

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS:

WORKING WITH TEACHERS TO USE MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES AS A LEARNING RESOURCE

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The purpose of the Report

This report identifies teachers' development needs for using museums and galleries effectively as a resource for learning . It is intended that the issues raised will initiate change in the professional development of teachers and re-define their professional relationship with museum and gallery educators.

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Introduction

The information presented in this report results from a two year research project *Creative Connections: Teaching and learning in museums and galleries*, funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), formerly Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The research was initiated and directed by the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and the Institute of Education (IoE) as part of the DfEE Museums and Galleries Education Programme 1999-2003.

Background

David Anderson's report *A Common Wealth (1999)*, on the status of education in museums and galleries, argued that although these institutions can offer some direct teaching services they do not have the resources to provide learning programmes for every school that visits. For the foreseeable future, teachers taking students to museums and galleries will need to be prepared to act as lead educators.

This report supports work carried out by others and takes up the discussions led by Government and its agencies on the links between education and the cultural sector. The need for quality experiences for students and young people when taking part in the arts, including visits to museums and galleries is emphasised in research reports by John Harland and Kay Kinder (1995, 1999, 2000). However, the effectiveness of such visits relies on both the quality of teaching and the currency of the teachers' subject knowledge. The report *All Our Futures* (National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education 1999), recommends that further training opportunities, giving equal weight to cultural and educational issues, should be developed for arts educators in the museum, gallery and performing arts sector.

The DfEE Museums and Galleries Education Programme provided an excellent opportunity for the V&A and IoE to make an in-depth investigation of how Art and Design teachers currently use museums and galleries and what further developments could be initiated to ensure that these resources are used most effectively.

The research focus and its methodology

Research was conducted between January 2000 - June 2001. The research brief was to:

- examine how Art and Design teachers currently use London museums and galleries as a learning resource

- investigate the existing and potential role of both In-service Education and Training (INSET) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for promoting effective use of these resources
- consider the role of museum and gallery educators and their professional relationship with teachers.

Although the research undertaken was specific to Art and Design teachers who are substantial users of museums and galleries, the findings have significance for all those engaged in teaching and learning in museums and galleries.

The research stages were as follows:

- a questionnaire survey was sent to Art and Design teachers in 181 schools in London and South East England regarding their use of museums and galleries (The overall response rate was 38% - 68/181)
- focus groups of 11 Art and Design teachers
- Continuing Professional Development initiatives (an accredited course and a one-day INSET) piloted and evaluated at the V&A
- questionnaire data gathered from 250 teachers visiting the V&A
- questionnaire survey of 19 London museum and gallery educators
- focus groups of 8 museum and gallery educators

Who is the report for?

The findings presented and questions raised in this report have specific relevance to those who influence the future use of museums and galleries by schools.

Four main groups identified are:

Government bodies - such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and General Teaching Council (GTC), The Council for Museums Archives and Libraries (Re:source) and the Arts Council of England

Museum and gallery sector - educators, managers, policy makers and professional organisations (for example: GEM Group for Education in Museums, and *engage* National Association of Gallery Education)

Higher Education sector - providers of Initial Teacher Education, Higher Education Institutions offering art, design and museum studies courses.

Secondary Education sector - Heads of Art and Design departments, INSET co-ordinators and senior professional tutors in schools.

Themes of the report

Four themes have been selected from the full research report produced for the DfES (available to download from the web site) These are:

- Current practice of museum and gallery visiting by school Art and Design groups
- The existing and potential role of INSET and CPD
- Factors that affect trainee and qualified Art and Design teachers' confidence and ability to use museums and galleries effectively
- Identifying misconceptions between Art and Design teachers and museum and gallery educators

Current Practice of Museum and Gallery visiting by secondary school Art and Design Groups

The research findings show, that although Art and Design teachers are substantial users of museums and galleries, they do not always feel confident to teach in these venues or to work with art and artifacts as resources for learning.

When Art and Design teachers visit museums and galleries with students their aims, according to their responses to the questionnaire survey, are often multiple and include: “*allowing students first hand observation of art and artifacts*”; “*informing students’ practical coursework*”; “*satisfying examination criteria*”; and broader aims for an holistic educational agenda such as “*providing cultural opportunities for all students*”.

From our questionnaire sample of 68 London secondary schools, the majority of state sector, secondary school visits to museums and galleries are made by examination groups: years 10, 11, 12 and 13. Years 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 3) are less likely to visit. This has clear implications for the substantial number of students who do not elect to take Art and Design as an examination subject. These students may only have access to such "cultural opportunities" if they were provided by their primary schools. Independent sector visits do not follow this pattern and include more Key Stage 3 visits.

Where criteria for examinations clearly state that students must have “first hand experience of original work” (GCSE in Art and Design ‘Edexcel’ examination board 2000) students will be taken to visit museums and galleries, whereas within the National Curriculum for KS3 directives are less explicit..

Other research such as Harland and Kinder ' *Crossing the Line*' (1999) demonstrates the long term impact that such paucity of opportunity brings; substantially reducing attendance of cultural institutions in adulthood.

When will the National Curriculum Order for Art and Design include a clear directive to teachers at Key stage 3 to include museum and gallery visits as an entitlement for all students ?

Teachers' perceptions of the challenges presented by teaching in museums and galleries

Art and Design teachers often perceived a distinct change in their role when they took students to museums and galleries. This can be characterised as moving away from the teaching activities of the classroom (demonstrative, informative, activity based) towards more passive and organisational roles (supervisory, observational, pastoral).

Teachers were aware that the resources in the museum or gallery environment were beyond their control and expressed concerns that they might be ‘caught out’ by lacking understanding and /or knowledge in front of their students.

“Having to think on your feet quickly because there might be a piece of work you haven’t read up on or seen ...so it’s quite different from a classroom situation when you’re in control of the resources you’re putting on show.”(focus group)

Teachers also felt self-conscious when talking in a public space.

“It can be quite strange (talking to a group of students) in a gallery setting, people think you’re talking in a very vain way.”.”(focus group)

Teachers found it difficult to assume a teaching role.

“I think it (the role) changes completely; you’re a facilitator, a coach as opposed to a teacher.”(focus group)

The characteristics of the two contexts summarised below, help to illustrate teachers’ perceptions of the challenges presented by museum and gallery teaching which can represent major disruptions to their usual pedagogic practice.

<i>School - Art Room</i>	<i>Museum /Gallery</i>
Practical activities	Not practical
Many art materials	Limited art materials (dry)
Teacher controls visual resources	Someone else controls resources (curators)
Private domain	Public domain
Teacher is the expert	Someone else is the expert (museum and gallery education staff/curators)
Familiar environment /content	Unfamiliar environment /content
Few or no original art works	Original works of art

The questionnaire findings show that Art and Design teachers often attempt to apply a template for classroom practice to the museum and gallery context; they favour drawing activities in sketchbooks and worksheets as methods to engage students with art works. However these activities do not always enable critical interpretation of collections and exhibitions, or allow pupils to *“discuss and question critically...a range of visual and other information”*(*Art and Design National Curriculum 2000, 20*) Comments made during focus groups indicate that the reason teachers employed these activities was not necessarily because they were the most appropriate approaches but because they had not acquired the experience and confidence to employ alternatives.

Writing about developing professional knowledge and competence, Michael Eraut, acknowledges that::

“For teachers to change their classroom practice in any radical way (which is what the museum environment in effect demands), involves both modifying their classroom persona and embarking on a learning task of enormous magnitude. The experience of disorientation and alienation is profound; and unless teachers are given considerable psychological and practical support over a long period, they will revert to their old familiar practice.” (Eraut 1994:112)

How can teachers identify their individual strengths and limitations when using museums and galleries as sites for learning?

The existing and potential role of In-Service Education and Training (INSET) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Over half (60%) the Art and Design teachers who responded to the questionnaire had attended a museum or gallery INSET, yet only 29% of those in their first five years of employment had attended.

<i>Factors that determine attendance</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>% of teachers in each variable group who attended a museum or gallery INSET</i>
Number of years teaching	1-5 years	29%
	6-11 years	61%
	12-21 years	67%
	22 years and over	71%

Limited attendance is not necessarily due to the lack of INSET provision, as a number of museums and galleries cancel INSET sessions each year due to a poor response from teachers. In their responses to a separate questionnaire London museum and gallery educators attributed this to the increasing pressures on teachers' time: examinations, SATs, OFSTED inspections were all cited as reasons for low take up rates.

What directives can be put in place to ensure that newly qualified teachers who are required to use museums and galleries as learning resources prioritise opportunities to develop their skills and understanding of teaching and learning in these venues?

Value of INSET

Teachers were unsure how to value museum and gallery based INSET. When asked to rank which of 8 services provided by museums they valued most, teachers ranked INSET 6th.

Art and Design teachers' ranking of eight typical services provided by museums and galleries in order of value

As a bar Chart

<i>Services provided by museums and galleries</i>	<i>Ranking order by Art and Design Teachers (corresponding %)</i>
Educational publications e.g. teachers'/pupils' packs	1 st (75%)
Workshops/talks led by museum/gallery staff	2 nd (59%)
Helpful advice for planning and booking a visit	3 rd (49%)
Teachers' evenings	4 th (44%)

Telephone service	5 th (40%)
INSET/CPD	6 th (30%)
Suggestions for ideas back in school	7 th (19%)
Loan collections	8 th (10%)

However when asked to comment about INSET sessions they had attended, they acknowledged, in their questionnaire responses, general as well as specific benefits such as *"developing ways of looking and using visual information, to explore concepts and themes relevant to GCSE and A level assignments"*

The purpose of INSET

Both museum and gallery educators and Art and Design teachers acknowledged that INSET sessions aim to, and are successful in, stimulating interest and disseminating information about collections and exhibitions. The research shows that in these sessions museum and gallery educators prioritised enabling teachers to make relevant connections between the exhibits and the personal realities of their students. This priority is clearly understood by teachers who have attended museum and gallery INSET sessions; they are far more confident in their abilities to make these connections than their colleagues who have not attended.

Museum and gallery educators' cited that their second priority for INSET was to develop teachers' use of interpretative/analytical methods. By comparing this with teachers' questionnaire responses it appears that this is less successfully realised. Teachers who had attended museum and gallery INSET sessions did not perceived themselves to be confident and able to use these methods. Neither did they say they had increased confidence and ability to communicate in the museum or gallery as a result of attending museum or gallery based INSET, which was the museum and gallery educators' third priority.

This clearly indicates that there are some gaps between what is thought by museum and gallery educators to be delivered in INSET sessions and what is understood by teachers to have been received. Persistent difficulties that teachers experience when using museums (such as lacking the confidence to teach in the gallery space and being unsure how to use methods for interpretation) are rarely the explicit focus of INSET sessions .

From questionnaire responses temporary exhibitions and specific collections are understood by teachers to be the main focus of the INSET sessions they have attended. Museum and gallery educators' aims for the content of these sessions (to develop teachers' communication skills and use of a range of interpretative methods) do not appear to be recognized by teachers

How can museums and galleries be encouraged to re-conceptualise INSET; the aims, objectives and intended outcomes, to develop teachers' independent use of museum and gallery resources?

Pilot schemes

The pilot Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course *Critical Interventions* (accredited by the Institute of Education as an Advanced Diploma in Professional Studies, which carries 20 credits towards a Masters Degree) ran between June 2000 and March 2001. The taught part of the course was delivered in three days and four evenings over a period of nine months; a total of 30 hours. Between taught sessions, course participants undertook an action research assignment with a group of students that involved a visit to the V&A. The course offered experiential learning combined with lecture/seminar sessions led by experienced practitioners in art and design education and museum and gallery education. Sessions were led by staff from the Institute of Education, the V&A and other specialists in museum and gallery education, e.g. curators, art/design historians/theorists, practising artists/designers.

Evaluation from the course demonstrated that, in comparison to isolated one-day or half-day INSET, this form of CPD was more effective in enabling participants to sustain new or refined educational strategies. Course participants also indicated that the CPD course had greater long-term impact on their teaching and learning than was the case for the comparable group who had attended a one-day INSET session.

A *Critical Interventions* participant stated that prior to the course :
(my approach to working in galleries) *wasn't the way I normally teach in the classroom. I never thought of transferring the skills I had across into the gallery, it just didn't occur to me at all*. .”(CPD participant evaluation)

After the course, she identified changes in her approach to teaching:

“The course has made a huge impact on my confidence in using art and artifacts in critical studies. I'm not so afraid to look at a sculpture and discuss that with the class and it's given me more confidence, I've actually started teaching critical studies to GNVQ that's one thing I'd never have thought of doing.” .”(CPD participant evaluation)

A pilot one day INSET *Whose Interpretations?* was intended to address the same needs as the CPD model *Critical Interventions*. However, the limitations of a standard one-day INSET model rendered it less effective in achieving these aims. The length and intensity of study seems to substantially effect teachers' motivation for seriously considering their own continuing professional development. Teachers who were part of the accredited CPD course were by far the most committed to the value of continuing professional development 67% of this group had plans for further CPD in comparison to only 10% from one day INSET.

<p><i>Can museums and galleries form partnerships with universities and colleges of art and design to create accredited CPD courses which encourage the development of subject knowledge and meet teachers' professional needs simultaneously?</i></p>
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Teachers evenings

Many museums and galleries offer 'teachers evenings' as an informal invitation to view current exhibitions and meet museum and gallery staff. There was some debate by both teachers and museum and gallery educators as to the value, purpose and effectiveness of these evenings. Although valued more than INSET, teachers appreciated them as an opportunity to view ticketed exhibitions free of charge, rather than as a professional development opportunity.

"They're really good to get resources and that's probably about it. I learn a lot more in other situations; when I go on my own (to museums or galleries)." (focus group)

Factors that affect teachers’ and trainee teachers’ confidence and ability to use museums and galleries effectively

One of the unexpected outcomes of the research is the extent to which teachers undergraduate subject specialisms and how they were taught appear to affect not only their use of museums and galleries, but also their understanding of art and artifacts.

Some Art, Craft and Design graduates commence ITE course having:

- acquired a personal rationale for the use of museums and galleries and become familiar and comfortable with that use.
- been taught a range of interpretative approaches through which works of art and design can be better understood
- visited museums and galleries with fellow students and tutors as part of their undergraduate studies

Other Art, Craft and Design graduates come to teaching having had none of these experiences.

To what extent do other undergraduate courses such as History, Archeology provide opportunities for students to engage critically with museum and gallery collections?

A lack of familiarity with museum and gallery collections, combined with an undeveloped understanding of interpretative methods and critical analysis, affects teachers’ abilities and confidence to teach in a museum or gallery. Graduates from courses that place little emphasis on these aspects of teaching and learning are the most likely to lack the confidence to teach critically and creatively about the work of others both in and out of the museum and gallery context.

Teachers who had studied Fine Art subjects, History / Theory of Art shown on chart below, perceived themselves to be generally more confident to teach effectively in museums and galleries than their colleagues who had studied Craft or Design subjects.

The relationship between BA specialisms and confidence in museums or galleries As a Bar Chart

	<i>% who indicated they <u>lacked</u> confidence associated with communication skills in the museum or gallery</i>	<i>% who indicated they <u>lacked</u> confidence associated with understanding the social, historical context of exhibits</i>	<i>% who indicated they <u>lacked</u> confidence in using methods of interpretation in the museum of gallery</i>	<i>% who indicated they <u>lacked</u> confidence to manage students’ learning in the museum of gallery</i>
<i>BA Specialisms 61/68</i>				
Craft and Design (26)	34 %	30%	27%	15%

Fine Art and History of Art (35)	11%	11%	8%	5%
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Although there was a level of confidence to teach in museums and galleries, indicated in the questionnaire responses this was not replicated by teacher discussion in the focus groups. Participants acknowledged that they did not always feel confident in the gallery space. The difference in response may reflect a perception amongst many Art and Design teachers that they can by definition use museums and galleries effectively **because** they are Art and Design graduates with Qualified Teachers Status.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The research findings show that successful completion of an Art and Design Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course does not appear to significantly develop teachers' confidence and ability to use museums and galleries effectively. All the questionnaire survey respondents possess a post graduate teaching qualification. Their responses, therefore, did not only suggest lack or absence in some specialist undergraduate provision, but also the failure of their PGCE course to address this lack.

Some PGCE courses integrate teaching and learning experiences in museums and galleries as a part of their programme of study. As this teacher recollects

“.. we went to the Fitzwilliam Museum and we had a brilliant tour.. There was a really good educational director who showed us round. We were in the role of the children and she was.. getting us to think beyond the visual: how it got to be made and why it was there and who made it and so on. I think that has had quite a big influence on me actually.”(CPD participant evaluation)

However, in this case the opportunity to consolidate this experience during training was lost as the student teacher was unable to visit museums and galleries with students as a part of her teaching practice.

Should ITE courses offer greater flexibility to respond to trainee teachers' needs by auditing and acknowledging their prior experiences?

With ITE increasingly devolved to schools, how will the Teacher Training Agency and General Teaching Council ensure that mentors in schools are capable of teaching trainee teachers to use museums and galleries effectively?

Identifying misconceptions between teachers and museum and gallery educators

The findings reveal areas where there is a lack of understanding between teachers and museum / gallery educators. In the questionnaire surveys the two professional groups place different values on educational visits to museums and galleries; for example, a successful visit is characterised, by museum and gallery educators as one where students find personal relevance in the exhibits, feel ‘at home’ in the gallery space and wish to return. Art and Design teachers, on the other hand, overwhelmingly identify a successful visit to be one that directly influences students’ practical coursework. These views can be seen as appropriate and aligned to their respective professions but also point to the need for greater mutual understanding to facilitate constructive partnerships.

Pedagogic Methods

The two groups of professionals also favour different pedagogic methods to engage students with collections and exhibits. Teachers encourage students’ independent study through drawing activities and the use of worksheets, with the teacher acting as facilitator. In contrast museum and gallery educators are more likely to lead the whole group to focus on an individual artwork through direct verbal question and answer sessions.

Museum and gallery educators were critical of teachers’ approaches. Almost one third of our questionnaire respondents remarked on: teachers’ “*lack of involvement,*” and “*lack of knowledge,*” or made comments relating to teachers’ inability to conduct independent visits. This strongly indicates that they have learnt to develop and value different pedagogic methods to those used by teachers.

To what extent are museum and gallery educators unconsciously placing teachers in a passive role? What needs to be done to foster more proactive roles for teachers?

Valuing services provided by Museums and Galleries

Findings from the two questionnaires has established that there are some anomalies between the services that teachers value and those that museum and gallery educators believe them to value.

<i>Service provided</i>	<i>Percentage of 18 London museums and galleries providing these services</i>	<i>Ranking order by 18 museum and gallery educators- <u>their</u> perception of what <u>teachers</u> value</i>	<i>Ranking order by 68 Art and Design teachers - services they value</i>
Workshops/talks led by museum/gallery staff	95%	1st	2nd
Telephone service for booking	95%	2nd	5th

Helpful advice for planning a visit	84%	3rd	3rd
Educational publications e.g. teachers'/students' packs	84%	4th	1st
Teachers' evenings	79%	5th	4th
INSET	74%	6th	6th
Suggestions for ideas back in school	79%	7th	7th
Loan collections	10%	8th	8th

The greatest differences between museum and gallery educators and Art and Design teachers can be seen in the value they place on *educational publications*, and *phone service for booking*.

Museums and gallery educators' perceptions of the services that teachers value reflect their focus on the visit itself and the central role of museum and gallery staff in its success.

On the other hand, the greater value teachers place on educational publications reinforces their perceptions of the visit as intrinsically linked to students' curriculum studies. Educational publications can be used both during the visit and in schools increasing their potential as resources/ services.

How should museum and gallery educators allocate resources to the services they offer to school groups ?

Conclusion

In conclusion we have found that teachers' abilities to use museums and galleries effectively as resources for learning vary greatly. The reasons are dependent on undergraduate, ITE, and possible INSET and CPD experiences of museums and galleries.

For individual teachers to be appropriately supported an acknowledgement of their prior learning experiences from undergraduate courses onwards, needs to inform the further professional development provision they are offered.

Although many teachers bring skills, knowledge and expertise to museums and galleries they believe that these are not fully recognized. Teachers' confidence to transfer and develop their professional abilities for the gallery space is affected by both the physical and intellectual context of museums and galleries and the perceptions of others.

We have found from the piloting of continuing professional development initiatives that by working together with museum and gallery educators and over time and in a spirit of collaboration, teachers' abilities can be identified, extended and refined to enable them to teach critically and creatively in the museums and galleries.

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Details of the full Report:

The full report can be obtained through the web site:

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Cover Image: Plaster bottles by year seven pupils from Fortismere School in response to the V&A collections Photograph: Peter Thomas

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