

Art as an intervention mechanism to teach social skills to lower secondary school age children.

Elisabeth Betlem, Christ Catholic College - Clare Campus, Parramatta Diocese

**Rosalind H. Johnman Bolitho, University of New South Wales, College of Fine
Arts.**

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Abstract

Traditionally, behavioural problems have been explained from either a sociological or a psychological framework. However such exclusive frameworks ignore the interactional effects resulting from individuals within systems. Thus too often within the school system, educationists see curriculum and behaviour management as separate entities.

This paper reports on the findings of a project undertaken to create behavioural change amongst secondary school age students without subjugating curriculum demands. A socio-psychological model is used to explain the way the art process can instigate behavioural change within the social dynamics of the classroom.

This project focused on the psychological constructs involved in the adolescent search for identity. Amongst other developmental changes that occur during adolescence, the young person experiences a heightened period of creativity that may be seen as a response to the growing awareness of options, possibilities and potentials. Such awareness, in conjunction with changes in their social environment may lead to cognitive, emotional and social conflicts often not addressed in discipline based education. In this project the decisions demanded in creating the visual image mirror the choices made in an adolescent's educational, social and cultural experience.

Thus it was concerned with mapping the points of intersection between the individual and the social systems and highlighting the way that such an intersection may better determine alternative teaching practices.

Introduction

Ever since Socrates gathered his disciples at his feet in order to develop an interest in learning, education has been plagued by an inability to define its aims. Like the philosophy of postmodernism, education seems to encompass a wide range of often contradictory meanings, and there is much debate concerning its goals. Is its primary importance measured in terms of some statement of possible outcomes or does its significance lie in the process by which these outcomes are pursued? Now while such questioning is the very 'stuff' of postmodernist analysis it serves the cause of education less well. Indeed analysis of education from a post-modernist perspective has served only to further cloud the question that lies at the essence of society now just as it did years ago. Whom does education serve? Is there a primary client? If not, who orders the priority of goals and for whom? Is it possible to serve multiple goals?

This paper is concerned with an exploration of a model of education that addresses individual and social goals without sacrificing the academic integrity of the art education discipline. Specifically it describes a project designed to create behavioural change amongst secondary school adolescents without compromising curriculum demands. A social-psychological model is used to explain the way the visual arts process can instigate and support behavioural change within the social dynamics of the classroom.

In reality the questions of goals remain to vex educators. For now, just as centuries ago, the goals of education serve both private and public ends. And it is left to the practising teacher whose own sense of the purposes of education often sits awkwardly with both these private and public purposes, to juggle the demands in order to achieve the balance that they believe best serves the individual. For teachers, whatever value they may place on the other benefits of education, the primary purpose is to encourage the development of the individual person.

Certainly this entails developing skills that might be useful for employment; certainly in this view a 'fully developed person' will be a good citizen; and certainly an introduction to 'culture' is likely to be an important part of the process. These are however outcomes of education rather than the processes. The individual in context must still be the primary focus of attention. This however leaves the educationist with the dilemma of adapting to the changing needs of students who themselves are struggling to adapt to the changing demands of their society.

Educationists and the community alike are concerned by the apparent increase in the numbers of adolescents who engage in high risk behaviours, behaviours that compromise their health, endanger their lives and limit their chances to succeed in their adult lives (MindMatters, 2000). We all accept that adolescence is a natural period of experimentation and risk taking but some young people - and they come from all sections of the society - appear far more likely than others to adopt 'risky life-styles', life styles that are characterised by drug use, unprotected sexual behaviour, dropping out of school, and delinquent and generally anti-social aggressive behaviours.

Whether these 'at risk' youngsters can be identified before they engage in these behaviours is not the concern of this paper. Rather it is concerned with responses to the knowledge that they do exist and that they are a threat to the underlying goal of education: to allow individuals to fulfil their potential. For 'at risk' students not only fail themselves but are a testament to our failure as a society and as educators to acknowledge the personal and social roles of education to reflect on curricula so that it might better serve the needs of young people.

What is it then that has changed the adolescent experience so that it makes it so much more likely that adolescents will be at risk not only of failing at school but even more importantly of falling through the cracks of society. Traditionally, these problems have been explained from either a sociological or a psychological framework. However such exclusive frameworks ignore the interactional effects resulting from individuals within systems. Thus too often within the school system, educationists see curriculum and behaviour management as separate entities.

From the perspective of social psychology it is clear that behaviour and development are the outcome of an interaction between the adolescent and their environmental context, not of the context alone. The role of the setting is twofold. It influences the development of a person over time through experience, socialisation and exposure in various contexts and it also interacts with that person at any given time in influencing the specific behaviours that occur. So for adolescents the contexts of importance are those that have influenced their development to date and those in which they interact on a daily basis. As educationists we have little control over the former but it is both naïve and irresponsible to fail to take cognisance of our obligations in responding to the perceived consequences of a changed context.

Over the last two decades the micro systems and thus the context of adolescents have changed dramatically. For more and more young people the traditional micro systems of family, neighbourhood, church and culture no longer serve to provide the resources, the supports and the opportunities essential to healthy development (National Research Council, 1993). The rapidity of changes in technology has further limited employment and training opportunities. Furthermore the extraordinary mobility of the population in combination with these changes has aggravated the lack of permanencies that young people are now experiencing.

On one level, the adolescent is directly affected by family resources, community services, education opportunities and employment prospects. But on a more fundamental level, these factors affect the very foundations of adolescent attitudes, which then feed both off, and into their school behaviours. Lack of parental availability in combination with diminished access to recreational and social programs has further fuelled a growing sense of disenchantment amongst young people.

What then are challenges for adolescents? Both psychological and sociological theory accepts that the central task of adolescence is to develop a coherent sense of self. This 'self' is a response to the dramatic physical, sexual, emotional, social and cognitive changes that occur during this period. Whether adolescence is indeed a period of 'storm and stress' as suggested by G. Stanley-Hall, (1904) or is it a period of 'adolescent explosion' (Emunah, 1990, p.102), or whether it is merely a period of transition between childhood and adulthood, the qualitative changes in thinking encourage adolescents to both explore and to challenge their personal, social and educational contexts.

In their search for a workable and relatively consistent sense of self, the adolescent attempts to reconcile a number of opposing beliefs and attitudes. Erikson (1968) called this the challenge to establish an individual identity rather than experiencing the role diffusion that is inevitable when a young person understands for the first time that there are indeed possibilities and potentials of which they were previously unaware. These possibilities are however always tempered with constraints over which they may seem to have little control.

The adolescent seeks autonomy and independence but at the same time they are still under the supervision of parents and teachers. They are confronted with a changing body that may well not match the socially accepted body image. They are faced with the promises of

sexuality when fulfilment of this is often not possible. They are exposed to a variety of individual and peer group behaviours that may be at odds with what they had considered to be abiding values. They are tempted with educational and vocational goals but at the same time there may be a growing recognition that they may never have the mastery of content, and opportunity to have a real choice. In all, with a heightened awareness of reality and personal limitations, the mastery and control over their own lives may seem to be an impossible ideal but they are no longer prepared to accept the 'realities' that they have been encouraged to accept without question.

Related to these over-riding challenges are specific problems that may cause stress to adolescents. These include: a sense of loss of childhood role, conflicts with parents and teachers, opposing pressures from family or society and peer group, concern about popularity with peers, problems relating to drug and alcohol use, fear of ridicule or humiliation, the imaginary audience as described by Elkind, (1967), a lack of confidence, poor self esteem and sensitivity to ethno-cultural and socio-cultural differences and distress due to relationship breakdowns. (Frydenberg , 1997; MindMatters, 2000).

As awareness of these possibilities and potential limitations grows, so too does a variety of adolescent responses. Adolescent responses to the exposure to new possibilities will lead them to challenge the upholders of those systems, be they parents, social authorities or teachers. Often these challenges reflect the cognitive dilemmas that an adolescent is experiencing in resolving what seem to be opposing concepts. On other occasions the challenge takes the form of an angry refusal to accept that there can be a successful resolution. In such cases the adolescent is more likely to engage in an external conflict that serves to deflect the internal anxiety.

Where those such as Freud (1958) saw the adolescent stress as an inevitable consequence of the failure of the ego to be able to keep the instinctive id in check , and those cognitivists such as Piaget (1969) concentrated on the nature and implication of the changing formal operational cognitions, the early social psychoanalytic theorists including Erikson (1968) were more concerned with the means by which adolescents could resolve the conflicts in their particular context.

Following on from Erikson's theory, Marcia (1980) forewarned of two inappropriate adolescent responses. The first of these he called 'premature foreclosure', evidenced when an adolescent opts at an early stage to avoid any conflict by choosing an identity 'package'. Such foreclosure often manifests itself as a strength of resolve and character. But from a psychological perspective this strength is vulnerable like the strength of glass. (Marcia, 1980).

The second inappropriate response involves the adolescent in very obvious experimentation amongst roles and possibilities. It might seem that this young person is engaging in exactly what Erikson saw as an ideal form of exploration but the adolescent who never opts for any closure is seen by Marcia to be in a state of moratorium. This state, which results from the excessive use of the rationalisation that because their contexts are perpetually changing, adolescents must respond with infinite flexibility. This repeated failure to commit to values, beliefs, relationships or plans for the future, ultimately reinforces their sense of powerlessness.

In the same way that learned helplessness, as the abrogation of personal responsibility, results from an acceptance of what was once seen to be helpful but which finally has become an acceptance of dependence, the adolescent moratorium serves to 'save' the adolescent from decision making under the acceptable guise of preventing premature poor decisions. The problem comes of course in that the adolescent soon learns that decisions

cannot be made. If decisions are made too early as in foreclosure or not made at all in the case of a moratorium, then adolescents find that they have no strategies to manage the challenge of resolving their conflicting cognitions.

As long ago as 1950 Simmel (p. 422) pre-empted what was to become a more contemporary social psychological approach to individual behaviour when he argued that an increasing personal subjectivity was a consequence of an increased reliance on intellectual reasoning skills. Given the failure of society to provide a united set of standards and guidelines for the adolescent, Simmel argued that it is little wonder that there is a further increase in this subjectivity, which he called 'the blasé attitude'. Such an approach serves to defend the individual ego against the onslaughts of ever increasing uncertainties.

The essence of the blasé attitude consists in the blunting of discrimination...(but) the self-preservation ...is bought at the price of devaluing the whole objective world, a devaluation which in the end unavoidably drags one's own personality down into a feeling of the same worthlessness. (Simmel 1950, pp 414-415).

Simmel's argument was that in order to ward off the increasing sense of alienation that flows from this worthlessness, and in order to maintain some sense of 'self' an individual must "exaggerate (any sense of uniqueness) to remain audible even to himself" (Simmel 1950, p.422). Fifty years later, in a society that has become more self absorbed as a response to threats to both personal and group security, the sense of disillusionment has increased.

The response to increased alienation has been seen in the school system as increased behavioural disturbances and decreased commitment to societally determined 'educational' goals.

It is true that many of the stressors of a changed and changing personal and social context are not within the power of the school to change. However the consequences of them might be ameliorated at school if the manifestations of such anxiety are seen to be inappropriate coping responses to situations over which the adolescent feels they have no control, rather than merely inappropriate, anti-authority and anti-social behaviours.

Mau (1992) has attempted to define the concept of adolescent alienation from school citing the dimensions of alienation as: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness and social estrangement. It has been suggested by Rutter and Smith (1995) that these attitudes result from a lessening of the internal locus of control which itself stems from both intra-personal psychological factors such as the development in moral conceptual thinking and inter-personal factors such as the failure of the adolescent to internalise values (1995, p804).

In a report called *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* the Carnegie Corporation(1995) summarised the goals of young people if they wish to achieve a coherent sense of self. They included: the need to feel a sense of worth, the need to find a valued place in a constructive group, the development of a reliable basis for making informed choices, the knowledge of and ability to use available support systems, and to develop a sense of the future as something that holds the promise of real opportunities. (1995, pp 6-8).

Using these types of goals the MindMatters Consortium has developed 'Pointers for school-based action' (2000, p11). In order to counteract a sense of powerlessness, schools must provide opportunities for students to seek achievable, feasible goals, to search for appropriate information which might aid in the making of legitimate choices and the opportunities to test these choices in a safe and supportive environment. A sense of meaninglessness results from a lack of 'connectedness' between the present and the future.

Thus schools must find a way to bridge the present and the future in terms of the academic, the social and vocational aspects of the curriculum.

Schools can help counteract adolescent confusion concerning conflicting norms and expectations by providing opportunities for students to develop a sense of belonging in the classroom and to the school involved. At the same time schools need to allow time to expose them to the reality, that while differences in values will occur, they can better be resolved through developing tolerance to frustration rather than by failing to recognise the rationale for differing values.

Finally, the social estrangement that adolescents feel can be addressed by schools designing classroom activities that demand group connections. Teachers must recognise that adolescents behave in ways to camouflage their lack of trust in others and their own feelings of shame, guilt, ineptitude, embarrassment, ignorance or fear.

While failure to achieve these goals can lead to dramatic consequences, more often it is not the extreme behaviours that cause daily disruption in the classroom. Rather teachers are faced with a more general and pervasive set of behaviours that disrupt other students and cause stress to the teacher. Such behaviours include hitting, kicking, pushing and shoving others, saying mean and unpleasant things, making fun of others, calling others mean and hurtful names, ignoring or excluding others and starting rumours (Olweus, 1999, p31).

It must be noted that meeting students' needs does not mean that the needs and expectations of teachers' must be secondary. Meeting adolescents' needs does not mean that teachers cannot provide structure, expect high performances, or hold students accountable for their behaviour. Indeed this is the very type of environment that allows students to explore while feeling supported and safe (Jones and Jones, 2001). Students spend a quarter of their waking lives in a classroom in which teachers create the student 'work' atmosphere (Jones & Jones, 2001). Yet currently little is known about how students are affected in their relationships with each other as a result of spending a major part of their lives in classrooms (Rigby, 2002). The challenge for teachers then is how to incorporate the needs of the adolescent, the goals of the curriculum and the demands of the society in a curriculum that positively enhances adolescent resilience (Freydenberg, 1997) without compromising future academic and vocational opportunities.

Before discussing the specific program, it is worth exploring two further areas of research that impact on the development and practice of such a project. Firstly it is important to survey the possible theoretical frameworks for intervention when attempting to modify student behaviours. If classroom practice is not informed by valid philosophical frameworks then it will be impossible for the teacher to assess the effects of any interventions that might be attempted.

Secondly, it is worth exploring the congruence between the demands of arts practice in general and the demands of adolescents.

It is not possible in this paper to canvass all of the specific psychological, sociological and psycho-social models of intervention and analyse their relevance in the classroom. However it is worth noting that models such as those proposed by Hill (1958), Albee (1982) and more recently Frydenberg (1997), all suggest in some way that the unproductive behaviours of students can be seen as the result of a lack of skills (strategies) to counteract the influence of a particular situation and the personal meaning that they construct from that situation.

Thus the student who acts out during instructional time may lack skills in understanding or organising work, may not have skills in using self-talk to handle frustration, or may have no strategies to seek assistance. Similarly, the student who acts aggressively on the playground may lack the social skills needed to make appropriate contact with peers, to handle the inevitable frustrations and conflicts that arise in groups, and to solve problems.

Thus a 'social-cognitive skill deficient model' suggests that students need more than reinforcement for appropriate behaviour and negative consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Students need to be taught social and work skills in the same manner that they are taught reading or math skills. Students who are unable to read are not placed in isolation; they are given specialist help. However students who have behaviour problems tend to be removed from the class and placed in isolation with little or no instruction on how to behave appropriately (Jones and Jones, 2001).

These skills appear to have three main elements: cognitive, behavioural and environmental. The basic assumption is that they are learned behaviours and therefore can be taught using structured teaching methods. Given that adolescents spend nearly a quarter of their waking hours at school, it really seems incumbent on teachers to use the opportunity afforded by their curricula to teach an alternative way to behave.

The question then arises as to the possible role of the arts in helping adolescents to master strategies that can help them develop resilience to changing contexts and changing demands. In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey held that art is a form of experience. The arts refine, concentrate and intensify those same beliefs, feelings and responses that are integral to any experience. For him, making art is the process of restructuring experiences into coherent unities whereby those experiences are "embodied in a material which thereby becomes the medium for ... expression" (p. 273). The art making process will "concentrate and enlarge an immediate experience (so that) meanings imaginatively summoned, assembled and integrated are embodied in material existence that here and now interacts with the self" (p. 273).

Seventy years later, Elliot Eisner discussed the role of the arts in what he called the 'transformation of consciousness' (2001, p.7). For him, "the aesthetic is...inherent in our need to make sense of experience. This sense making is located in the choices we make in our effort to create order" (2001, p.30). The adolescents' need to express and communicate their internal world is great, but most have a genuine difficulty in adequately communicating emotional conflicts verbally.

At the same time, researchers have found that during adolescence the young person experiences a heightened period of creativity which is believed to come about due to the chaos and emotionality experienced, combined with the fact that aesthetic sensibility, as one type of conceptual thinking, develops at this time. Researchers have also noted that there is a decline of this unusual artistic activity at the close of adolescence, which seems to indicate that it is indeed a function of the adolescent process (Blos, 1962; Speigal, 1958; Linesch, 1988). Thus the visual arts can provide a form of expression, which can match the intensity, and complexity of the adolescent's experience, which is at the same time direct but non-threatening, constructive but acceptable (Emunah, 1990, p102).

If it is agreed that education is central to the development of the whole person and experience is the medium of education, then the role of the arts in education is to provide a process by which that experience is heightened and directed towards individual fulfilment. The arts encourage this exploration of the personal experience, not only via the perceptual senses, but through the integration of experience in context. This can be encouraged in the art classroom.

Through a wide variety of learning, and often kinaesthetic experiences, students learn how to think (ways of knowing). Eisner reflects these aims in describing the five cognitive functions of art, recognising both the conscious and sub-conscious aspects of the process.

Through engaging in the arts:

- Students learn how to notice the world.
- Students use imagination as a means of exploring new possibilities. The imagination can liberate them from the literal, inviting them to explore the realms of possibility and ultimately encouraging empathy through the practice of exploring the attitudes of others.
- Students explore feelings and opinions through critical self-reflection. This encourages the development of a disposition ready to tolerate ambiguity to explore what is uncertain and to exercise judgement free from perspective rules and procedures. In the arts the locus of evaluation is internal and the subjective side of the individual has an opportunity to be stimulated. This allows direction of attention towards feelings as well as knowledge.
- Students are encouraged to think metaphorically, to explore the poetic use of language and to use language to generate meaning. Students develop language with which to talk about the qualities of an artwork.
- The idea and the image are resolved in a way that allows the work to reflect back meanings that have been unconsciously expressed. As the congruence stabilises, the process becomes an active process of communication.
- Students explore their own interior landscape discovering what it is they are capable of experiencing thus encouraging an understanding of the contours of the emotional self (Eisner, 2001).

Eisner (2001), describes the act of representation as having four cognitive processes, inscribing, editing, communicating and surprise. In this process students develop an idea which they transform into a medium. The choice of medium, be it clay, paint, photographic, pencil, wood, metal or video all have constraints and 'affordances' within which the student has to work, providing opportunities for the development of the mind (Eisner, 2001). Students need to edit as they make. Editing is about paying attention to the relationships and attending to detail, it is the process of making the work. Students learn to work with the element of surprise, to adapt and change their ideas as they make judgements while resolving the idea into a finished work.

The programme described below provides a sequence of learning opportunities for students to develop intellectually and socially. Behaviour skills, necessary for success in the wider society are taught without constraining the demands of the educational systems within which all schools operate.

Description: Example Unit of Work

The rich symbolism used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, both traditional and contemporary, as well as those of Australian landscape artists are explored in this unit of study. Students are introduced to various painting techniques in order to develop a series of personal symbols for a mural painting. The historical and critical study will be used as inspiration for their own art making.

The *mural game* used as the organisational structure for this unit of work provides students with the opportunity to develop their social skills while working both individually and in a collaborative manner. The finished artwork is a record of the game. However, the process of playing the game is just as important. The students will have learnt on two levels, one concerning art, the artist's attitudes to the artwork, and techniques and the second concerning social skills.

The learning experiences are sequenced in order to develop the student groups into self-motivated units, with students ultimately initiating the work each lesson and taking responsibility for the decisions made.

The unit evolves through four stages.

1. Students develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal art concepts through individual work. This is an awareness raising stage, where students are encouraged to notice a world different to their own.
2. Students work individually to design the mural, and also within groups. Students explore new possibilities and develop imaginary maps based on the local environment. Students will edit the designs, make choices regarding the relationship of the parts and the composition as a whole. Students evaluate, adapt and change the designs to meet their own aesthetic judgements.
3. Students work within cooperative groups to draw up the mural. Students have the opportunity to work with the element of surprise as they continue to evaluate, adapt and change the designs to work with the accidents that will no doubt occur.
4. The final stage of painting the mural, is also in, although less structured, cooperative groups. Students learn to work within the constraints of the material, to yield and give to the materials limitations. They are challenged to work again with the element of surprise that the material of paint can bring, to adapt and change the design and paint quality as they resolve the mural into a finished work.

Each stage introduces students to increasing complex social skills necessary to succeed at the task.

Stage One - Individual work

Students are introduced to the traditional techniques of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The Australian Landscape artists from both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Anglo Saxon backgrounds are studied to form the subject matter of the students' historical and critical study. Students are introduced to the traditional techniques used by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to create images. They study the cultural beliefs associated with the works' production. Students are introduced to the notion that modern artists appropriate these philosophical concepts for their own art making.

An individual art making project titled *A Journey from Home to School*, is done in conjunction with the historical and critical studying in order to reinforce the concepts introduced. Students are required to create an oil pastel using personal symbols that represent the student's own journey from home to school. This section of the unit forms the philosophical understanding for students' concept development for the future mural project.

This early stage of the unit is used to teach and establish clear boundaries of the art classroom and to create an environment that addresses the needs of as many students as possible while at the same time satisfying the needs of the teacher. The structured routine alluded to by Jones and Jones, 2001, suggests a daily routine, where students line up outside, enter the room with the appropriate equipment, are seated in an appropriate arrangement, along with behaviour expectations where students respect each others' rights, talk politely and seek permission to move around the room. These expectations of the classroom or 'ground rules' are all established during this early stage of the unit and reflect the 'ground rules' of society.

Stage Two - Developing the Design

The notion of a game is introduced to students. The class is given a scenario, a topic or story line involving direction. Two teams are established based on contrasting ideas in the scenario. The scenario of this unit was 'Natural versus the Man Made Environment'. Students were given aerial views of the local area and asked to focus their designs on either the natural environment including the natural land contours, rivers, trees and flowing lines and shapes to be found on the aerial maps provided. The 'Man-made team' focused on the roads, houses, power poles and the rigid line and shapes of the maps. Students were encouraged to use the personal symbols developed in the previous exercise. The designs at this stage were created individually, were simple and yet, still had to reflect the concepts discussed in stage one.

Next, three students worked together to combine their individual ideas into one design. Students were instructed that the work from all three individuals had to be represented in the design. This ensured ownership by all students of the design created. The new design is combined with the design from another group from the same team; therefore six students are now part of the same group.

Natural environment Man-made environment

The process illustrated here is based on twenty-four students in the class and will divide the class group into two games.

In order to provide peer teaching opportunities it is important that the groups are well selected based on personalities and social skills ability level. This will allow for students, who are more socially aware to be teamed up with those who are in need of skill development. However, it is also important to empower the students in the initial stages of the learning process. Therefore to ensure a balance between student choice and teacher choice students were allowed to chose their first group of three.

Stage Three - Drawing up the mural

The cooperative group work is a tool for teaching students how to function in society. Individuals are part of a culture, a shared way of life. Schools are like the larger culture, they make possible a shared way of life, a sense of belonging and community (Eisner, 2001). The group work aims to teach students in a small, safe and comfortable environment the same values expected of the larger society, values such as, co-operation, tolerance, participation, sharing, and understanding of each other's limitations.

Co-operative learning involves small groups in which students have to jointly organise their time and resources to work toward some specific goal (Topping & Ehly, 1998 p9). There are three defining features of cooperative learning which are well defined in the mural game. The first, students work in teams toward the attainment of some super-ordinate goal in this case the mural. The second feature sees that labour is divided between team members, such that each individual takes responsibility for a different sub-goal. The playing of the game assures that each student has a task to complete at all times. The third feature ensures individual contributions are pooled into a composite product to ensure that the collective goal is reached (Topping & Ehly, 1998 p29). The individual contributions of students during the drawing up stage and the painting of the mural will ensure that the goal is reached.

The preparation of the grid is the first of many steps in the production of the mural, which require students to organise each other in order to achieve a common goal. A grid is drawn over the design (master plan) and an equivalent, but of course on a much larger scale, grid on the mural surface.

An example grid

1 2 3 4 5

A					
B					
C					
D					
E					
F					

Playing the Game (Drawing up the mural)

To play the game each team requires **at least** three people.

- a. The **PLANNER** - looks after the master plan (team design). This person gives verbal instructions to the team caller. He/she is the only person who now sees the plan.
- b. The **TEAM CALLER** - is the *go between*, who communicates the information given to him/her by the planner to the artist.
- c. The **DESIGNER** - is a student who locates the co-ordinates on the grid. The team caller and designer can be the same person.
- d. The **ARTIST** - is the student who does the drawing of the design. He/she draws up the design as described by the team caller.

For example; the planner tells the team caller where he/she is to draw - *draw a straight line from 1B to 3D* or *draw a star which fits in the co-ordinates 4B, 4F, 6B, and 6F*. Students may change roles from one lesson to the next, as this will give them the opportunity to experience being leaders and workers.

Planner (Should not be able to see the mural)

Artist / Designer

Caller

Students from the two opposing teams draw their designs onto the same piece of canvas. *Team A* use a warm coloured pencil and *Team B* a cool (this is in keeping with the scenario outline) pencil. The two opposing *Teams* are to negotiate their way across the canvas whenever they overlap each other's design.

During the playing of the game students will develop a language that adequately communicates between the players a clear intention and meaning. The language generated will teach students how to talk about some of the qualities of an artwork.

Stage Four - Painting the Mural

When both teams have completed the drawing on the canvas, the whole group is to hold an *unscrambling conference*. This is done to discuss the designs as a whole and to make decisions on the areas of the design to be kept and those to be discarded. The unscrambling conference provides students with the opportunity to make judgements regarding the relationship of the parts, such as the line, shape, composition, subject-matter and concept. Students can discuss, negotiate and decide upon a colour scheme that reflects the scenario, *natural versus man-made*, and make decisions about the location of the colours. Different techniques such as sponging brush work, whether the paint is applied flat or with a texture, thick or as a wash, are decided upon.

This final activity is cognitively challenging for young people as they have to transfer the early work on Australian art and the art from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands (stage one), to developing their own symbol system which conveys meaning to an audience. What will the work communicate to an audience? How will the audience make sense of it so it may be meaningful to them?

The artwork as a form of communication is a representation of the group's involvement with each other, the inter-play of ideas will feed back into the work and thus shape it as a final product. It becomes a metaphor for society as a whole, demonstrating the means by which we as individuals inter-play with society, the processes through which individual beliefs and behaviours feed back into society thus shaping the culture in which we live.

The painting of the mural provides for a less structured organisation with the groups. Students by now are use to working with each other and natural leaders are beginning to develop and take control. Students need to allocate work to the team members, negotiating 'who' paints 'which' area of the canvas and will need to assign others to mix the paints. The appropriate sharing out of effective resources and territory during the mural game is necessary, The success of one team in a mural game depends on the success of another. Players need to have some awareness of the relative importance of their work 'in the grand scheme of things' as a whole, and be able to sense the relevance of other players' activities (Pavey, 1979). A sense of cooperation and tolerance of each other's views will see the groups become self-directed and self-motivated.

Conclusion

This unit of work does not pretend to be a 'panacea' to social needs curricula or to the demands of managing a secondary classroom. But what it does suggest is that it is possible to develop classroom practice that is both grounded in academic discipline demands but which at the same time encourages the development of the social skills that are needed by adolescents in their search for a personal identity. Not only will this demonstrate the praxis of social /psychological theory and educational practice in education, but it will demonstrate to students that education has a personal relevance to them and at the same time can be beneficial to the community in which these adolescents will ultimately live.

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