories. A sustained examination of centralised assessment procedures at the year twelve level in the first instance would be most illuminating, and a necessary pre-requisite to the determination of a national subject profile if we have to have one. It is my guess that agreement will be hard fought, even at the level where most assessment effort has been directed on a state by state basis over the past fifteen years.

A fourth research focus should be developed in the area of arts education policy analysis. Arts educators are typically slow to respond to major policy initiatives. The current developments have drawn remarkably little critical response. Effective lobbies depend upon good critical analysis.

Although most of what I have said here has been cautionary there are some positives. I believe the proposed national curriculum will spark a national debate with a degree of vigour that can only be good for the arts. While it is useful to strive for transferability of student achievement between states and territories, diversity must be preserved in the arts at all costs. This curriculum initiative has been imposed in a magisterial top-down fashion. Without the acceptance and whole-hearted support of schools, teachers, and local administrators it will be stillborn unless arts educators choose to resuscitate it. The choice is ours.

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GLOSSARY

AEC: Australian Education Council is comprised of the Ministers for Education in all states of the commonwealth.

AVCC: Australian Vice Chancellors Committee

MOVEET: Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training. Responsible for oversight of industry training within the country. MOVEET and the AEC often work together to achieve an overall approach to education training and industry.

NBEET: National Board of Employment Education and Training. Advises the Commonwealth Minister for Employment Education and Training. It is comprised of four councils; the Schools Council, the Employment and Skills Formation Council, The Higher Education Council, and the Australian Research Council.

NTB: National Training Board. A Public company established by MOVEET to provide and accredit vocational education and training across Australia in the context of national competency standards. Its role includes assistance to industry in the development of competency standards, and approval of those standards when developed.

NOOSR: National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition. Assists professions in the development of competency standards, and maintains a register of professional competency standards as they are developed. The professional skills, and qualifications, of migrants (such as teachers) are assessed against these standards.