

Plain English and a Realistic Connection Between Classrooms and Pedagogical Discussion

By Clare Boreham

“I feel that what happens up high in government and Ofsted can become very mistranslated on the ground by SLTs and subjects leads trying to make sense of what they’re supposed to be doing and how. I’ve noticed recently that few young teachers have a great deal of confidence in Art themselves and schools try to use the same pedagogical approaches as in other subjects. In practise, I’ve sometimes felt Art is closer to PE at times. I also feel that what some people in academia think is happening on the chalk face, may not be the case everywhere.

This is why I personally think the visual, easily accessible ‘projects’ AccessArt has, mostly devised by artists, work so very well in schools. It’s not bogged down with learning intentions and success criteria. Or a formulaic pedagogy.

During the discussion, I was glad to hear passionate plea made that ordinary teachers are involved in this group; this is very important. Some language used by academics can also quite abstract. If we are going to have any impact anywhere, on the chalk face, plain english needs

to be used. (I'm aware though, that when I talk about ASD, it's also sometimes very abstract to the uninitiated! So it's easily done.)

I think one of the issues with the current curriculum is there is so little guidance for Art. Which was a wonderful open ended opportunity, but I feel subconsciously meant it seemed less important in some schools, besides the very packed history curriculum for example, and non specialist Art leads weren't sure what to do. I have an Art degree and had taught for more than 10 years and I struggled!

Initially I was asked to come up with art units that helped to deliver the enormous amount of history and geography, as apparently many schools were taking that approach. I had to spend time researching my gut feeling that this was wasn't the right approach for all units. I feel like I've had to say 'No' an awful lot over the last few years. And spend a lot of time solving the conundrum of what could be happening instead. This is still ongoing!

A little while ago I saw a question in a forum; "I've been asked to do a unit on proportion for Y3 linked to Charlotte's Web..." I feel some Art curriculum leaders have to spend a lot of time doing mental gymnastics. And I think about the children on the other end; how much engagement is a top down formulaic topic actually going to have? A happy child will learn...

My husband is an architect and sometimes teaches second years at the local University. He's noticed a gradual decline in creative innovation and confidence in the last few years. In terms of creative industries, they're very much an important one to think about. Practical critical thinking and confident creativity is an incredibly valuable skill that we do risk losing without risk taking, innovative, evolving approaches to Art Education."

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