

Nationalism,
Public Formation and Art Education

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The public formation of education, and art education in particular has recurrently been influenced by the perceived interests of government. The dominant voices in government have most recently been described as economically rationalist. In this paper I will argue that a National Curriculum in the Arts serves the interests of these voices in two distinct, yet interconnected ways. They are : (1.) in the economically rationalist interest in efficiency, models and organisation, and (2.) as an expression of nationalism. It will be argued that art education has little to gain from a National Curriculum statement.

At the local, national and international level education is being reshaped by the imperatives of government in the guise of curriculum change or reform. In New South Wales educators prepare to accommodate new curriculum documents and the demands of the National Curriculum in concert with recent experiences of intensification through the increasing accountability of education to economic values.

This paper argues for a more critical analysis of the concept of nation(al) in the national curriculum. I am interested in bringing together two theoretical positions to problematise the idea of nation in the national curriculum. This paper is based on current research toward understanding the framing and cultivation of art education as it relates to political economy and public formation. I place art education within culture as a potent force in the representation and appearance of a society and not just as an instrument to deliver culture. The theoretical positions of Gramsci and Althusser that assume education reproduces society/culture and reciprocally is shaped by culture support this discussion. Art education is as much a force in shaping student and social conceptions of art, culture and identity, as it is in turn shaped by art, culture and identity.

Education, and art education, in its concern for the cultural, is very much a part of the invention and imagining of nation. I bring Benedict Anderson's theory of nationalism, with selective consideration of Fredric Jameson's writings on imperialism, and Michael Pusey's critique of economic rationalism to impinge on the national art curriculum as an idea, and as represented in The Brief for National Curriculum Statement and Profile in the Arts (Emery and Hammond, June 18 1992).

The structure of this paper is in three parts. The first section details my conception of curriculum as a culturally constructed critical practice. This is central to subsequent discussions of economies and nation.. This is followed by consideration of how economic rationalism or neo-classical economic theories have influenced the intellectual climate of government decision making to have a National Curriculum, and the form and values of the National Curriculum. The third section engages nationalism with the idea of a National Curriculum and how identity formation, so central a theme in histories of Australian art, is defined and effected through the brief for the arts curriculum statement ;

All nationalisms have a metaphysical dimension, for they are all driven by an ambition to realise their intrinsic essence in some specific and tangible form. The form may be a political structure or a literary

tradition (Seamus Deane 1990 p.8).

In identifying nationalism as metaphysical in form, Deane's examples of politics and literature can be extended; The form may be a political structure or a literary tradition or a national curriculum.

The late 1980s in Australia were characterised by the particular coincidence of an emergent post-colonial interest in the identity and meaning of the nation-state, the waning of an economic boom and the onset of recession. The distribution in wealth is undergoing change with a diminishing middle class and an increasing binary in the distribution of wealth, or wealth and poverty. These social and political forces operate within the educational and curriculum developments as increased post-compulsory secondary schooling and tertiary enrolments, and the accelerating demands for an economically relevant and vocational curriculum, exemplified by the Carmichael report. In this paper these contingencies cluster around two quite opposite theoretical positions. They are, on the one hand, the assumptions of agreed values, of something common

and essential in a nation and its economy and schools, that underpin nationalism and a national curriculum. This is expressed in the Brief as a concern for common ways of conceiving curriculum. On the other hand, local concerns, be they local to a teacher or an individual system or group, seek the very opposite to that which could be called common. Difference and distinction typify this position, they are a socially and culturally accountable register against which curriculum and schools can conceive a regional, peculiar and even dissenting conception of education.

I will further argue that curriculum, and a National Curriculum in the arts, or any other subject, cannot then be conceived as a process of identifying a curriculum model, particular approaches and content, without actually determining the choices that teachers have about the understandings that are possible within that subject or subjects. My hunch is that in the guise of an assertive repositioning of art education as one essential thread in the national curriculum, art as a subject in 'the arts', reflects extrinsic values, including those of nationalism and economic rationalism, rather than representing itself as advancing conceptions of the intrinsic values of artistic knowing. These extrinsic values are more concerned with uniformity and by implication control (hence the importance of assessment and credentialling), whilst the intrinsic values of artistic knowing utilise specificity and diversity. In an analogous way it could be argued that nationalism, economic rationalism, the arts and the national curriculum are nomothetic rather than idiographic in kind.

Curriculum

The model or framework of curriculum that is the platform for developing the National Curriculum statement combines traditional models and more recent school based curriculum development with statements of purpose, or aim, activities and processes, identified as components and cross-cultural perspectives. In arguing this framework, the National Curriculum invites teachers and syllabus writers to develop specific plans as appropriate to their subject and their setting. The National Curriculum project adopts the

view that parts or layers of curriculum texts can be defined in one place and the resolution and use of the curriculum be meaningfully completed by students and teachers in other places.

The persistence of this traditional binary conception of curriculum, where the teacher is the instrument of an externally devised curriculum text, denies the reflective voice of the educator. The conception of curriculum adopted by this writer is of practice, reflection and critique rather than traditional models. Although curriculum texts should provide coherent and meaningful conceptions and relationships of curriculum components, the choices made and the actions taken by teachers make curriculum replete. Thus, curriculum can be conceived as a social practice whereby educators enact art educational praxis through knowledge.

The brief for the national curriculum statement in the arts adopts a structuralist framework that has been readily acknowledged as derivative of Harvard's Project Zero. The response to a national art curriculum has not been one of renewing, deepening and enriching theory, nor the innovation of a new and contemporary view of curriculum and art education coupled with an infusion of the peculiarities of local knowledge and concerns. The national curriculum statement has been identified as articulating that which can be seen as common and fundamental, national, agreements. The mapping and consultative process resulted in collecting information, resources and opinion rather than of initiating discussions of possibilities and means of changing art education.

The assumption of commonality presents a dilemma for the arts and art education in particular. Curriculum practices and art education are strengthened by diversity and the variousness of theoretical perspectives that articulate ways of understanding. The expressed purposes of the arts statement include, in 2.2, "a common view of arts learning ... a common language... a common basis for curriculum resource development" (Emery and Hammond 1992 p.3). Such insistence on the ordinary, the widespread and the familiar invites a reduction of the subject art, and through the further negotiation with other subjects in an arts model an additional diminution of opportunities for art education. The common obstructs the value of diversity, a diversity that includes the specificity of curriculum

participants to interpret and enact local meanings for that particular community through a range of theoretical frameworks.

Teachers can subvert the technical and instrumental values of curriculum documents to realise a dialogue with their own practical and theoretical understanding of art education. Current theory in curriculum rejects the binary relationship of form and content where a distinction can be made as to what is taught and how it is taught (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Grundy 1987; Cornbleth 1990; Smith and Lovat 1990; Young 1990). This is at variance with the idea presented in the National Curriculum that the curriculum brief will "identify what should be taught rather than how it should be taught" (Hannan and Wilson, 1992, p.2). This type of curriculum policy positions the teacher as an adaptor and innovator of ways to convey certain knowledge, thus disempowering the teacher, limiting the subject and negating the active involvement of the student in their own learning. The

reflective authority of the teacher is subsumed within a regime of technical rigour.

In the arts brief a restrictive basis is demonstrated by an exclusive dependence on positivist models of artistic understanding where the arts are presented as symbol systems and known only through processes. The nominated processes, described as the four interconnected strands of "transforming... presenting... developing understanding of criticism and aesthetics... developing understanding of past and present contexts" are "fundamental experiences" (Emery and Hammond 1992 p.12). If this is the content then how art can be known and understood is circumscribed, being restricted to psychologistic processes that are dependent on activities. The processes do not recognise an epistemological base to art and they make no statements towards understanding the value of the arts as knowledge. There is no information about how teachers or students can identify the significance of these activities. The current review process of the Visual Arts Syllabus 7 - 10 in New South Wales addresses these types of concerns. A National Statement which continues to deny that art is a kind of knowledge, as the New South Wales position seeks to articulate, does not create the conditions for "a common view of arts learning and teaching in Australian schools" (Emery and Hammond 1992 p.3).

The development of the arts statement has been through the combined process of colleges of evaluation and an interpretation of the structuralist privilege of art and arts as symbol systems. Rather than address the nature of curriculum and identify where authority is embedded in the curriculum the National Curriculum is preoccupied with what goes into the curriculum. A curriculum document is not a neutral text with a form separate and removed from the content and its participants. I would argue that the choice not to innovate a new art or arts curriculum shows that the imperative in the national curriculum is more related to the external forces of nationalism and educational responsibilities to the economy than art education. Thus the Brief for National Curriculum Statement and Profile in the Arts must be sited in this broader context.

Economic Rationalism

For the purposes of this paper I am interested in Michael Pusey's description of economic rationalism and the placement of education policies within state and federal economic policies. Much of the authority of economic rationalism comes from the associations made with the word rational; associations of a logical, reasonable and sensible, even objective, theory. However, rational includes rationalise, which becomes the efficiency driven reduction, the paring down and the reorganisation of elements. Pusey contends that economic rationalism reduces the complex myriad of constituent values and practices of government and society to systems and models that deny the significance of the parts beyond an instrumental and interchangeable value to the economic principles of the system. Pusey says, "the economic rationalist reformers have recast themselves and the state as the servants of an 'economy...[that] obeys not an immanent logic of needs, but instead the need for an immanent logic'"(1991 p.178). The relationship of society and the economy mutates and "we find that this state apparatus is caught within projections of reality that give primacy 'the economy', second place to the political

order, and third place to the social order ... The tail that is the economy wags the dog that is society and this inversion forces consideration of how

and in what respects culture and identity can have any 'structure forming effects' "(1991 p.10). Economic rationalism or neo-classical economics translates human affairs into economic variables forming systems and models accounted for by profit and expenditure.

In a survey of key members of the Senior Executive Service of the Federal Government bureaucracy Pusey has identified the frames of reference against which government policy decisions are taken. In setting out the character of the dominant economic rationalism or neo-classical economics he isolates the prevailing political perceptions of schooling and education. Pusey provides a useful insight into the decision making processes that politicised education and moved it into an economically accountable framework. In the following discussion I identify the particular influence of naming (as an act of possession) and the rationalist interests in modelling and systematising as central to the processes and structure of the National Curriculum Project.

A distinct and significant change in the naming of educational responsibilities occurred during the current reign of the economic rationalists. The 'Bastille Day' (July 14, 1987) restructuring of the Department of Education into the Department of Education, Employment and Training was a clear restatement of the purposes of education. Education is here identified as being in need of renovation to more efficiently address the failing economy and increased unemployment statistics. Pusey says, The education system was a problem because it did not appear to be sufficiently attuned to the specific demands of the labour market ... the education system was defined by those people who saw it as problem principally, or solely, as a means of producing human capital, and, certainly, only in terms of its relation to the economic system (1991 p.35).

Economic rationalism produces systems that are able to respond to operational models that observe predictable and rule governed, lawlike regularities. Subjects in the curriculum become organised as they are seen to have the best fit. Further, the articulation of subjects into Key Learning Areas proposes a 'natural' relationship of knowledges and understanding. Both these references are Darwinian in kind, a theoretical position to which economic theory has recurrently been attracted. Phyllis Deane notes,

the social and political problems of an urbanising, democratizing nation were making them (economists) increasingly sensitive to contemporary attacks... It was thus heartening to be able to take from Darwin a 'scientific' justification for the assumption that systematic natural forces were at work to ensure the ultimate welfare of the highest form of life - mankind (1989 p. 125).

The naming of subjects as the arts in which art/visual arts and design, becomes the sibling of music, dance, drama and media signaled a reconception of subjects as linked through their creativity.

Economic rationalism can be conceived as influencing education in more ways

than financial constraints and fiscal responsibility. The curriculum as an arrangement of elements in a system reflects the immanent logic of organisational principles. The most acute representation and influence of economics is the inclusion in the Cross- Curriculum Perspectives of point 4.9 "Economic awareness and understanding". Alongside specific interest groups who seek to use education to readjust inequities - indigenous peoples, gender equity and literacy is the economy. The arts are diminished by their translation into the uncritiqued exhorting for the imperatives of economic recovery.

Nation and Nationalism

The terrifying possibility that Australia is only one quarter of the way through half a lifetime's preparation for, celebration of and recuperation from commemorations of competing Births of the Nation is a result of the way in which nationality is expressed in Australia. Certainly there is something obsessive about it, a determination to read the nation into every event, to ponder what might be said about the national character, a term which still has surprising currency in journalistic and academic debate (White 1988 p. 33)

A National Curriculum can be considered from a different, yet connected perspective to that of the economic rationalists. Nationalism is

interconnected with economic rationalism as it is very much the concern of government. However, where economic rationalism is instrumental and utilises largely positivist theories, nationalism is a concern for questions of existence and identity, "a curious amalgam of legitimate fictions and concrete illegitimacies" (Anderson 1990 p.95).

In *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread on Nationalism* (1987) Benedict Anderson describes a nation as an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship (1987 pp.15-16). For Anderson, nationalism through language and culture are part of the expression and representation of this necessary imagining. In this paper I am suggesting that a national curriculum is part of the Australian desire to define and become a first world nation-state. Education is central to how a nation wishes to define and reflect itself. This link between the community and education is discussed by Wilfred Carr (1991) who argues that conceptions of curriculum must be considered as nested within the broader values of education and that society. He says, "(E)ducation is only found embedded in the discourse, social relationships and practices of some particular form of social life" (Carr 1991 p. 184). A curriculum becomes the educational image of how a society wishes to see itself and be seen. Democratic practices and their connections with the social experiences and values of a community articulate the educative purposes of a curriculum. In this discussion of the British national curriculum Wilfred Carr argues for

a clear relationship between curriculum and these democratic values and practices. Indeed, many critiques of national curriculum initiatives focus on the educational evidence for the democratic values of the west. Richard White identifies the Australian preoccupation for the imagining of nation in *Inventing Australia*. (1981). Traditionally Australia as nation is represented as wars fought by heroic masculine symbols of strength. The most authoritative image in the identity formation of Australia is the Anzac, "the masculine ideal...the men in the trenches...(the) mythic figure of the Australian bushman" (Astbury 1992 p.68). The landscape and spaces that are crucial to nation are seen as vast and hazy expanses of lapis lazuli sky punctuated by golden suns and the curiously harsh, white light and unruly trees and leaves of the Australian bush. The history of painting is a history of nation constantly inventing itself, seeking to find a common history;

insurgent nationalisms attempt to create a version of history for themselves in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself, thereby producing readings of the past that are as monolithic as that which they are trying to supplant (Seamus Deane 1990 p.9).

Fredric Jameson places nationalism as synonymous with modernist imperialism arguing by example its literary representation as *Empire* in E. M Forster's *Howards End*.. For Jameson the understanding of nation(Empire) is an understanding of space. Interrogating Forster's opening paragraph Jameson says,

It is Empire which stretches the roads out to infinity, beyond the bounds and borders of the nation state, Empire which leaves London behind it as a new kind of spatial agglomeration or disease, and whose commercialism now throws up those practical and public beings like Mr. Wilcox (1990 p. 57).

Jameson, like Anderson defines nation as both a metaphysical and a cartographic construct. Seamus Deane further explains Jameson's nationalism. Deane says,

Fredric Jameson' ... pursues the contradiction, explored in his other works, between the limited experience of the individual and the dispersed conditions that govern it. In any imperial system, the subject, living in the home country, does not have any living access to the far-flung system that makes his or her subjective existence possible. Jameson argues that the attempt to achieve some coordination between private existence and the global, institutional apparatus has been the stimulus behind many of the experimental forms assumed by modern literature (1990 p.4)

Spaces and borders are part of the authority of nation in Australia, of terra nullius and repeated assertions of vast, red and empty interiors until recently forming and inventing Australia. Technological advances now link across the spaces. Spaces which are no longer infinite. The National Curriculum, along with satellite dishes, railways and air travel proposes another such community link.

The Australian constitutional provision for primary and secondary education is invested in the states and traditionally curriculum and assessment have been state responsibilities. In 1981 the concept of a national core curriculum led to the development of The Core Curriculum for Australian

Schools by the since abandoned Curriculum Development Centre located in Canberra. Curriculum Initiatives, a report of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) identifies the core curriculum document as antecedent to the current National Curriculum Project and notes the collaborative and national base to the National Curriculum and its various apparatus,

A conference of Directors-General in 1985 became a watershed in national collaborative developments. It specifically examined how best systems could deploy their collective strengths. A sub-committee was established to review the preferred role of the Commonwealth in curriculum development and how the AEC might in future shape national priorities on issues of agreed importance. The outcome was a generic paper prepared by the Director-General of Queensland on National Collaborative Effort in Curriculum Development in Australia. That 1985 meeting also convened the Directors of Curriculum as a key working group and gave them the task of identifying national priorities and common interests. The CDC participated in the role of facilitator and sometimes sponsor, with a status similar to other individual systems (pp.2-3).

This excerpt clearly isolates the importance of "national priorities and common interests" as the connections between educational systems and the advantage in a National Curriculum project.

National policy projects by governments in both first and third world economies are believed central to their capacity to achieve as modern nation states. These policy and review statements often appear with nation in their title, and are exemplified by A Nation at Risk : The Imperative for Educational Reform, released in 1983 by The National Commission on Excellence in Education in the United States.of America. A Nation at Risk recommended a series of improvements to the education system in the United States in the belief that education was the site of both the problem and the solution to the perceived fall in literacy and numeracy standards and reduced international competitiveness in science and technology. More importantly, democracy was also at risk as the final years of the Cold War were played out. In the 'new world order' of 1992, the preoccupation by government with technological (hence space and military) superiority has shifted to trade, tariff and currency competitiveness. Education continues to be perceived as one focus in the achievement of such competitiveness. The current Australian concern for a national curriculum can be understood and thus implemented differently when these national and economic interests are considered. Art education can no longer make a virtue of being above this political fray, however convincingly our history shows we have been shaped and formed by these forces. Education is more than the dissemination of conceptions of identity, the experience of schooling and the possibilities afforded through schooling are constitutive of nation. The Brief for National Curriculum Statement and Profile in the Arts states in

3.2 The arts in Australia (that), The National Curriculum Statement in the Arts will demonstrate and acknowledge the following key characteristics and roles of the arts in Australian society :

3.2.1 The pivotal role of the arts in the shaping of Australian identity pluralistic but predominantly English speaking society (1992 p.4).

What do these references to identity imply? Why is Aboriginal identity the single example? Peter Sutton is helpful on this point. Sutton notes the ascendant role of the commodification of Aboriginal artworks, most especially dot paintings, in the formation of national identity. He argues that the "decline of the pastoral myth of colonial Australia, a welcome development to a lot of us, has been partly matched by the rise of

Aboriginal culture as a mark of national identity" (1992 p.6). However, Sutton continues by pointing out the imagined and distorted nature of such representations of identity. Sutton says, The gap between the intellectual origins of most Aboriginal 'art' and the culture that buys and collects it and uses it to promote the national image itself is central to this problem. Differences of understanding are one thing, but universalised false consciousness versus local knowledge is something else. Especially as a token of Australia as a nation state on the international stage, Aboriginal images have become imagined art, in the service of an imagined nation (1992 p.7).

In shaping and representing identity Sutton suggests a less Orientalised approach, an approach that comes to terms with the lived reality and experience of different social and cultural groups. For Sutton to speak of identity with examples of Aboriginal culture, especially visual arts culture is to perpetuate the imagined, desired and remote exoticising of identity.

The repositioning of images of nation, of cultural history, has, in recent years recognised groups of artists working in locations other than the urbanised eastern coastal fringe and rewritten 'the story of Australian art' to include artists in South and Western Australia and more recently the dramatic inclusion of large numbers of successful women artists in Joan Kerr's Dictionary of Australian Artists (1992).

Conclusion

In this paper I have introduced two theoretical perspectives derived from extrinsic interests to curriculum discourse. Economic rationalism has exercised a process of reduction in conceptions of education, most especially art education as within the arts. Nationalism is the desire to articulate a sense of community amongst people through culture, language and I would argue, education. Art has been central to the imagining and inventing of nation and contributed to the shaping of identity. This identity continues to be formed through political conceptions of education and curriculum.

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- The debates about evidence for the nation-state - anthems, flags, monarchies, British history and tradition vs. contemporary Pacific and Asian Regionalism and trading and treaty partners - are widely canvassed in

the popular press.

Some art educators believe the presence of art in the National Curriculum offers a guarantee for success. It would be difficult to conceive of a National Curriculum as excluding art. The position of art amongst five arts locks art into a restrictive relationship. It is further interesting to note that the ACT is the only educational system that nominated the arts as representing 'cutting-edge' curriculum, see National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) Curriculum Initiatives, pp.9-10.

Amanda Weate (1992) "Agenda Setting for Research in Art Education : A

Discourse for Art Education" Australian Art Education, 16(1), in press.

I discussed the influence of Project Zero with Lee Emery at the New South Wales consultative meeting on March 18, 1992.

In 1991 the proposed sale of the Fairfax media group to the Tourang consortium including Kerry Packer was received by the public with dismay. Indeed, it brought together Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser, two adversaries from one of Australia's more painful political periods. It was feared that a reduction in the range of media ownership would limit and distort the possibilities for a diverse, pluralist media sensitive to local concerns and values. Such dismay should also be directed to the reduction and loss of diversity in art education through a national curriculum statement.

This is coherent with the stated framework of Project Zero, which is based on Nelson Goodman's structuralist theories.

See School of Art Education (1992) Papers: Occasional Seminars in Art Education 4, Art educational curriculum praxis : a time for collaboration, Paddington.

See Stephen Kemmis with Lindsay Fitzclarence (1986) Curriculum Theorising: Beyond Reproduction Theory, Victoria: Deakin University Press.

The relationship between economics and the arts and education demands more extensive research than this brief account. Firstly, by including economics with recognised groups suffering disadvantage economics is positioned as in need. This accepts only one interpretation of the recession. Secondly, there is no examination of the acknowledged contribution of the arts to the economy, nor tariffs and manufacturing, industry reform of management and industrial relations and the means by which economic figures are measured and reported.

Nation has shifted to the economy rather than the military and is now dominated by NAFTA, the Rome Treaty and Maastricht

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