

**Positioning, constructing and assessing visual art:
Primary teachers' perspectives**

Jan Byres

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of Master of Teaching and Learning
Christchurch College of Education

July 2006

Abstract

This dissertation explores the positioning, construction and assessment of visual art and the influences on these. The perspectives of nine primary teachers were investigated through informal interviews.

The fields of visual art, visual art education, assessment and curriculum were analysed to provide the background and context for the study. This analysis was ongoing and informed the research questions and the research processes. All these fields are complex with underlying tensions. Major changes in educational administration, assessment and central curricula in New Zealand since 1990 were relevant to the study.

The research question was 'How is primary visual art positioned, constructed and assessed at the operational level and what are some of the influences on these?' A qualitative design was selected in order to find out teachers' views. A grounded theory approach was used in which key themes emerged from the data. Nine teachers from nine different primary schools were selected through purposive sampling for a range of characteristics including teaching experience, age of class, school characteristics and particularly interest in visual art. Content analysis was also used to investigate *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. Processes of analysis and interpretation were ongoing with critical reflection, discussion and reading of the literature throughout. The final dissertation is a 'bricolage' of the participants' stories, voices from the literature and my story. Social constructionism was selected as the overarching theory that gave the study coherence.

The initial finding that influenced the direction and framing of the study was that these teachers and schools actively constructed curricula. They did not passively receive and deliver a given central curriculum. Woven through the findings chapters were key themes of complexity and context. Differences and similarities between the schools and the teachers illuminated the significance of context. Constructed visual art curricula were a complex interaction of influences and some significant tensions emerged including the

tension between summative and formative assessment. The relationship between assessment and curricula was complex.

The operational visual arts curricula of the teachers in this study were constructed as making and doing artworks using a range of media and skills, mostly in isolation from social, cultural or historical contexts. These teachers' visual art was non-controversial and predominantly Pakeha/Eurocentric. The positioning of visual art within wider operational curricula varied between the teachers and the schools. In some of the schools visual art was positioned at the margins of the operational curricula. In all of the schools literacy and numeracy were prioritised. This was hegemonic and questions were not asked about their construction or what their priority meant for other subjects. The increasingly overcrowded curricula of separate subjects, requirements for summative assessment, constant time pressures and teachers' workload were very significant issues. Breadth of curriculum coverage was occurring at the expense of depth.

The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum was only one influence on the construction of operational visual arts curricula. The teachers used it selectively if at all. Teachers' personal experiences were also relevant. An unexpected finding was the significant role and power of the schools through long-term overviews and curriculum programmes, assessment requirements, timetables and organisational structures. In this study there was almost no evidence of political and ideological influences in teachers' discourses despite the dominance of these in the New Zealand literature.

Assessment was dominated by discourses and practices of summative assessment, which is consistent with the literature. All of the teachers told of collecting much more assessment data than was needed for reporting to school managers or parents and caregivers. Assumptions were made about the meaningfulness of the information collected and assessment of creativity and processes in visual art was problematic. The teachers considered much of the assessment they had to do had no purpose, added to their workloads and did not benefit children. Despite the importance placed on formative assessment in the literature and the stated commitment to developing formative

assessment in the Ministry of Education's assessment strategy, it was often not understood or valued.

I asked why summative assessment continued to be so dominant. Some possibilities included the hegemonies of accepted discourses and practices, the underlying but often unstated importance of the accountability function supported by the Education Review Office (ERO), the Ministry of Education and the political ideology of the New Right, and school managers and leaders who imposed the requirements but did not understand assessment.

The dissertation concludes by considering the implications of the findings for visual art as a subject, for school managers and for teacher agency in primary schools. The future of visual art as a subject seems uncertain in an overcrowded curriculum of separate subjects in which literacy and numeracy are prioritised. Its positioning within operational curricula, whether at the margins or not, depended on a complex interaction of influences. Principals and other school managers need to understand the purpose, rationale and impacts of their decisions on teachers and operational curricula. Teacher agency is important for teacher efficacy, morale and interest, and in order to interrogate change. Operational visual art curricula assessment and teacher agency were contextual and very complex. Complexities and tensions were evident at all levels.

This study contributes to understandings about primary visual art education, primary teachers' issues and experiences, and the construction of operational curricula in primary schools.

Acknowledgments

This work acknowledges the time and contributions given by the nine teachers involved in this research. I sincerely thank them. I also thank my supervisors Janinka, Ruth and Graeme for their expertise, support and encouragement. I acknowledge too the support of friends, colleagues and family throughout the long journey, and I thank them all.

Table of contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Chapter 1 Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2 Conceptual framework | 4 |
| 2.1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2.2. Conceptualising visual art | 4 |
| 2.3. Visual art in education | 9 |
| 2.4. Curriculum theory | 14 |
| 2.5. Assessment | 16 |
| 2.6. Social constructionism | 20 |
| 2.7. Summary | 22 |
| Chapter 3 Methodology | 24 |
| 3.1. Research design and rationale | 24 |
| 3.2. Sampling | 26 |
| 3.3. Participants | 26 |
| 3.4. Ethical considerations | 27 |
| 3.5. Methods | 28 |
| 3.6. Data analysis and interpretation | 30 |
| 3.7. Representation and positioning myself | 31 |
| 3.8. Limitations, trustworthiness and generalisability | 33 |
| Chapter 4 Construction and positioning of visual art: Influences, context and complexity | 35 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 35 |
| 4.2. Visual art as doing and making artworks | 36 |
| 4.3. Influence of the central curriculum | 39 |
| 4.4. Visual art within wider operational curricula | 43 |
| 4.5. Personal influences on visual art curricula | 48 |
| 4.6. Influences of the schools | 49 |
| 4.7. Teacher autonomy and control | 53 |
| 4.8. Summary | 54 |
| Chapter 5 Construction and influence of assessment | 56 |
| 5.1. Introduction | 56 |
| 5.2. Summative assessment | 57 |
| 5.3. Purposes of assessment | 65 |
| 5.4. Formative assessment | 66 |
| 5.5. Dominance of summative assessment | 69 |
| 5.6. Summary | 71 |
| Chapter 6 Conclusion | 73 |
| 6.1. Introduction | 73 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.2. Summary of findings | 73 |
| 6.3. Implications | 76 |
| 6.4. Limitations, generalisability and trustworthiness | 84 |
| 6.5. Summary | 88 |
| Bibliography | 90 |
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1: Letter to participants and Declaration of consent | 99 |
| Appendix 2: Interview guide | 103 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter the background to the study, my position, the research focus and research questions are introduced.

This study explores primary teachers' perspectives on the positioning, construction and assessment of primary visual arts and the influences on these. It arose out of an interest in primary teachers' views and practices of assessment of visual art and their use of the new visual art curriculum. The main source of data was the perspectives of nine primary teachers investigated through informal interviews. This thesis is a 'bricolage' of many stories woven together: stories of the nine teachers and their schools, voices from the literature and my own stories. The themes of context and complexity underpin the research.

My experiences have shaped my social, political and theoretical perspectives. My orientation to this research and many of the decisions I made reflect my background in sociology. Phenomenological approaches and theories about how humans construct meaning continue to influence my thinking, often unknowingly. My approach to theory was eclectic. The theoretical approaches used in this study and the rationale for these are explained in chapters two and three.

I am many selves: mother, woman, friend, visual artist and lecturer. My background is a mixture of working and middle class. As an adult I lived for many years in a small South Island rural community. Just prior to 'Tomorrow's Schools' in 1990 I worked for the Department of Education and experienced firsthand the incredible waste and ridiculous bureaucracy that educational administration had become. As a primary teacher in the 1990s I lived through the huge changes in education and experienced the impacts of new curricula and new assessment practices. Of concern were the mounting stresses and pressures on primary teachers, which I too experienced. In addition I am passionate about visual art and visual art education. It seemed timely to look at how teachers were using *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* as this had recently been gazetted and most teachers would have received professional development in its use. As a practising visual artist and a College of

Education lecturer in visual art I am aware of issues and debates in visual art and visual art education.

With these interests and goals in mind the initial research questions were ‘how do primary teachers assess visual art?’ and ‘what are the issues in assessing visual art?’ However in our conversations the teachers talked about wider issues and contexts, and it became clear that assessment could not be considered in isolation from curriculum and the wider context including the schools in which the teachers worked. As is appropriate in qualitative research, the focus changed.

The following questions focused the evolving direction of the research:

- What are some significant issues for primary teachers as they talk about the teaching and assessing of visual art?
- How are primary teachers using the new visual arts curriculum?
- How are operational visual art curricula constructed and positioned?
- How is assessment constructed and visual art assessed?
- What are some influences on assessment and curricula construction?

The research question became: How is primary visual art positioned, constructed and assessed at the operational level and what are some of the influences on these?

The experience of this research has strengthened my personal and professional commitment to visual art. It has given me insights to my practices as a teacher educator. It has also allowed me the opportunity to present these teachers’ views both here and to a wider audience, and thereby contribute to effecting some changes to address their issues. The teachers who participated said they valued the opportunity to share their perspectives.

Several issues emerged as significant: The curriculum and assessment fields were very complex with unacknowledged tensions. The changing roles of schools in educational decision-making in changing political contexts raised issues of power and autonomy. The influence and power of the schools in positioning and constructing assessment and visual art were a surprise. These issues and the underlying themes of

complexity, context and influences will be explained, explored and interpreted in the following chapters.

Chapter two highlights some of the literature that has informed this research in relation to visual art, visual art education, curriculum, assessment and social constructionism.

Chapter three describes the research design and rationale, methodology and processes used including ethical issues, the sources, collection and analysis of data, and issues of representation.

In chapters four and five the findings are discussed. The influences on and the construction and positioning of operational visual arts curricula are explored in chapter four and in chapter five the construction of assessment is described.

Chapter six summarises the findings, explores some implications of the study and discusses some limitations, generalisability and trustworthiness.

This study whilst focusing on the micro-level of nine primary teachers in a small geographic area of Aotearoa, tells a story of the perspectives, tensions and complexities of assessing and teaching visual art within a broader context of influences. It contributes to understandings about primary visual art education, teachers' issues and experiences and the construction of operational curricula in primary schools.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter backgrounds the context and relevance of my research. It maps out some of the complexities in conceptualising visual art, curriculum and assessment. I draw on concepts and theories from several fields: visual art, visual art education, curriculum and assessment. Underpinning this research is the theoretical framework of social constructionism.

Debates and conceptualisations of visual art are mirrored in visual art education. The fields of visual art, visual art education, curriculum and assessment are all contested. Major changes in New Zealand education over the last 20 years have impacted on teaching and assessment. In the complex world of primary education various positions and ideologies are acted and reflected in formal curricula, discourses and practices.

I include discussion on the historical development of ideas and issues where these are necessary to understand changing theories and the New Zealand context. This chapter provides an overview of the literature. In succeeding chapters I will include further literature where this is relevant to more detailed discussion of particular issues. Some concepts are explored more fully in later chapters.

Some issues, understandings and debates have more impact than others on teachers' talk. The conceptual frameworks outlined here describe some wider social, historical and ideological contexts in which teachers' discourses are situated. The intention of this chapter is to select and clarify the conceptual bases that underpin my study. The fields are complex and many of the issues have generated considerable debate. It is not my intention to summarise or re-debate all the arguments.

2.2. Conceptualising visual art

Concepts and understandings of visual art are contested, change over time and are relevant to education. Recent debates about what art is demonstrate the contested

nature of the field. Betty MacNeill of Mangonui wrote to the Editor of the Sunday Star Times on 19th June 2005.

Duchamp's urinal presented as art was obviously a joke aimed to shock. With all the solemnity of the dim-witted there were those who took it seriously. Another version of the emperor's clothes, this cult lingers on.

The debates raging in newspaper articles and letters to editors represent varying and passionately held views.

I describe two broad groups of theories about visual art that have dominated in the twentieth century. The first is the notion of 'art' as a separate entity and the second is the idea of art as a cultural construct. Distinguishing the two is a useful way of mapping the field although they are not dichotomous and the second has not replaced the first. I provide an overview of each group, which briefly outlines many complex ideas. These theories underpin discourses and practices of art education.

2.2.1. Art as a separate entity

Key underlying ideas of the way of knowing that has dominated western thinking over the last three hundred years are separation and individualism. The individual self is split into parts, such as the ego and the id in psychoanalysis (Freud, 1953). In sociology the personal and the social are separate and culture is split into separate aspects such as religion and art, and education is divided into separate subjects.

This first group of theories which has dominated twentieth century understandings of art is founded on assumptions that art exists in objects and events called artworks (Bracey, 2001). The value, quality and status of an artwork are inherent and artworks can be viewed and understood in isolation from their social cultural and historical contexts. Aesthetics and the idea that qualities of truth, beauty and goodness are inherent in certain objects and images can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks.

These theories focus on the individual. Art is understood as an individual creative activity and the artist is the creator of meaning. Art is a "distinct and private event by which individuals present a private view of the world" (Bracey, 2001, p. 54).

Psychology and psychoanalysis were influential from the early twentieth century with

the idea that the artistic impulse resided in the individual's sub-conscious and art could be therapeutic for releasing deep-seated innermost feelings.

Mansfield (1999) traces the foundations of individualism back to the Enlightenment and the writings of Kant. She argues that Kant's division of reason into theoretical knowing, practical reason and aesthetic judgment provides the foundations for modernist assumptions of universalism and formalism in art. The idea of making aesthetic judgements based on feelings of pleasure rather than cognition or logic can also be traced back to Kant.

Understandings of art as artworks created by individual artists are part of 'modernist' theories of art. 'Modernism' is the term used to describe a movement and a period that dominated nineteenth and twentieth century Western art. Artists were freed from realism and traditional genre and forms, truth was universal and art was separate from everyday life in modernist theories. Formalism was a movement in art that became predominant in the early twentieth century. Freedman (2001) describes formalism as reductionist and pseudo-scientific, and connects its roots with developments in science. She says

While these models appear simply to facilitate an analysis of what is contained within a work of art, they actually condition the ways students approach art...to prepare students to approach art as a series of objects about form and feeling isolated from meaning. The assumption that any object can be effectively analysed using such models carries with it the idea that the artefacts of any culture can and should be taught about as if they were fine art. This form of acculturation does not promote an understanding of the peculiarities of fine art and aesthetics, nor does it maintain the integrity of other forms of visual culture and alternative ways of understanding. (p. 37)

Critics claim that modernism privileges fine arts over popular culture, decorative arts, crafts and the traditional arts of minority cultures (Duncum, 2001). Bordieu's idea of social capital is applied to the art world by Bracey (2001). He says art is a hierarchically organised social institution structured by power relations with the artist and the curator at the top and the generalist primary teacher near the bottom, marginally above the 'art public.' Those with power and authority decide what art is worth having and seek to maintain their positions "by surrounding their roles and practices with the mystique of expertise" (Bracey, 2001, p. 52).

Modernism continues a tradition that organises the world into separate and opposite categories, for example scientific objectivity versus personal or metaphysical subjectivity. Not only are the categories mutually exclusive, one usually has greater status and power than the other. Very often Western categories of binary opposites are superimposed onto other world-views in which realities are more complex, pluralistic and shifting (Garber, 2001).

2.2.2. *Art as a cultural construct*

The second group of theories contests the idea that art is a separate entity isolated from social, cultural and historical contexts. In this view art is a cultural construct given meaning by social actors in a cultural milieu and time. Visual images and objects can only be known in relation to the institutions, relationships and power structures of the cultures in which they are embedded and which give them meaning. This position draws on anthropological and sociological theories to understand ‘culture’ and the cultures of social groups. Two linked strands within this group of theories are firstly post-modernism and art as visual culture, and secondly post-colonialism and the knowing of art by and in non-Western cultures, including Māori.

The late twentieth century movement ‘post-modernism’ challenged many ideas of modernist art. A post-modern world is multiple and contradictory with as many truths as there are stories. Duncum (2001) says that the social boundaries that divided the arts from the rest of social life have collapsed. In the post-modern world art is “not a special category, a privileged domain, but a way of communicating that is as ordinary as everyday speech” and “the sites of art are everywhere about us. Shopping malls, theme parks, television, the Internet, virtual reality and tourist attractions are some of the most obvious sites” (p. 15). He says that Western institutions define the art that is learnt and that it is based on exclusions: “High art typically focuses on art as objects that are severed from their material conditions of production, distribution and use” (p. 30).

Duncum defines visual culture as all the visual artefacts through which we make meaning. *Visual* refers to observable images, objects and experiences and *culture* to their contexts. In this view the relationships, institutions and power of the culture in which they are embedded give visual artefacts their meaning. Critics of this view say

that it treats all visual artefacts as equal. For example Kamhi (2003) considers serious art of high quality

is being displaced by often trivial works of popular culture, as well as by cultural artefacts of all kinds, selected more for the hidden sociopolitical messages that can be wrung from them than for their expressive power or aesthetic value. (p. 9)

This issue is at the heart of the debates represented by Betty MacNeil's quote at the start of the chapter. Conceptual art which foregrounds ideas and meaning challenges a view of art as skills and representation.

Colonisation led to the framing of Māori 'art' in western terms. Nineteenth century paintings both reflected and actively influenced the views of the time. The cultural framing of 'art' in European terms was part of a process of cultural and social domination (Mansfield, 1999). A New Zealand landscape painted in soft 'English' colours or the portrayal of a Māori hapū as 'noble savages' both affirmed and constructed views of the landscape and the 'natives'. Mansfield discusses how the 'colonial corridor' of colonial artists of the time framed and imaged narratives and places to advance the political and economic interests of the colonisers.

Sidney Moko Mead (1984) writes

The supporting ideologies and practices which helped to provide a coherent, constant and vibrant art tradition were called into question and became subject to Pākehā (European) evaluation and approval. The cultural grid which incorporated the arts was altered quite drastically until it became like a shredded road map. (p. 29)

In pre-European Māori society *whaikōrero*, *waiata*, visual motifs and symbols were integral to everyday life. The aesthetic form and the practical function of objects were linked. An outsider could not assume an understanding of the form, function, meaning and value of images and objects. Hakiwa explains "Māori taonga, like real people are important because they too are regarded as having a geneology and a mauri or life-force which generates, regenerates and upholds creation". They are not objects of art but "are living in every sense of the word and carry the life and pride of those who fashioned them, handled and caressed them, and passed them on for future generations" (Hakiwa, as cited in Starzecka, 1996, p. 53).

There is a tendency to freeze the culture of minority groups in particular points in time (Metge, 1990). Many Māori and Pākehā unthinkingly identify Māori culture with the culture of nineteenth century Māori. Māori art in 2006 is a contested field with a range of views on what Māori art is, the appropriate use of Māori motifs, images, symbols and traditions, and who is a Māori artist (Mane-Wheoki, 2001).

In this view art is a cultural construct with a material existence in institutions and artefacts and subject to norms and values. Status and power are not inherent within those artefacts or institutions but are constructed by groups within society.

The previous discussion highlights the contested nature of the field. The first group of theories has not been replaced by the second group. The theories, the debates and the multiple discourses are mirrored in visual art education and the development of school curricula.

2.3. Visual Art in Education

This section briefly outlines some of the theories that underpin primary visual art education in New Zealand. Although 'art' has been part of New Zealand education since 1877, the nature of that art depended on the theories and ideologies of the time. Some historical aspects are relevant to the discourses and practices of primary visual art teachers today and help to position New Zealand teachers' theories and practices. The ideas and positions in the formal syllabuses both *reflect* and *shape* understandings and practices of visual art education. The following 'visions' (Eisner, 2002) of primary art education in New Zealand are brief outlines. The visions are not mutually exclusive and were all evident in the teachers' talk.

The syllabuses and curricula assume theories, discourses and values of the time within the New Zealand context. Thus the syllabuses are both normative and prescriptive in that they conceptualise both what art is and what it should be. Pearson (2001) says

The prescriptions literally prescribe an existence for art, and in doing so they also describe what counts as knowledge to do with art. All prescriptions for art education stand as art theories whether or not an allegiance to an art theory is acknowledged. (p. 69)

Prior to colonisation Māori had a complex efficient education system based on oral traditions, life-long learning, hierarchical power structures, consensus and environmental understandings (Mutch, 1997) and ‘art’ was not a separate domain but integral to everyday life. The British settlers of the 19th century brought from their homelands values and models of institutions including for education and for art.

The organisation of knowledge into subjects is a Western tradition which goes back to Plato’s theories in the fourth century BC. Curriculum theorists have long considered the essential place of the arts in education. Herbert Spencer in 1860 included the arts in his rational hierarchy of priorities among areas of study (Print, 1993) and the fine arts and aesthetics were included in Hirst’s seven forms of knowledge and Phenix’s six knowledge fields from which these theorists argued school curricula should be based (McGee, 1997). Art education was firmly established as part of Western education throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The arts were positioned as part of an upper class intellectual education in Britain, but were positioned differently in 19th century USA as a component of a broad liberal and democratic education (Stankiewicz, 2000). Both of these discourses are evident in the ‘colonial’ vision of education in New Zealand.

2.3.1. A colonial vision of art education

Early colonial education in New Zealand was dominated by two discourses; firstly that education including art was for work, building the ‘new country’ and for homemaking, and secondly liberal education for citizenship, understanding of ideas and as an individual right (Harker, 1985). Reflecting these, art education was conceptualised as drawing to develop perception and improve hand-eye coordination, and also art appreciation through the study of great art works. Although by the 1930s art was an integral part of primary and intermediate programmes, it was largely regarded as a frill and less important than the three ‘Rs’ (Department of Education, 1978). This tension between art as part of a civilising general ‘education’ in its broadest sense and art as skills and attitudes for work was also evident in the debates that accompanied the 1990s’ educational reforms.

2.3.2. Progressivism

After the Great Depression of the 1930s during which much of the education system was dismantled, a Labour government was elected in 1935. It abolished the Proficiency examination and instigated educational reform. The international art theorists Lismer and Dengler visited in 1937 and received a very enthusiastic response from thousands of New Zealand primary teachers. Lismer and Dengler believed that all children have artistic creative powers which need to be developed into adult life and that children should be free to express themselves (Department of Education, 1978). Their views aligned with theories about children's progressive development and child centred education of theorists such as Piaget.

Gordon Tovey was National Supervisor of Arts and Crafts from 1946 to 1966. He was influenced by the theories of Read, Jung and Lowenfield. He believed in the power and importance of the imagination and "he wanted to sensitise teachers to the individual needs and expression of children, to prevent teaching of inappropriate techniques such as linear perspective, and to recognize the sincere efforts of children whose styles may differ markedly one from the other" (Department of Education 1978, p. 30). The conceptualisation of art as personal self-expression and a creative activity was embodied in the 1961 syllabus "Arts and Crafts in the Primary School". During the Tovey era art and craft were established as an essential part of primary schooling (Department of Education, 1978).

2.3.3. A modernist visual art education

Mansfield (1999) argues that all the syllabuses were modernist with their assumptions of universalism, individualism and rationalism. Art as a separate creative activity that could be understood in isolation from its social, cultural and historical contexts, the artist as the creator of meaning and that the great artists were individuals, mostly white men, underpin the syllabuses. Hierarchical models of culture, notions of artistic progress, growth and development and the honouring of works of art by the great masters, which students would learn to appreciate, were modernist features of all these documents. "Within the discourse of modernism, it has been European models of culture and civilization that have dominated curriculum thinking" (Foley, Hong & Thwaites, 1999, p. 21). Modernist ideas also underpinned the Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) approach of aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production,

which has been the dominant model for curriculum development in the arts in the USA since the 1990s (Eisner, 2002).

Māori arts and crafts were actively promoted in the 1960s by Tovey and there was a real push to encourage Māori cultural activities in all primary schools “in order to sustain interest in traditional culture and to allow children of the two races to come to understand one another better” (Department of Education, 1978, p. 36). Māori art advisors were appointed, many schools held ‘Māori’ days and Pākehā children were taught haka, stick games and poi. I recall being taught ‘Māori culcha’ with no understanding of meaning or purpose in a city school in the 1960s and having never talked to a Māori person. That these practices continued discourses and practices of colonisation and assimilation was probably never considered.

The primary art syllabuses in New Zealand strongly emphasised practical art making. Drawing skills were stressed in the 19th century syllabuses. Crafts have been included in New Zealand primary schools since the 1940s and the 1961 syllabus advocated 2-d work such as needlework, painting and linoprints and work ‘in the round’ including construction. This discourse of visual art as making and doing artworks also positioned visual art as isolated from a social, cultural, historical and political context. Thorburn (1981, as cited in Boyask, 2004) examined a schism in art education between this view of art as the expression of a singular self, which underpins colonial, progressive and modernist theories, and art as socially constructed.

2.3.4. A post-modern/critical vision

Postmodernism rejected ideas that there can be an ultimate truth and grand theories, and that the world we see is the result of hidden structures (Burr, 1995). Mansfield (1999) writes

The ideological features of humanism/liberalism – its privileging of the individual subject, in particular – can be offset in a variety of ways through an alternative approach to art education. Re-envisioning curriculum from a post-modern perspective has been a task with which curriculum theorists have been struggling. It has become a pressing project as the security of thinking of modernistic approaches to education which represented knowledge as stable, and curriculum as reproductive, is being left behind. (p. 27)

She advocates an alternative curriculum in which students interrogate the major issues of our time including environmental problems, feminism and cultural diversity.

Freedman and Wood (1999) agree that our definitions of art education need to be broadened to include more analysis of all forms of visual culture including multiple meanings. Duncum (2001) argues that art education must explore issues of power, domination and ethics while Fehr, Fehr and Keifer-Boyd (2000, p. xv) say

So where do we go? Critical theory's emphasis on challenging authority seems to be one signpost of tomorrow's art education. Post-modernism's dismissal of grand narratives seems to be another. Add feminist consciousness-raising and the political activism of a host of marginalized groups, and a picture begins to emerge.

The Curriculum Framework was published in 1993 in a political and economic context often termed the New Right in which discourses of marketisation and globalisation were dominant (Lee, O'Neill & McKenzie, 2004; McGee, 1997). It "is strongly oriented towards the political directions of the government's goals of competitiveness and economic efficiency" (McGee, 1997, p. 62). The Arts, arguably the least relevant to economic success, was the last learning area to be reformed. The potential reduction of visual art to one quarter of one seventh through having to share curriculum time with music, dance and drama received some criticism at the time (Anderson, 1998; Cassie, 1999).

The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum document was published in 2000 and compulsory for schools from 1st February 2004. It identifies the skills, knowledge and understanding that students will learn in the four disciplines of Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Art. The document's rigid structure and focus on teaching outcomes have been criticised (Langton, 2001; Mansfield, 1999). Langton (2000) contended the draft curriculum lacked vision and did not allow for teaching multiple perspectives, imagining possibilities and expressive and problem-solving skills. Boyask (2004) says the teacher and teacher expertise have been written out of the curriculum. She argues the concept of 'visual literacy' which is central to the document implies a linearity contrary to the actual experience of art and that students would become passive interpreters not active engagers in art practice. Interpretation of the curriculum and its use in practice are explored in this research.

The centralised curriculum documents are statements of the *intended* learning and teaching (Beane, Toepfer & Alessi, 1986). The *operational curriculum* happens in classrooms and schools in interaction. I now look more closely at the general fields of curriculum theory and development.

2.4. Curriculum theory

The meanings of ‘curriculum’ depend on their context. Grundy (1994) describes two broad categories of meaning: Curriculum as ‘object’ is documents including official syllabuses and school programmes, and curriculum as ‘action’ takes a pedagogical view that curriculum is a dynamic interaction of teachers, students, subject-matter and milieu. Curriculum as action importantly allows for unintended consequences. She says “the idea of the hidden curriculum is that the structures, organization and practices that characterise schooling themselves teach students all manner of powerful lessons” (p. 31).

There are a number of models of curriculum development, usefully grouped by Print (1993) into rational/objectives models of Taba (1962) and Tyler (1949), cyclical models of Wheeler (1967) and Nicholls and Nicholls (1978) and dynamic/interaction models including Skilbeck (1976), Walker (1971), plus that of McGee (1997). Many of these ‘traditional’ theories (Mutch, 2003) suggest curriculum development is an orderly and consensual process, often driven by experts. Goodson (1995) on the other hand describes curriculum as social conflict and that written curricula are the result of past conflicts over values and goals. Mutch (1997) describes a highly contested curriculum change – the development of the new Social Studies Curriculum - using Bordieu’s (1977) concepts of field, capital and habitus and Foucault’s (1981) notion of discourse. She problematises questions of what should be included, who makes the decisions and what forces have vied for control over the decision-making process. Importantly, issues of power and influence are foregrounded.

Curriculum development does not take place in a vacuum as Brady (1995) points out. “Questions concerning the nature of learning, the nature of society, teaching methods, desired outcomes and the nature of the learner are crucial ones that must be answered at every stage of development” (p. 58). He examines the contributions of philosophy, psychology and sociology.

The field is extremely complex. Wright (2000) identifies several characteristics of contemporary curriculum theorising, including:

- It is inherently political, contested and fractured.
- Canonical figures such as Freire and Habermas, and theoretical frameworks such as progressivism, hermeneutics, critical theory and phenomenology have waned.
- The framework of the “post-discourses” including postmodernism, and post-structuralism are increasingly influential.
- Discourses of multiculturalism, critical pedagogy and particularly cultural studies are predominant.

An eclectic approach is warranted. He says

Curriculum theorizing has been overtly politicized: It has been variously institutionalized, freed of institutional constraints, restricted to K-12 schooling and opened up to other pedagogical spaces, queered, raced, gendered, aestheticized, psychoanalysed, moralized, modernized, and postmodernized, all to such an extent that it presently demands a high degree of flexibility and tolerance from all involved...it is obvious that curriculum theorizing has diversified and fragmented to such an extent that it appears to have put to rest the possibility of continuing to falsely describe it as a cohesive field...What is demanded from all curricularists at present is flexibility, open-mindedness, and eclecticism. (Wright, 2000, p. 10)

Appropriately therefore, Pinar (2003) says “curriculum studies tend to be embedded in their national and regional settings, often stipulated by national educational policies and/or in reaction to them” (p. 1). Curriculum studies are situated historically and culturally. In New Zealand Roberts (2003) suggests “that although curriculum issues have attracted considerable comment in this country, a well-developed, multidisciplinary, interinstitutional program of curriculum studies is yet to emerge” (p. 505), due largely to New Zealand’s small size. He says “much of the work conducted by academics on curriculum matters in the 1990s addressed the *Framework* (or its precursor, *The National Curriculum of New Zealand*) and the other subject-based documents that followed from it” (p. 499).

A key theme in the New Zealand literature is the influences of ‘New Right’ neo-liberal ideologies on the educational reforms of the last thirty years. Lee, Hill and Lee

(2004) explain the connection between curricula and politics through written curricula which prescribe “‘legitimate’ knowledge while proscribing ‘by omission’ that which is considered irrelevant or non-essential” (p. 85). Key features of neo-liberal ideology are individualism, competition, globalisation, the efficiency of the market in sorting who gets what and economic efficiency prioritised over citizenship and collective rights (Lee, Hill & Lee, 2004; O’Neill, 2004). Peters and Marshall (2004) describe this New Right discourse.

The message is quite clear: in the past there has been too much emphasis on social and cultural objectives and insufficient attention paid to economic goals in our education system; henceforth we must invest heavily in education as the basis for future economic growth by redesigning the system to meet the needs of business and industry. (p. 115)

Elley (2004) and O’Neill (2004) are highly critical of the contract-driven *processes* of the curriculum reforms and their tight time frames, lack of transparency, and lack of input by teachers. The arbitrary and rigid eight-level structure of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* and the separate curriculum documents, and their focus on outcomes are criticised for leading to narrower and more directive teaching of skills isolated from context (O’Neill, 2004; Peters & Marshall, 2004) and to teacher deprofessionalisation and reduction of autonomy, increased workload and a heavily overloaded curriculum (Elley, 2004; Olssen & Matthews, 1997).

However Grundy (1987) says “it is not on the teacher’s shelf that one looks for the curriculum, but in the actions of the people engaged in education” (p. 7). Curriculum is enacted at many levels. Goodson (1995) notes

Central to the project of a pervasive reconceptualization of curriculum studies are the range of arenas and levels where curriculum is produced, negotiated and reproduced. A move towards a more historical and social constructionist view of curriculum work would have to work across the full range of these arenas and levels. Plainly this is an undertaking for a whole cohort of scholars and at the moment, one can only provide or point to a few parts of the mosaic of such a reconceptualised understanding. (p. 17)

This research, based on a small sample of primary teachers in one part of New Zealand in the first few years of the 21st century, is positioned as part of that mosaic.

2.5. Assessment

In the previous sections I examined concepts, theories and contexts of visual art, visual art education and curriculum. In this section I will examine some concepts and changing discourses of assessment in primary schools in New Zealand, with particular reference to the assessment of visual art.

There have been major changes in the discourses and practices of assessment in New Zealand over the past twenty years. Prior to the reforms teachers were responsible for what went on in their classrooms with little accountability for their teaching or the outcomes for children. Formal assessment was minimal and often reports for parents and school record cards were completed without any formal data-gathering (Crooks, 2002).

New concepts in assessment are now widely used. Two key types of assessment, summative and formative, are distinguished in the literature. The essential difference between them is their purpose. Assessment is formative when action is taken that is intended to improve student learning and summative when it is used to describe learning for reporting, audit and accountability, policy review and the award of national qualifications (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Hill (2000) and Anderson (2003) concluded that in New Zealand assessment practice is dominated by summative assessment. Professional development in assessment has overwhelmingly focused on summative assessment (Dixon & Williams, 2003) and Hill (2000) says many teachers found it difficult to articulate their ideas about learning theory and assessment. In their literature review on the effects of curricula and assessment on pedagogical approaches and educational outcomes, Carr, McGee, Jones, McKinley, Bell, Barr and Simpson (2003) found significant research gaps: “No research findings on assessment activities which would provide valid, reliable, trustworthy and fair information about Māori, Pacific nation or other minority students was found in the review” (p. 45).

Processes of formative assessment in classrooms are highly complex (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989; Torrance & Pryor, 2001). Tunstall and Gipps (1996) for example developed a typology of eight different types of formative feedback teachers gave to young children. Black and Wiliam (1998) contend the implementation of

formative assessment “calls for deep changes both in teachers’ perceptions of their own role in relation to their students and in their classroom practice” (p. 10).

Prior to the 1990s assessment practices and discourses were predominantly norm-referenced with a student’s achievement compared to others and achievement results distributed to a ‘normal’ distribution with most students clustered in the middle. Criterion-referenced assessment, which compares students’ achievement with established criteria rather than each other, has replaced norm-referenced assessment as the dominant discourse (Crooks, 2002).

The term ‘standards-based assessment’ is often used interchangeably with criterion-referenced assessment although Sadler (2003) says criteria and standards are not fully equivalent terms or concepts. Standards-based assessment is supposedly transparent and fair because students are assessed against a standard rather than each other. However Richards (2005) notes considerable confusion about standards, and Sadler says that the professional judgment of the teacher is always at the heart of all grading processes, including criteria-based assessment. Judgements of the quality of students’ work are a result of the teachers’ own standards and how other students have performed despite beliefs to the contrary. Anderson (2003) found teachers’ judgements about student performance in visual art were influenced by an internalised traditional discourse about intelligence and ability.

Codd (1997) argues that standards-based assessment links to a view of education understood to be a product rather than a process of learning. It assumes that standards can be clear, unambiguous, agreed in practice and interpreted consistently. He says it rests on an exaggerated faith in performance measurement, ‘objectivity’ and in those who set and monitor the standards.

Much of the international research on assessment has been on the results and effects of external assessment - national testing and large-scale surveys. When the results of external assessments are published and the results considered important they are termed ‘high stakes’. “The results of high stakes external assessments are often used as an informal yet powerful measurement of teacher and school effectiveness” (Carr et al, 2003, p. 42). In the USA national standards were introduced and national

assessment of the arts revived in the 1990s. Eisner (1999) criticises the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Arts Report Card. He says the assumption that one curriculum framework and one set of standards for each subject are appropriate for a nation of 50 million children is flawed and questions the appropriateness of using written responses to assess students' knowledge and skills in the arts. He concludes that if national testing is to improve the quality of education

... we will need to use its results to understand far more than how students perform on a collection of test items. We will need to pay attention to more than resources. We will need to pay attention to the culture and structure of schooling. All the testing in the world will not improve the quality of education in the visual arts. We must look deeper. (p. 5)

Limited validity is a criticism of much large scale, high stakes and external testing. Validity is defined as "the extent to which an assessment instrument actually does measure what it sets out to measure" and reliability as "the extent to which an assessment task is consistent in measuring what it sets out to measure" (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 49, 50). Ecological validity is how close the assessment comes to the actual activity to which its results are to be considered relevant (Black, 2000). In New Zealand PAT tests have been used for many years to compare students' achievement against cohort and age norms, yet the assessment measures used often bear little resemblance to actual classroom practice.

Assessment in New Zealand at primary and intermediate level is 'low stakes'. Standardised tests are used in a low-stakes way (Crooks, 2002). Results from the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) for example are not available for individual schools, teachers or children. The Ministry of Education's National Assessment Strategy is intended to develop teachers' assessment literacy and effective use of assessment information (Chamberlain, 2000). A number of tools are being developed to support the strategy including Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs), exemplars, ASTLE and the Assessment for Better Learning and ATol professional development contracts.

There has been very little research in New Zealand on assessment of visual art by primary teachers. Barry and Townsend (1995) researched a sample of Auckland primary teachers and concluded "teachers' evaluative comments made during art

lessons appeared designed to promote enjoyment, participation and self-expression rather than achievement, distinction, or even skill development” (p. 61). Langton (2001) investigated varying strategies to assess art and Anderson (2003) looked at secondary teachers’ understandings about assessment of year 11 students’ artwork. She concluded the continued valuing of summative assessments “resulted in a narrow formalist approach in classroom practice and continual controversy about assessment judgments. It seems that the status of art education is validated through examination results” (p. iii).

Further references to relevant research and theorising in assessment are included in chapter six.

2.6. Social constructionism

I selected social constructionism as the overarching theory which gives the study coherence. It fitted my methodological choices, my position and the emergent themes. Burr (2003) describes four key features of social constructionism:

- A critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge
- Ways of understanding the world are culturally and historically specific
- People construct their understandings of the world between them in their daily interactions
- Constructions of the world sustain some patterns of social action and exclude others.

She says there is no objective truth given to people or the world, waiting to be discovered. “We are born into a world where the conceptual frameworks and categories used by the people in our culture already exist... When people talk to each other the world gets constructed” (Burr, 2003, p. 7).

Hibberd (2005) says most social constructionists would agree that “the traditional categories of cognition (including perception and memory), motivation, emotion, learning, social behaviour, etc., are not properties in each individual’s head, but are grounded in discourse... and that discourse is central to the constitution of at least social reality” (p. 3). Social constructionism focuses on interactions and social

practices and the key role of language. “Our language serves to construct what we take to be the world” (Gergen, 1994, as cited in Hibberd, 2005, p. 4). Language is structured into a number of discourses.

Burr (2003) defines discourse as “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 64) and that “numerous discourses surround any object and each strives to represent or ‘construct’ it in a different way” (p. 65). Discourses manifest themselves in texts – conversations, written material, visual images, clothing, buildings etc., and the things people say and write depend for their meaning on the discursive context. Discourses are intimately connected to the way society is organised and run, “to the structures and practices that are lived out in society from day to day, and it is in the interest of relatively powerful groups that some discourses and not others receive the stamp of truth” (p. 76).

Burr (2003) discusses Foucault’s (1979) notion of disciplinary power in which power resides in prevailing knowledges that manage and control society and its members efficiently and without force. “People are disciplined and controlled by freely subjecting themselves to the scrutiny of others especially ‘experts’ and to their own self-scrutiny. Such disciplinary power, he believes, is a much more effective and efficient form of control” (Burr, 2003, p. 72). For Foucault, knowledge and power always go together. What counts as ‘knowledge’ or ‘common sense’ is the particular construction of events and the world that is given the ‘stamp of truth,’ and marginalises other potential explanations.

What it is possible for one person to do to another, under what rights and obligations, is given by the version of events currently taken as knowledge. Therefore the power to act in particular ways, to claim resources, to control or be controlled depends upon the knowledges prevailing in a society. We can exercise power by drawing upon discourses which allow our actions to be represented in an acceptable light. Foucault therefore sees power not as some form of possession, which some people have and others do not, but as an effect of discourse. (Burr, 2003, p. 68)

Goodson (1994) applies social constructionism specifically to curriculum and takes up a middle ground between a focus on individuals and a focus on structures, linking macro-theories of educational knowledge and inequalities with micro-theories of

classroom interaction, according to Hargreaves (1994). “Exploring curriculum as social construction allows us to study, indeed exhorts us to study, the intersection of individual biography and social structure” (Goodson, 1994, p. 23). Although the notion of ‘structure’ is contentious within a social constructionist perspective, teachers’ constructions of the structures within which they work are relevant. O’Neill (2004) describes curriculum as a complex “reciprocal and relational process of *active* construction by teachers and students – one underpinned by the relations of power which shape wider society” (p. 26).

Goodson (1994) contends that the central curriculum which was fought for should not be taken as a given by researchers. The ‘high ground’ of the written curriculum is subject to negotiation at the lower levels of the curriculum and he argues for research at the macro and micro levels. “What we require is a combined approach: a focus on the construction of prescriptive curriculum and policy coupled with an analysis of the negotiations and realization of that prescribed curriculum, focusing on the essentially dialectical relationship of the two” (p. 112). This research takes a social constructionist approach to the operational visual art curricula within wider political and social contexts. The decision not to provide an overall definition of ‘curriculum’ is deliberate and consistent with the social constructionist and grounded theory approaches taken in this research.

2.7. Summary

This chapter has outlined concepts from theoretical fields relevant to this study. Decisions made throughout this research were informed by theoretical influences as described here. Relevant aspects of the historical, political and social context were selected and described.

Throughout this chapter various positions and ideologies were outlined. The fields of visual art, visual art education, curriculum and assessment are all complex uncertain and contested. Within these complex fields there are various tensions and competing positions. “The field of qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions, contradictions and hesitations” say Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 15). Indeed social life itself is characterised by ‘tensions, contradictions and hesitations’ and these are evident throughout this study. Macro-level issues such as government policies as well

as micro-level focuses of individual children and classrooms all contribute to the tensions and complexities⁴ of teaching. Primary teachers both enact and reflect various positions and ideologies in their discourses and practices.

This chapter provides the background and the context within which the emergent themes are framed and new theoretical propositions might arise. The next chapter details the methodological positions and decisions that framed the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The qualitative methodology used to conduct this study is outlined in this chapter. I explain the rationale for this, the research design and the methods used to gather, analyse and interpret the data. I also discuss some of the decisions made during the course of the project.

3.1. Research design and rationale

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe qualitative research as an umbrella term for several research strategies that share certain characteristics: Research questions are framed to investigate topics in their complexity in context, rather than by operationalising variables. The data are rich in description of people, places and conversations and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Qualitative researchers are concerned with understanding process as well as outcomes and with behaviour from the subjects' own perspectives.

The qualitative design of this research followed from its purpose (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). It aimed to find out how teachers constructed meaning in the context of their classrooms and schools. The intention was to generate rich data from which themes and patterns would emerge. My goal was to understand visual art operational curricula and assessment from the point-of-view of the teachers. According to Eisner (1994) qualitative approaches can give more meaningful information about education than research based on isolating factors out of context.

Davidson and Tolich (1999) argue that all research is underpinned by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Underlying the interpretive approach in education are assumptions that the 'reality' of teaching, including assessment, exists as teachers 'know' and experience it and give it meaning. The actions and products of teaching and assessment cannot be separated from their context and cannot be studied as isolated variables. My data were teachers' spoken words from our conversations and the words in written documents. The actual research methods of interviews and

document analysis were consistent with my methodological decisions and assumptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

The detailed research design evolved over the course of the project. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) say

Qualitative researchers avoid going into a study with hypotheses to test or specific questions to answer. They believe that shaping the questions should be one of the products of data collection rather than assumed a priori. The study itself structures the research, not preconceived ideas or any precise research design. Their work is inductive. (p. 49)

I began data collection with ideas, assumptions and my initial research questions from my personal agenda and literature review (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). The research questions and focus changed throughout the project as a result of the ongoing data collection, analysis and reflection. Immediately after each interview I made field notes, listened to the tape and noted ideas questions and themes. These initial ideas and analyses informed the next interview. This was important as I wanted the teachers to define and explore the topics and issues of interest to them but within my overall purpose. As well as gathering primary data I continued to search the literature which further informed my data collection and analysis.

This research used a grounded theory *approach* (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I was constructing a picture that took shape as I collected and examined the parts. Important questions and concerns emerged throughout from the ongoing research. This approach aimed to understand some aspects of this particular group of teachers and their settings through description and theory rather than develop a coherent social theory as advocated by Glaser and Strauss (cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) say “the search for grand narratives is being replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and particular situations” (p. 29). Understanding the particular can increase experiential knowledge and substantive theory, and connect the micro-level of individual action to the macro-level of social structures and processes (Neuman, 1997). A grounded theory approach was appropriate to explore the context of school, educational change and national curricula and policies as the teachers experienced these.

3.2. Sampling

My aim was to maximise the richness and depth of information. Non-probability sampling was appropriate as my sample was not intended to be representative. My sample was illustrative as is appropriate for a study of this size. *Theoretical* sampling is a strategy of deliberately selecting cases to study. As concepts and theory were generated, I sought new cases to clarify or falsify my perceptions and inform the developing theory (Davidson & Tolich, 1999; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Potential participants were selected *purposively* for a range of characteristics: Teaching experience, age of class, decile and size of school and particularly a teacher's interest in visual art. This was a key characteristic in my sampling strategy as I wanted to ensure teachers with little interest in, enjoyment of or commitment to teaching visual art were represented as well as teachers who were very interested. Included in the sample were some teachers with visual art leadership roles. Each teacher was from a different school, in order to understand a range of school practices. Although I attempted to represent varying views through my purposive sampling strategy, no claim can be made that the views of my participants represent the views of the wider population of New Zealand primary teachers.

Seven teachers were interviewed in the second half of 2004 and two more teachers were interviewed in early 2005. When interpretation of interviews revealed no new significant insights (data saturation) interviewing was stopped (Miller & Crabtree, 2004).

3.3. Participants

The participants were all practising primary teachers in the Nelson, Tasman and West Coast areas. Four male and five female teachers participated. They were teaching juniors to years seven and eight children. The nine schools ranged from decile two to decile nine and included integrated, semi-rural and urban types. The teachers' experience ranged from less than two to more than thirty years.

I used my networks to identify approach and gain access to participants. Potential participants were contacted initially by phone and briefed on the research. All agreed to participate and an interview appointment was made. Participants were informed

about ethics, the consent form and the research process. Interviews took place in a variety of settings and were taped. Interview questions, process and data were constantly analysed and amendments made before selecting further teachers for interview.

3.4. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were given careful attention. The research was approved by the Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee and carried out in accordance with its standards. Participants were given information about the project and its rationale. There was no pressure to participate. Indeed the teachers were all very willing and several said they enjoyed the interviews.

Before any interviewing took place, written permission was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured of their and their schools' anonymity and the confidentiality of all information gathered. All teachers involved in the study were given pseudonyms and the schools not identified. Any information that might identify particular schools or teachers was not reported. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the project at any time. None chose to do so. Anonymity, confidentiality and trust were essential in order that the teachers were freely able to express their views. Data have been used for this thesis and will be used for related journal articles. The data are kept securely, the transcripts are non-identifiable and all data will be destroyed after three years. Copies of information letters and consent forms are attached as appendix one.

As well as the ethical issues of participation there were ethical issues related to the dissemination of the research. Sikes (in Hughes, 2003, p. x) said "Dissemination is an acutely political and ethical process. Whose voices are heard, how findings are represented, just exactly what is disseminated and to whom, and how it is interpreted, are crucial concerns."

Relevant considerations were the reporting of the information and its use once released, the audience including the participants, and potential impacts on both researcher and researched. The findings may be used for ends at odds with, or even harmful to, participants. An example of this was the finding about how some teachers

‘manipulated’ assessment information, which could be used by politicians to justify national testing in primary schools. This was unanticipated but I considered it important to include because of the larger concerns this practice raised.

Ethical principles are not simply a series of hoops to jump through before beginning research say Munford and Sanders (2001). After I sent a written summary of the results to the participants and invited their responses, one rang to say she was really concerned at the implication she couldn’t and didn’t plan high quality visual art units. We discussed her quotes I had used. She said she stood by her comments and accepted the implications. Ongoing formal and informal dialogue and negotiation together with reflection and commitment to ethical principles throughout were essential to ethics as “a process more than a problem to be resolved” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 87).

Alton-Lee (2001) believes “ethical issues of teacher and researcher voice and power can be most effectively addressed when the researcher has experience as a classroom teacher” (p. 89). I consider that my extensive classroom experience enabled me to understand the teachers’ perspectives. I was mindful of reporting the findings fairly and respectfully, which presented some ethical dilemmas. For example although I was concerned at the minimal multiculturalism in the reported visual art I presented this finding in a non-judgmental way.

I asked ‘who is benefiting?’ and ‘how?’ throughout. I benefited through gaining skills as a researcher and hopefully a qualification, and it was important that the teachers benefited. I see the outcomes of this research as a positive contribution to educational practice and to teachers’ lives, and perhaps indirectly to children’s lives (Alton-Lee, 2001) through later dissemination of these findings in articles and conference presentations.

3.5. Methods

My research purpose was to find out teachers’ perspectives. This purpose drove the choice of interviews as the main research method. I rejected participant observation as a method because of the potential conflict between my role as a researcher and my role as college lecturer. I decided it was likely that teachers, particularly those not

confident, would see me as an 'expert' in visual art teaching and this would influence their teaching. I would be unlikely to see usual or typical lessons. I did not look at unit plans even though some of the teachers gave me these because I was not interested in written intentions.

3.5.1. Interviews

Millar and Crabtree (2004) say

The depth interview is a powerful qualitative research tool when the focus of inquiry is narrow, the respondents represent a clearly defined and homogenous bounded unit with an already known context, the respondents are familiar and comfortable with the interview as a means of communication, and the goal is to generate themes and narratives. (p. 186)

This study met all these criteria. I conceptualised the interview as a particular communicative event with two active participants who established a relationship and constructed meaning. The interview consisted of the specific social situation and the communication – both message and form.

I knew all the teachers and the interviews were friendly and informal. The conversations ranged over a number of topics and issues of interest to both the teachers and myself. These interviews did not fit the model of a hierarchical relationship and a controlled exchange where a skilled interviewer provides the stimulus and the interviewee the response. The informal interview tends to resemble casual conversations pursuing interests of both the researcher and the respondent and does not involve any specific type or sequence of questioning. The intent is to find out what people think.

However the interviews in this study differed from everyday conversations in their explicit purpose and they were systematic (Glesne, 1999; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). They provided an opportunity for discussion and clarification and to maximise description. They allowed me access to teachers' perspectives and thoughts in their own words. The interviews focused on programmes, issues and processes but not on people's lives as in the ethnographic interview (Glesne, 1999).

I flexibly used a one-page interview guide of three parts: Introductory questions, a list of recurrent themes and a set of generic prompts (Tolich & Davidson, 1999) attached as appendix two. After each interview I modified the guide. After two or three interviews and as I became more confident I was less reliant on the interview guide.

3.5.2. Document analysis

Document analysis is appropriate to investigate ‘products’ as a source of data. It involves an examination of the content of documents. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) note documents can provide insight into the perspectives of people who write and use them and into organisational processes. In this study I undertook limited qualitative analysis of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. The need for this emerged from the conversations. Analysis of the language and the messages of the curriculum document provided a broader picture of the field, background and context and ensured the central curriculum was not taken as a given (Goodson, 1994). I looked at the text for meanings and assumptions in relation to wider ideological and political issues and particularly focused on the intentions of the document. I used this data to further investigate and clarify the context and influence of this document on the teachers’ construction of their operational visual art curricula.

3.6. Data analysis and interpretation

Immediately following each interview I recorded field notes and throughout the research process I made memos of questions and thoughts. The interviews were taped, professionally transcribed and then checked and corrected by me. Initially I annotated each transcript with key words, questions and themes. I read and reread the transcripts and listened to the tapes many times. From this immersion in the data I sought repeated patterns. As I became increasingly familiar with the data and its complexity, my initial codes were renamed and subdivided. The interpretive process was on-going and informed each subsequent interview (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). Data collection and analysis proceeded together.

After the initial coding phase I cut up the photocopied transcripts and glued chunks of text onto labeled sheets of paper. Some of the data belonged to multiple codes. The processes of constructing and reconstructing the data were messy and chaotic. I

discussed ideas, problems and questions with participants, my supervisors, colleagues and friends throughout, both formally and informally. Throughout the process of sorting, analysing and writing I created concept maps to categorise and make sense of the information. As well I continued to read the literature. Themes emerged from these processes and were altered throughout the analysis processes. In writing up I continually changed chapter structures and headings and shifted text around. I removed the ‘ums,’ ‘ers’ and pauses from the quotations but kept the slang and non-grammatical speech in order to better convey the teachers’ voices.

Finally I decided on the overall structure of six chapters. The findings are described and interpreted in chapters four and five. Throughout the research I constantly questioned and critically reflected on the meaning and implications of the findings and my place in the research. Some implications and a more critical perspective became the basis of chapter six.

3.7. Representation and positioning myself

In qualitative research the researcher is the main research instrument (Davidson & Tollich, 1999). Throughout the research the researcher actively formulates shapes selects and creates the process and she or he is shaped by it. Behind the activities of research

stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis). (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 30)

Lincoln and Denzin (2003) say the qualitative researcher is creative and interpretive, artistic and political. They use the metaphor of the qualitative researcher as *bricoleur*, a maker of quilts or montages.

The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience (p. 7) ...The product of the interpretive bricoleur’s labor is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage – a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts to the whole. (p. 9)

The colours patterns and motifs, the forms and functions of the quilt are influenced by the cultural and social context, and the quilter is similarly bound both to copy and to create.

In writing this thesis I struggled with whose voices were represented and how. This is my story but I did not want to be the central character. I wanted the teachers' voices to be heard. I framed the study, selected participants and actively participated in the conversations. In writing this thesis I chose which quotes to use and how to use them and constructed the narrative. Yet in the way I have chosen to write this including the use of the third person voice in the findings chapters, I have made myself largely invisible. This struggle has been termed a 'crisis of representation' by Lincoln and Denzin (2003).

Hertz (1997, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 282) describes voice as

a struggle to figure out how to present the author's self while simultaneously writing the respondents' accounts and representing their selves. Voice has multiple dimensions: First, there is the voice of the author. Second, there is the presentation of the voices of one's respondents within the text.

Much traditional writing sustains structures of privilege from a knowing researcher to a not-knowing audience. Gergen and Gergen (2003) say methodology that attempts to give voice to 'the other' favours self/other difference and reifies the 'knowing one', and Alton-Lee (2001) contends the process, not the researcher, should give voice to the participants and thus dialogue is essential. However maintaining dialogue with others including participants was difficult because they were all very busy. Although researchers are experimenting with different ways of representation such as multiple voicing and story-telling (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003), I decided to use a more traditional approach albeit with awareness of the limitations.

Lincoln and Guba (2003) discuss the place of reflexivity.

Reflexivity forces us to come to terms not only with our choice of research problem and with those with whom we engage in the research process, but with our selves and with the multiple identities that represent the fluid self in the research process. (p. 283)

In the research process we bring and create our selves, and reflexivity demands that we question these and how these shaped our interactions with our respondents. In

these processes I brought and became my selves of teacher, lecturer, woman, researcher, listener, writer and learner. However Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2003) say although it may be true that researchers are never absent from our texts, inserting brief autobiographical details may serve to assert the researcher's authority and "flooding the text with ruminations on the researchers' subjectivities also has the potential to silence participants" (p. 170). I was wary of including snippets of autobiography that would serve no clear purpose other than to 'get me in there', and thus be merely artifice.

Decisions about representation must take into account the intended audience, and for you, the reader, I finally decided to use a conventional approach. I assumed your understanding of research and educational terms and have tried to use 'plain English' throughout. I have chosen to declare my position and my subjectivities but to allow sufficient distance for the various voices to be heard (Mutch, 2003). This dissertation is the stories of my participants, the written curriculum and the literature, and myself. I am the quiltmaker, the user of strategies and materials, the chooser and the questioner and this dissertation is a quilt of interconnected interpreted representations.

3.8. Limitations, trustworthiness and generalisability

The interview has a number of limitations as a research method. Miller and Crabtree (2004) say

The depth interview concentrates on the figure at the expense of the ground – it focuses on facilitating a co-construction of the interviewer's and an informant's experience and understanding of the topic of interest and not necessarily on the context of that understanding. (p. 188)

The interviews were staged events away from the interactive contexts of classroom and school and my understandings were limited to teachers' talk about their practices. The students were absent.

To achieve trustworthiness I was continually alert to my own views (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As a practising visual artist and college lecturer in visual art I have a deep commitment to visual art teaching and particular views about teaching and learning. With this awareness I tried to ask non-leading questions, affirmed all responses both verbally and non-verbally and reiterated the anonymity and

confidentiality of the teachers and schools. I tried to be enthusiastic, non-judgmental, show interest, be empathetic and put my opinions aside (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). I searched for ideas that didn't fit, questioned and critically reflected throughout, asked friends and colleagues to assist with developing codes and interpretation, and shared the interpretative process with participants.

A number of strategies were used to consider and improve the credibility and transferability of the findings. The issue of generalisability needs to be explored and reported on say Bogdan and Biklen (1998). Generalisation is possible to other similar situations, future times and from the reported description so the reader can relate and draw conclusions, and greater generalisability can be claimed if a broad range of cases has been examined (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). These issues are further discussed in chapter six.

The research framework, design, methodology, methods and decisions made throughout the research process were outlined in this chapter. The findings are presented in the voices of the participants, the academic literature and myself in the next three chapters. In the next chapter, the first of the findings chapters, the teachers' constructions and positioning of their visual art curricula are described.

Chapter 4: Construction and positioning of visual art: Influences, context and complexity

It would be a sad day when things like PE and the arts and those lesser non-academic type curriculum areas are pushed aside for a little bit more maths or numpa. I better not say that too loudly! (Owen)

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is the first of the two in which the research findings are described and interpreted. In this chapter the teachers' constructed visual art curricula and the positioning of visual art within the wider curriculum context are described. Assessment requirements were a major influence on curriculum and the construction of assessment is discussed in chapter five.

I understand curriculum to be both series of written documents and processes in action and will use Eisner's (1994) terms of *intended* and *operational* curriculum. The intended curriculum is that which is planned and the operational curriculum is that which is enacted in the classroom. This chapter discusses the teachers' *operational* visual art curricula as described by them. The curriculum field is complex and fragmented and curriculum theory is contextual and contested.

This chapter focuses on the discourses and practices by which these teachers actively constructed curricula including how they used *The Arts in The New Zealand Curriculum*. Mutch (2003) describes a range of institutional, contextual and personal influences on the construction of curriculum at a macro-level. The focus of this study is the operational level of the nine teachers and schools. The construction and positioning of visual art was a complex interaction of influences. The central visual arts curriculum document was only one of these. Of far greater significance was the influence of the schools, although there was considerable variation between them. Personal influences are also described. The macro-level of the wider context is relevant and included through consideration of influences on curriculum construction. This bricolage of visual arts curricula at the operational level was multi-layered. The key themes of complexity and context underpin this chapter.

4.2. Visual art as doing and making artworks

The teachers talked about their most recent visual art lessons and units, which provided a concrete context for discussion and gave a 'slice' of what visual art was taught and how it was being taught. Both content and teaching strategies are key dimensions of the operational curriculum and inextricably linked. In their practices and their discourses teachers constructed views of what visual art is and how to teach it.

The teaching of skills and techniques and a focus on artworks dominated all the visual art lessons described by all the teachers in this study. Gemma's lesson for example was about producing a pinch pot from clay and the skills to do this. Yvonne's focus was on making artworks and the skills of using water colours and mixing colours.

We worked with watercolours and through watercolours the children made a fish, the main skill for them was actually mixing watercolours and putting them on and they were asked to make colours, mix colours together to create their colours and they also used pencil once their watercolours had dried to draw on top (Yvonne).

Closely linked with the teaching of skills were discourses of formalism, which several teachers used to describe their visual art lessons. Formalism focuses on the formal elements and principles of design and the analysis of the formal qualities of line, shape, rhythm etc. at the expense of overt narrative content (Freedman, 2001).

It was pencil and then we looked at the line and then tone with making the limbs look 3D (Barbara).

We did some still life and we worked with line, that was the skill it was based on, just used different techniques of line and just did some still life drawings (Yvonne).

There was a range of media used by the teachers in this study including collage, acrylic and watercolour paint and mosaics. Crafts such as clay and fabric and fibre as well as painting, drawing or 'fine art' were equally represented. This was different to Duncum's (2001) assertion that Australian school art privileges fine art over craft. As noted in chapter two, crafts have been actively taught in New Zealand primary schools for decades.

This active teaching of skills and techniques was in marked contrast to the 1930s to 1970s where progressive theories that visual art was about creative self-expression dominated and there was often very little active teaching of visual art (Boyask, 2004; Department of Education, 1978).

Closely linked to the construction of visual art as doing and making artworks was the positioning of visual art as non-academic. Practical art making provided opportunities for children who were not 'academic' or who struggled with written literacy and numeracy. This was a powerful discourse expressed by all the teachers.

I think it is important because there are a lot of kids that art is the only thing they're good at, a practical thing, it's so nice, the kids who drive you mad during the day with reading and writing and they struggle with everything suddenly they're good at something. (Gemma).

It's like all of the arts really, there's some of my children just come to life when I'm doing any of the arts units, they just come to life they're kids who might not show much interest in other things (Yvonne).

Paul described a non-academic future for some children.

There is a lot of kids whose lives aren't going to go down the academic road that you know traditional sort of academic paths and these days a lot of people get pretty good bright futures in arty, in the art areas.

Several said that visual art provides relief from the academic curriculum areas.

In school this year the focus is on numeracy and literacy and I think you've got to be careful that you don't make a programme too heavy in that direction and make the programme boring and visual arts can provide some relief and I think there's nothing wrong with having a day out from time to time for visual arts and really getting into an aspect of it (Graeme).

Although visual art was positioned as non-academic, four of the teachers strongly believed that it was a 'serious' subject.

The children enjoy doing visual art it's a fun time but it's also quite a serious time too, when we're focusing on a particular aspect of visual arts we take it quite seriously and they do too and it raises the standard as well (Graeme).

Others had a different view. William saw it as a relaxing time for children and Paul described how some teachers regarded visual art as time out.

I do know that sometimes other teachers do just give out paper and tell them to draw and it might be for very valid reasons like if you're overloaded and

you've got unit assessments to do or running records to do or something like that (Paul).

The afternoon is a good time for visual art because the children are tiring particularly the last five weeks of term the children will be tired out they just want to cruise a bit, they need to cruise a bit so it's a good time (William).

This discourse of the arts as non-academic is exemplified in the rationale offered for emphasising crafts written in 1942.

Handcrafts were thought to offer relaxation from the ordinary routine of the school day, to give training for the constructive use of leisure, to help hand and eye coordination and, most importantly, to satisfy the impulse in children to create, to make something. Crafts...could provide this opportunity for all children, whereas only the lucky few could create in words, the majority being content to use words for fairly prosaic purposes. (Department of Education, 1978, p. 20)

These teachers' discourses and practices of visual art as making artworks and teaching skills and techniques, using formalist language, were hegemonic. They were unquestioned and accepted. Hegemonic practices are also normative. They assume and construct what visual art teaching should and should not be. Mansfield (1999) writes

Yet the conception of art education as knowing how to make artworks, and knowing how to appreciate and understand artworks, constructs art education as unconnected to human matters such as political, moral and religious values, its social and cultural production. (p. 25)

Eisner (1994) challenges the underlying discourse. He says "the idea that the arts deal with feeling and that reading and arithmetic deal with thinking is a part of the intellectual belief structure that separates cognition from affect" (p. 92). He believes that the arts foster "those cognitive capacities we treasure the most; the ability to think metaphorically, refined human sensibility, the ability to be flexibly purposive, the ability to notice and create coherent relationships, the tolerance for multiple meanings emanating from single events" (Eisner, 1999, p. 7).

All the teachers interviewed, including those who disliked teaching it, believed visual art is important for children and described the many benefits including the enjoyment, satisfaction and success children get from the visual arts.

It's another form of expression and when you think of all the different media and even the excitement sometimes and the pleasure that the kids get out of

producing something that they're really pleased with, that it can be displayed on the walls so it gives them a sense of pride or just satisfaction (Barbara).

Gemma believed that the sense of achievement that children gain from success in visual art was generalised into a self-belief as a successful learner.

I think visual art gives them a sense of achievement that they've been successful at something cause at the beginning when they're making something they'd say this is too hard, there's no way Ms. G. we can do this, it's just too difficult...by the end of it they're like wow I made one too and they're so proud and I think that's important for their learning that they see themselves as successful learners.

Related to the idea that visual art is important so that all children can experience success is the idea that all children are good at something. Yvonne said

There are children out there who it's important for them like it's something they are good at and they should be given the opportunity to excel in you know because I honestly believe that we've all, everyone of us has got a gift in some place or another and for some children that's their area ...but that works in all areas of the curriculum, because there's gonna be strong readers and there'll be weak readers and strong mathematicians and there's gonna be ones that don't choose that.

So far this chapter has described teachers' operational visual arts curricula without any reference to the central curriculum. I now explore how teachers said they were using this document.

4.3. Influence of the central curriculum

4.3.1. Teachers' use of 'The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum'

All teachers in New Zealand state and integrated schools are required to teach the New Zealand Curriculum. The teachers in this study were generally positive about the *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* document.

I think it's good...when you compare it with some of the other curriculum documents, you know it sort of comes towards the end, I think it's more useable than a lot of the other ones, it's easy to use...just the way it's set out (Barbara).

They all used the document very selectively. Kathy said "I hardly ever look at the curriculum". Barbara and Graeme both fitted the curriculum document to what they wanted to do.

I would probably use the curriculum document at the *end*, you know, I might think, what do I want to do first, I wouldn't look at the curriculum document and say oh well I'm going to do that and then fit it in, it's the other way round really (Barbara).

I find the strands are a bit of a nuisance. I've got to keep on thinking now what the heck is PK and yeah I find those a bit of a nuisance. I tend to ignore them to be quite honest and focus on what I believe to be important (Graeme).

Not only were the strands and the achievement objectives the only parts of the document used, the 'PK Developing Practical Knowledge' strand was used much more than the other three.

Paul was the only teacher who used all four strands in the unit described.

We did lava-lavas out of calico using the repeated pattern. There was knowing about their processes, to know how to make and create patterns, use the textile lengths, put them all onto the calico and the context was looking at Pacific Island patterns before you did it, how they take shapes from nature and there's rotation, reflection, translation to make these patterns, we did a lot of that sort of thing with maths as well and generating ideas. They all brought along leaves and things and made their own patterns that they wanted in the lava-lavas and they communicated, they explained to other kids why they chose a particular pattern, what it represented to them sort of thing like try to get across their meaning.

He commented on the value of using all four strands.

I like the structure of the curriculum, I like the four strands because it takes you away from just making something and it brings in the wider world.

Barbara described using the 'DI Developing Ideas' strand.

With the new arts curriculum I'm doing more exploration with materials rather than giving them something and they have to make it...In the first session I gave them heaps of material, pipe cleaners, boxes, and I gave them a few ideas, lace, scrunching up newspaper and covering it with material, they had to draw and make a 3D mini-beast. We had heaps of books from the National Library so I said to them if you're not sure, if you haven't got any ideas in your head go and find a book and so some of them did that.

Although Barbara liked the four strands

I think they're quite sensible those strands, you know, like we have to teach the kids the means to do it and they go and create it, talk about it, and then they relate what they're doing to their society or in the past, so I mean it's sensible,

she said

I mean I wouldn't say that we're going to do, and I don't probably intend to do much about, you know the last one about relating art to society.

These teachers selected from the curriculum document aspects that fitted with their views of visual art teaching. I was also interested in the parts of the document not used by the teachers. Some aspects of the document are prescribed whereas others are optional, as indicated by the language of the document.

4.3.2. The visual arts curriculum document: Intentions

McGee (1997) says the intention of right wing groups was that the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* would provide a means of much greater control on what teachers would teach. However for visual art and music many teachers were demanding more prescription and guidance. The 1989 music and art syllabuses were criticised as being too open to interpretation, lacking guidance and direction and requiring too much specialist art knowledge of primary teachers who were mostly generalist teachers (Henderson, 1998).

Each of the separate curriculum documents that make up the New Zealand Curriculum outlines what *must* and *will* be taught and what *might* be taught. *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* requires that primary students will study all four disciplines (p. 7) and all four strands (p. 90). Requirements for health and safety are strongly mandatory (p. 106) and planning and assessment are also prescribed.

However the language of the document reveals that many aspects are suggested rather than prescribed including learning examples which “provide *guidance* to teachers” (p. 13), that schools *may* link with artists and community and teachers *should* consider gender issues.

In their background paper to the draft curriculum document Foley, Hong and Thwaites (1999) write “Importantly, the document adopts a postmodern stance which acknowledges pluralism” (p.18) and “one of the major paradigm shifts in arts education has concerned the acknowledgement of multiculturalism as an issue for consideration in education policy, curriculum design and school practice” (p. 13).

Only two of the teachers in this study talked about including art from any culture other than European/Pākehā. Paul's unit on Pacifica patterns and making lavalava was noted previously, and in the previous year Graeme had taught

a landscape using mostly korus as the line form and combining them...we looked at Celtic art and knots and so forth and compared that with korus too.

In the current year however, he had not included a multicultural dimension.

There are mixed messages in the curriculum document with respect to cultural diversity and inclusiveness:

- Arts education *must* embrace these diverse traditions (of the European, Pacific and other cultures that make up our nation) and the heritage of the tangata whenua, respecting and responding to the many ways in which students experience and express their own sense of identity. (p. 104)

but also

- Education in the visual arts *may* include the art forms of all cultures, past and present. (p. 71)

The lack of inclusion of bicultural or multicultural visual art by teachers means that non-Pākehā children are denied opportunities to understand and explore their origins and identities. Young people learn a white eurocentric view of visual art and Pākehā children lose an opportunity to understand diversity. A eurocentric curriculum does “little to connect children from ethnic minorities with other histories relevant to them and their families” and it does “little to connect white children to their peers and place them in a global context of heterogeneity” (Jones, 2002, p. 281). Teachers' exclusion of bicultural and multicultural visual art constructed it as Pākehā.

Teachers' discourses reflected mostly past non-controversial and Western views of visual art. Popular and protest art for example, were not mentioned. I contrast the teachers' views with those of my College of Education student teachers whose choices of visual art to research included local waka, environmental sculpture and issues of sustainability, and the art made by a community group with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses.

It seems that despite the intentions of the curriculum writers that critical pedagogy and inclusive approaches to teaching and learning in the arts be included (Foley et al., 1999) these were absent or minimal in practice. Mansfield (1999, p. 25) writes that school art continued to “be interpreted as the teaching of ‘how to’ make ‘works of art’” even after the 1989 syllabus aimed for students “to develop an understanding of the actions and relationships in cultures and society”. The findings support Mansfield’s conclusions. However, I consider *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* allows for post-modern and critical perspectives. Rather it was the teachers and schools by their decisions and selections from the document who constructed their visual art as modernist. The issue of their professional development in visual art is relevant but as will be seen school influences, assessment requirements and the overcrowded curriculum were particularly powerful in the construction of curricula.

These teachers had considerable autonomy in their use of *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. They used it at the end of their teaching if at all. It may be that this high degree of autonomy teachers had in visual art was in part because of the marginalised position of the arts. The positioning of visual art and the influence of the schools on operational curricula are explored next.

4.4. Visual art within wider operational curricula

The discourse of visual art as doing and making artworks differentiated it from academic subjects. Some teachers and schools positioned it at the margins within their wider curricula. I include as the ‘wider curricula’ all the subjects and content. All the teachers talked about an ‘overcrowded curriculum’ of separate subjects which they and their schools positioned and prioritised.

4.4.1. Curriculum as separate subjects

All these teachers and schools constructed the wider operational curriculum as separate subjects.

We’ve got to do science technology social studies and art, break down all the arts material, drama and visual arts it’s just too much...by the time I get my reading and maths organised for the week that’s quite a few hours gone (William).

Integration of visual art with other subjects was non-existent in seven of the nine schools. Only two of the teachers described any. Paul said the gala day and the school concert provided authentic contexts for the arts. For Barbara however integration was not so much about authenticity of context but about getting through all curriculum areas.

We're moving towards integrated units, in the first term our topic was the solar system so the art was related to that and the second term was the Olympics and I taught the visual arts with moving body parts (Barbara).

Understanding how people use and value artefacts, and communicate with visual symbols also links closely with English and Social Studies, and thus visual art lends itself to integration with these. However the hegemonic understanding of visual art as making artworks using skills and media constructs visual art as a separate subject isolated from people's uses and valuing of artefacts, as Mansfield (1999) said.

The division of knowledge into separate areas goes back to the Ancient Greeks although the idea of academic disciplines as networks of concepts, theoretical frameworks, vocabularies and methods of inquiry developed in the west in the late 19th century according to Stankiewicz (2000). Cliff Whiting (in Department of Education, 1978) reminds us that this is a western tradition and way-of-knowing. He comments on the negative effects of subject segmentation.

In our schools we break children's lives into artificial segments of maths and English and science and Māori. We fail them again and again and then we push them out into the world with a bare survival kit and we leave them to join up the pieces. We should be concerned with giving them a quality of life. (p. 290)

In his view the organisation of teaching in schools is a European system imposed on Māori children that hasn't served them well. Hunt (2006) found the arts, including visual art and popular Māori culture, were powerful for developing confidence, communication skills and in engaging Māori children in their learning. Integration and a holistic understanding of knowledge and learning are also closer to how children learn in the world before and outside school. Carr et al. (2004) note "learners have difficulties when complex skills are taught in a fragmented way" (p. 39). The central curriculum framework and the influences of curriculum decisions made by

schools, including timetabling, assessment and overviews that limited integration will be explored further.

Goodson (1995) discusses the reassertion of traditional subject dominance and “the ‘impregnable fortress’ of the school subject” (p. 20). He describes socio-historical processes by which school knowledge embraces the academic tradition and contends “the dominance of ‘academicism’ can be shown over the last century or more” (p. 195). Questions of how academic disciplines have come to dominate primary school curricula in New Zealand are an area for research.

4.4.2. *The ‘overcrowded curriculum’*

The ‘overcrowded curriculum’ and lack of time were hugely significant issues for all the teachers and influenced the constructed visual arts curriculum. Kathy said

The crowded curriculum. Oh don’t start me! How long’s your tape?! It just seems to be getting more and more crowded and there’s more and more stress on teachers to get through things and you have to do this and you have to have an hour more sport, more fitness which is great, but then you’ve got maths and topic. I put all the things I have to do in my planner every weekend and then try and fit in those extra things like visual art. There’s no space. It’s filled up already.

The curriculum was crowded because of the “extra things like Arbor Day” (Kathy) and events such as school concert, Science Fair and Kapa Haka (Paul) as well as the prescribed subjects of the *Curriculum Framework* and Ministry of Education policy initiatives such as extra Physical Education. Deborah described the visual art in her school as “extremely hit and miss” and the overcrowded curriculum as responsible.

Teachers are so busy and I can see why, with all the demands of all the curriculum, I think they just want something that is easy to administer, easy to clean up, easy to mark, and that the kids enjoy, they’re not throwing stuff around, and it’s probably the last thing on teachers’ minds to actually look at the strands and to have it all fitting and working, and I actually don’t think they know how to work out a unit of work and quite frankly I don’t think they want to know either, because they’re loaded up to the gunwales with other things that are probably regarded as more important.

Furthermore

What I have found, what has become very very apparent to me, is the superficiality of subjects covered, the amount of coverage to me is very superficial. There’s a lot being covered but not well. I’m just gobsmacked by it. You just don’t have the time to go into anything in any depth at all. If I

could wave a magic wand and change something instantly, I'd like to change that, the quantity and put quality in its place (Deborah).

Breadth of coverage and surface rather than deep learning were also effects of assessment, described in chapter five. Another aspect of the lack of time was talked about by Deborah.

I think we're teaching them to be frenetic and we get a lot of frenetic behaviour. All those meetings that we've got to attend at interval and lunchtime, for God's sake, I can't remember half of them, I think we're giving kids an absolute blueprint for freneticness, and holding up being busy and freneticness and being slightly out-of-control as the norm.

Their workload was a huge issue for several of these teachers.

Why am I expected to come in like I often do to catch up on my classroom stuff through work being so hectic, the admin stuff that I haven't had the time or the energy to getting on top of things? Yeah workload is a big issue I'm learning to not try and be the perfect teacher. I've got two kids of my own, not just 34 other people's kids (Paul).

I won't be teaching forever. After school two sometimes three or four nights there are meetings. I work at home every night except Friday, sometimes have Saturday off, would go in on Sunday... What other job demands an extra 30 hours of work over and above one's ordinary workload and no recompense? (Kathy)

High teacher workload within an overcrowded curriculum meant that the areas teachers constructed as highest priority received more of their limited time for planning, preparation and assessment as well as for teaching. For all of these teachers, numeracy and literacy were prioritised.

4.4.3. Positioning and prioritising visual art

The value and importance of visual art varied between the teachers and the schools. As already noted, all these teachers thought visual art was important for children, but the amount of visual art being taught varied significantly. Both Deborah and Kathy had taught one or no lessons in a term whereas Gemma and Barbara taught visual art at least once a week. Graeme talked about the daily sketching his class did.

Another thing I do in the class which I find quite valuable, I call it a ten minute sketch and we do that every day, we slot it in say between spelling and maths... The kids have a sketch book and they often refer back when they're doing other pieces... so that's something I do in my class.

However Kathy said

We have to rush visual art, it's not our focus and I don't think it ever will be...we don't often write up our visual art planning, we don't have unit plans nothing like that.

Although all the teachers said visual art was valued in their schools, this seemed to be rhetoric in at least two of the schools. Kathy noted

Our priorities are literacy and numeracy. Visual art it would probably be down there to be honest. It's probably one thing that would get dropped OK we can't fit art in this week whereas we would never say that about literacy and numeracy.

Visual art was not taught in every term in four of the schools. In contrast, literacy and numeracy were taught throughout the year. They were also accorded the highest priority by central government policy. Eisner (1994) says that what are considered problematic and non-problematic in the curriculum are influenced by ideologies. Attainment of literacy is considered a given, whereas the position of the arts is problematic. As well however, the most valued subjects gain lots of attention and are problematic whilst marginalised or neglected subjects such as the arts are seldom considered important enough to care about.

Literacy was constructed as a separate subject, in isolation from science, social studies and the arts, and yet those subjects could provide rich contexts for meaningful literacy learning. In his research on the impact of the National Literacy Strategy in England, Herne (2000) said there was a certain irony seen in the way the 'daily literacy hour' was squeezing visual art, a subject that teachers felt had such a strong input into developing literacy. The changing construction of literacy and its impact on other curriculum areas are ongoing areas for research.

The effects of the hegemonic prioritising of literacy and numeracy on visual art and other 'non-academic' subjects were highlighted in Owen's quote at the start of this chapter. However there was considerable variation between the schools and the teachers in the positioning and valuing of visual art. This depended on a number of factors including the teachers' personal experiences, interest and enthusiasm.

4.5. Personal influences on visual art curricula

Personal influences on visual art teaching included recreational and childhood experiences. The teachers talked about a range of visual art experiences, from Gemma

And I actually think that's sometimes the key to it, it's the experiences that they have to have, and I was lucky that mum used to give us anything she had, paint anything and we were just allowed to go for it. I think a lot of people the reason they're not confident to have a go with something is they've never actually tried them, they've never had clay in their hands, they've never tried to see what happens if they stick this onto this

to Yvonne.

I think I felt very inadequate and I don't think I was taught the skills and I think all I can remember was that there were people that just had this talent and I just felt like I didn't have that talent. I didn't feel like it could be taught.

Graeme also recalled negative childhood experiences and Barbara couldn't recall any childhood visual art but talked about her positive experiences at Teachers' College.

Several of the teachers talked about the arts in their own lives.

I think the visual arts have an important place. In my own life I've found that visual arts is one of the things that I really find relaxing and I get great real satisfaction out of making something that looks good, you know gives me sort of pleasure while I'm doing it and lasting pleasure when I look at it...I tend to do it, things like mosaics, carving, wooden stuff like that (Paul).

An unexpected finding was links from the arts to significant life events.

At that stage I had traced my birth mother and found my birth family to find that, I had a great passion for music too and music and visual arts have always been strong in the family and so that was really the start of it for me (Graeme).

Paul described the significance of drawing when his beloved dog was dying.

When my dog was dying I had her in my classroom the principal knew she was there and the kids too kept quiet, in the last week of her life and they really knew it was a special time and it was about her last day the kids were sketching they used her as a model they used black paper and white crayon and I did a sketch of N. dog and I've still got her above my bed at home and you know I really surprised myself how I captured her mood and her look and that's special to me so I think it's important.

Yvonne said

For me having a son who's into the arts, he's incredibly artistic and it's something that's so within him that he *has* to have in his life and that he's chosen it and it's like when he was growing up I used to think of it as just that sideline thing. It's an interest but it's actually more than that, he can't live without it you know, he's a musician but he's also going to do this degree, I mean he's never stopped doing, he creates, records all the time, so I think I probably value it more now.

There were no simple relationships between childhood experiences and enthusiasm for teaching visual art. Graeme and Yvonne were enthusiastic despite negative childhood experiences. Kathy and Deborah were confident in teaching visual art but taught very little. Although personal factors were important the construction of curricula was a complex interaction of factors. So far personal influences and the central curriculum have been considered. A strong and surprising theme to emerge from the findings was the powerful influences of the schools in constructing and positioning visual art.

4.6. Influences of the schools

In their organisational structures, their written programmes and the decisions they made, schools also constructed curricula. From 1990 schools have had considerable freedom to develop their own organisational structures for curriculum planning and delivery. There were several mechanisms by which the schools in this study constructed curricula including curriculum leadership, long-term overviews and curriculum programmes, school events, timetables and syndicate organisations such as interchanges.

4.6.1. Curriculum leaders

All the schools in the research were organised into hierarchical power structures. Each school had a person or team in charge of each curriculum area. Some curriculum leaders set the achievement targets for their curriculum area and wrote the long-term programme. Usually the curriculum leader was recognised as having expertise and their responsibilities included running workshops for other teachers and going to courses to “get professional development and bringing the knowledge back” (Owen). Both Gemma and Graeme had these roles.

I quite often model in other people's classes They'll come to me usually, how do I do this? And I'll show them or if I've been away at a particularly

good workshop then I might run a workshop at school for everyone to join in (Graeme).

Gemma commented on how important it is for her as curriculum leader to be approachable.

I try my very best to be as open as I can be and I'm quite happy to show people how to do anything that I know how to do or show them where I got the knowledge.

Thus curriculum leaders had influential roles in constructing visual art curricula.

4.6.2. Curriculum programmes and long term overviews

In every school curriculum programmes and long-term overviews were in place for each curriculum area. The long-term overview for the term and year prescribed the particular unit, topic or theme that would be taught in each curriculum area for each syndicate or class. Within the schools in this study there was considerable variation in the flexibility of these. In Barbara's school the visual art overview was very flexible to allow for integration with other curriculum areas.

The school (visual art) programme it's very flexible I actually wrote the programme, well like I was the one that had responsibility but we sort of had a team. I did arts special development and I was the arts leader so we sort of felt that we wanted to keep it really flexible, like it doesn't say you know, you need to teach this topic this term and so on (Barbara).

In Graeme's school some areas over the two-year cycle were non-negotiable – teachers had to cover painting, construction, pencil and charcoal in one year for example, but within this syndicates could choose what they did. Long-term visual arts overviews constructed particular views of the arts and visual art. In all the schools in this study except Barbara's, overviews were written in terms of teaching a range of 2-d and 3-d media and skills thus constructing visual art as making and doing.

Overviews also constructed curriculum as separate subjects and prioritised and determined the relative importance of each subject. Rationales for long-term overviews were to ensure curriculum balance and the sharing and efficient management of resources. However for Paul the long-term overview was a straight-jacket.

It's all fragmented, you know, doing stuff you're being told to do with different kids I mean if I don't get any enthusiasm here's the curriculum plan for Social Studies ancient bloody middle ages medieval times, castles and their social structure you know they're doing that and here you are, the plane's just flown into the twin towers and I'd rather be looking at that and why some Muslim people are feeling aggrieved.

He contrasted the highly prescribed curriculum in his current school with his previous school.

When I was at (N) School there were lots of those shifts because I had a lot more autonomy and control over the curriculum I delivered to my class. At this school it's more prescriptive and you don't have time to make those shifts as frequently as I would like to because there is so many other things crowding in that you have to be doing, it's just the reality of the place... I could see something that's current, that kids are interested in and build a unit, an integrated unit around it and run with it for several weeks and cover lots of achievement objectives and lots of curriculum areas in a meaningful way rather than having something dumped on me you know this is what we're doing and not, me not really thinking much, not really having the time to make it blossom into something that you know is really great. Like for example I love conservation, it's one of the things the Ministry says we should do environmental education, we should be teaching the kids about their indigenous flora and fauna. They say this and I've done really neat units with different classes. This year I had a two-week slot where we had a choice we could do something of our own and in two weeks I couldn't really do the unit justice whereas when I was at the other school I could, I ran with it and did a field trip to (N) and visited the mainland island, did great social studies actually writing to the Ministry of Conservation and we had great debates about all sorts of different issues and we were involved in the internet the LEARNZ programme which was focused on the mainland island at (N) and it was a whole term, we wrote poetry, real neat bloody poetry, we sat on the bloody beach at (N) one moonlit night and the snow-capped mountains and the kids were really moved by it and it was really marvellous. When you've got curriculum programmes that don't seem to mesh, it's hard, you can't integrate things and it's you're just doing little bits, disjointed bits and pieces.

Because of the highly prescribed long-term overview he was unable to make shifts in his teaching to meet children's needs in response to his formative assessment. His very different experiences in two schools demonstrated clearly the power of the schools over operational curricula.

4.6.3. School organisation

The syndicate or school organisation also positioned and prioritised subjects including the arts. Kathy said her syndicate had interchanges for maths and for

dance/drama/music, which meant all teachers were committed to these. Because visual art was not part of the interchange but up to each teacher, she taught visual art only occasionally. Both Deborah's and Owen's schools also used interchanges to deliver the arts.

The way we've structured our arts programme in the senior syndicate in the last two years it's that the four of us each take a strand (discipline) and I take drama while another teacher takes visual arts so four classes rotate round...this way everything is covered, the kids are getting the coverage and we're doing something that we're comfortable with... We each take our strengths and do it that way and it's worked out really well (Owen).

Kathy argued for her school to prescribe visual art so that it would be taught.

I would just like to see it more, OK we *have* to do this art because that *makes* us do it and then you love it when you do do it.

However, although a syndicate interchange ensured particular subjects got taught and teachers taught to their strengths, it prevented integration because teachers were then tied to teaching that particular subject at that time.

In these schools the arts were mostly taught in the afternoon. Gemma's school had made literacy in the morning compulsory.

Some people have really struggled to do art or any other subject in the afternoons cause the kids are tired and ratty and they're not focusing. I was a morning art person I used to like having a whole morning to really focus on something, to me you really need as much brain work as you do for maths or anything else, art's a really focused activity (Gemma).

According to Eisner (1994) afternoon art conveys to students

that the arts are essentially forms of play that one can engage in only after the real work of schooling has been finished. It reinforces the belief that the arts do not require rigorous and demanding thought and they are really unimportant. (p. 92)

Afternoon art further reinforced the positioning and constructing of visual art as non-academic and less important than the "core stuff" (Paul) morning subjects. The teachers and the schools differed in their degree of control over operational curricula. Barbara and Graeme both had considerable autonomy and Graeme's daily drawing was described previously. However others including Kathy, Deborah and Paul had

less control over their operational curricula. Autonomy and control are discussed in the next section.

4.7. Teacher autonomy and control

There were two main issues about their lack of control over their operational curricula. The first was their inability to teach to their own interests. William said

I think we're getting too serious I think the push to literacy and numeracy is really good, I think it's great and I think we need to loosen up on everything else as well let teachers do their own thing much more... now we're expected to look at so many different things so technology, science, the arts being spread out like they are and to be assessing them as well, it doesn't allow a teacher to use his or her strengths or interests and we've all got them, they're all things we love to do and I think the children probably get more out of that than a lesson that's taught because it has to be.

The second issue was being able to meet the needs of the children. Teaching to children's needs was a powerful discourse for most of the teachers in this study. 'Child-centred teaching' has a strong tradition in New Zealand primary schooling dating back to *progressivism* discussed in chapter two. Paul was highly critical of his inability to teach to children's interests and needs because of his school's tight control over curricula. He was disparaging of the use of pre-planned units.

Like the social studies unit last term on the Olympics and it was one of those recycled units that somebody had gone to TKI, banged one off the internet, photocopied it, chucked it in the tray and said Oh hey I've written a unit for you guys which was quite funny at the syndicate meeting cause I brought exactly the same unit in and said yeah I've printed that one off too so it wasn't particularly generated by the learning needs of the kids (Paul).

Overall there was no evidence of the co-construction of visual art curricula with children and teachers. This is an area for further research.

In some of the schools the teachers had considerable autonomy to make curriculum decisions and changes in response to their formative assessment. In others the operational curricula were tightly prescribed and controlled. Roberts (2000) situates the issues of influence and power over curriculum in the political context of marketisation and New Right reforms. Although the influence of ideological and political factors on curriculum construction is a strong theme in the literature, only two of the teachers referred briefly to these. The political context was significant by

its absence from teachers' discourses. Rather the teachers were focused on 'their' children and their schools. Graeme said

Why is it so important we're not assessing? Because we're dictated to the fact that we should do it, it's probably the current Business Roundtable model I would think the scenario of workplace fodder.

The lack of comment, awareness or interest in the ideological and political influences on curriculum is consistent with my own experiences as a teacher educator and also those of colleagues, and some implications are discussed in chapter six.

Throughout this chapter the construction of operational curricula and the positioning of visual art have been discussed. Underpinning this discussion is a tension between teachers having power and autonomy to construct curricula and to teach to children's needs, and the considerable power of the schools over curriculum decisions. This tension was even more evident in assessment, which is the focus of the next chapter.

4.8. Summary

In this chapter the positioning and construction of visual art were discussed. The teachers described their visual art lessons and units. Visual art was constructed as making artworks and learning skills and techniques using a range of media. The teachers used *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* very selectively. They scarcely referred to it and only the strands and the achievement objectives, particularly the Practical Knowledge strand, were used. This is consistent with a view of visual art as making and doing. There was little evidence of multiculturalism, critical thinking or co-construction with children. Visual art was constructed as isolated from social, historical, cultural and political contexts.

Operational curricula were divided into separate subjects and integration of visual art was minimal. The positioning of visual art was explored in relation to the 'overcrowded curriculum', which all the teachers identified as a major issue. Visual art was positioned as non-academic and received very little curriculum time in some of the schools. Visual art was seen as important for children, but its positioning as non-academic marginalised it in a school curriculum in which academic subjects were prioritised. The prioritisation of literacy and numeracy was hegemonic.

Key themes underpinning this chapter were context and complexity. The construction of operational curricula was contextual and highly complex and many influences interacted. A surprising finding was the power of schools through their long-term overviews and organisation, although there was considerable variation between them. In some, operational curricula were tightly prescribed and controlled whereas in others teachers had considerable autonomy. The influence of the schools on the construction of assessment was also particularly strong, and is discussed in the next chapter.

Because my findings were based on teachers talking about their practices this discussion is certainly not a full picture of the operational curriculum. Curriculum happens in interaction in the classroom and in this study the voices and actions of the children were not considered and were notably absent from teachers' talk. Nevertheless teachers' descriptions of their practices and understandings are important components to understanding operational curricula.

Chapter 5: Construction and influence of assessment

So you would have to say that a lot of the assessment is done for, well what? Well you would, you know, it only means anything if it's going to change what you're doing with the kids (Barbara).

5.1. Introduction

Assessment was a significant issue for all the teachers in this research. They talked about assessment in general as well as of visual art in particular. As a consequence this discussion about the influence of assessment on curriculum also explores wider assessment contexts and issues. Where appropriate I have linked teachers' comments to the literature.

The construction of teachers' operational visual art curricula was influenced by assessment. Carr et al. (2003) note the strong, crucial and "complex nature of the interactions between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy" (p. 3). Assessment is included as a separate chapter in this dissertation both because it emerged as a very strong theme and because teachers constructed it as separate from curriculum.

In the previous chapter, the influence and power of the schools on curriculum construction were considered. This chapter further develops that theme. Since 1990 and 'Tomorrow's Schools' the principle of self-governing schools has become part of the educational landscape of New Zealand. Schools are largely responsible for their own governance and management. However at the same time as schools gained more freedom and control, systems and requirements were established to limit those freedoms and make schools accountable (McGee, 1997).

Over the last ten years there have been significant changes in the discourses and practices of assessment in New Zealand primary schools. The terms summative and formative assessment have become part of the discourse. The first part of this chapter looks at summative assessment. The purpose of assessment is considered in section two. Formative assessment is integral to curriculum and is discussed in the third

section and the final section suggests some possible reasons for the dominance of summative assessment.

5.2. Summative assessment

The topic of assessment generated considerable discussion, concern, frustration and even anger. Assessment was a major issue and aspects of both quantity and quality were raised by the teachers. However, as will be seen, they often had little choice over what and how they assessed. The assessment of visual art is discussed within a broader context of assessment constructed as primarily summative. How the requirements for summative assessment influenced curricula is considered.

5.2.1. A culture of 'over-the-top' summative assessment

In their talk about assessment teachers constructed it as primarily summative. Assessment was assumed and understood by the teachers to be of pre-determined outcomes during or at the end of a unit of work and summative assessment was constructed as a separate event to teaching and learning. The legal requirements for planning and reporting are set out in the National Education Goals (NEGs), the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) and the National Curriculum statements. Variations between the nine schools indicated how different schools fulfilled the legal requirements differently.

Several teachers described a culture of 'over-the-top assessment' as Yvonne put it.

I think the assessment culture in this school, it's over the top, and I don't think a lot of it benefits the children.

The amount of assessment they were required to do applied to all curriculum areas. Yvonne's comment was typical.

I've got to do this tickbox here and I've got to do that and I've got to do that...I've heard so many of the teachers here say it's just ridiculous, it's too much, it takes up too much of our time, and you know, I feel that myself, I really do.

Deborah said

Every unit of work, or every item has to be assessed.

Kathy described how she had to do assessment of the children on camp!

We took away all these forms with us to assess the children, can do this, mix with others, you don't get time when you're on camp ...it's hard to assess when everything went so well, everyone did good, so tick tick tick.

For Graeme the amount of assessment was less of an issue.

We're a bit weighted the assessment way, it's probably understandable because we're taking part in the Atol contract, the person who comes in and takes that would like us to be more weighted but our staff are pretty realistic and say well hey let's temper that a bit.

William and Graeme were concerned at the effects of continuous assessment on children's motivation, that if children constantly receive extrinsic rewards such as grades, marks, ticks and triangles, they learn for these rather than for the satisfaction and enjoyment of learning.

The schools also varied in the level of prescription. Assessment was *highly* prescribed in three of the schools.

We are actually given an assessment sheet for visual art and there are certain things written there that we are *required* to cover during the year and assess on and that data is used in the report for the end of the year. They do it for everything, use it right through, including numeracy and literacy, there's a whole set of assessment sheets that I have got that I have to ensure I've covered (Yvonne).

In four of the schools assessment was *fairly* prescribed with some outcomes for assessment pre-determined. Graeme said "Each term there are things that *have* to be assessed and sort of like assessed formally and that's not negotiable". In Owen's school the objectives to be reported to parents were decided in advance.

We've tagged off the ones that we assess at report time, so you're a fool if you're not going to be assessing those on a regular basis because when it comes to writing reports, if you've been assessing them in your previous unit you've got all the info there and you can just transfer it to the report.

Although it was an important driver of assessment, formal reporting to parents and caregivers happened only two to four times a year and in all the schools the amount of summative data collected was more than was needed for this purpose.

In the other two schools the teachers had considerable autonomy over what to assess. Barbara described her uncertainty about what visual art to summatively assess even

though she had almost completed her unit. Gemma wondered about the lack of prescription for assessing visual art.

Teachers decide for themselves what they're going to assess unless it's something for benchmarking no I haven't been too prescriptive at all, but I could see that it would be useful because some people have no direction at all for their topic, I mean the AOs are so general it's very hard to, to sit down and write, if you didn't know, if you weren't experienced in teaching something you'd find it really hard to make those into specific things that you're going to teach to the class.

This variation between the schools indicated their considerable power over the construction of assessment.

5.2.2. Summative assessment driving teaching

Several teachers talked about the requirements for summative assessment driving teaching. In Owen's school, teachers had to assess one or two essential skills and one or two other learning outcomes for every unit, so the essential skills that were taught were the ones that were easiest to assess.

I think it's a load of crock. Like I see it, two essential skills and you're actually at times trying to fit the essential skill into the unit, and I find that some of them are so wishy-washy or some old jargon dribble it's just ridiculous and you tend to go to the same ones that are assessable, are understandable and are achievable.

That which was easily measured was assessed and that which was assessed was taught. Paul too described how his teaching was driven by the assessment requirements, which meant he was not able to teach to children's needs.

Some of the other school-wide assessments I don't see much point because what it tends to do is focus your energies, you start teaching to the assessments rather than looking at the kids and saying 'what are their learning needs?'

Yvonne also described this.

It takes up so much of your time and I just think it interferes with the quality of your teaching because you then end up teaching to the assessments.

Assessment driving teaching is a major issue in countries with high stakes assessment (Carr et al., 2003) and this was particularly evident in the schools in which the discourses of showing 'added value' and 'meeting targets' were the most pervasive,

which suggested that as the assessment stakes were raised, assessment was more likely to drive teaching.

5.2.3. Reporting to boards of trustees

Reporting to school management and demonstrating ‘added value’ was another layer of summative assessment practice. Some of the schools carried out March and September assessments especially for this purpose. Paul described the practices in his school of showing added value and highlighted some significant issues.

The targets, the Ministry requires schools to set targets on numeracy and literacy. However we have targets in all curriculum areas which is more than what’s required from the Ministry, I think, not that I’m an expert, and there’s no standardisation because it’s so hastily put together because there’s so many of them...there’s no clear methodology, there’s no standardisation of assessment procedures, everyone’s interpretation of what they’re doing is different from everybody else’s. We find ourselves asking each other what the things mean and laughing because we’ve all done it slightly differently and it’s almost like it’s a steep learning curve for what the procedure is and then the following year it’s all chucked out and we’ve got new ones, so you never really get to perfect the assessment procedure.

He noted the negative effect on children from one syndicate’s assessment.

It was a waste of time and it actually turned kids off science when forced to do this very abstract assessment because they didn’t really understand what was expected of them.

He believed much of the information provided to the Board was meaningless.

The principal will present to the Board and staff beautiful spreadsheet generated graphs that show you know 70% of year 6 students have met the target in basic facts in maths or something and make very bold statements about the percentage of Māori and Pacific Island students that have achieved a particular target even though you might only get three in the syndicate.

Paul and Deborah described how the teachers in their schools showed ‘added value’.

You start to think, I don’t want to look bad, you know, I want to make them show value-added in those areas so just before September assessments come round I think, I know I’ve done it and probably other teachers have done it, you know tried really hard to make it show there’s some improvement at the expense of other things you could be doing with the kids (Paul).

Deborah said

A little bit of manipulation goes on here, because you try not to mark them too highly because they’re going to be marked again at the end of the year and

they're supposed to show improvement. The same story, a different title but the same story is given to them at the end of the year so that we can show an improvement in their writing. And so we try to mark low, really low...It's called target setting, so we have moved children in English, and to me I think it's manipulated.

It seemed that teachers' work was valued by the outcomes achieved and some teachers felt under pressure because the assessments were used to judge them and the schools. In the schools with formal March and September assessments for the purpose of reporting to Boards, these functioned like higher stakes 'quasi-national tests' with some of the concomitant negative effects such as low ecological validity and teachers teaching to the tests.

However Paul also described how some summative assessment was useful.

I thought that (writing) was a valuable assessment to show good useful data that confirmed what I was doing was on track.

Useful assessment occurred when teachers had ownership and understood what and how to assess and when assessment linked to a meaningful context, children's needs and his teaching. However in Paul's school the targets were set at the start of the year, and were often very general, derived from NEMP results and unrelated to the units being taught.

The stated justification for the functions of setting targets, strategic planning, self-review and evaluating progress of individuals and groups is to improve teaching and learning (Chamberlain, 2000). However there were often no mechanisms by which the summarised information to the Board was actively included in teachers' ongoing teaching and children's learning. Rather teachers simply gathered data. For teaching and learning to improve, assessment must lead to action i.e. be formative. The discourse that the achievement of individual children will be raised by schools' processes of target setting, measuring, strategic planning and self-review requires examination and further research.

5.2.4. Assessment of pre-determined learning outcomes

All the schools required summative data to be collected for most or all units of teaching. The outcomes to be assessed were usually determined at the beginning of the year, the term or a unit of work, and were often linked to the long-term overview.

Having to assess pre-determined learning outcomes lessened the likelihood of teaching to unanticipated outcomes and going with the 'teachable moment', and was seen by some of the teachers as a particular issue when assessing visual art. Graeme cautioned against assessment stifling creativity in visual art, although he also noted the value of learning intentions to focus teaching and learning.

I'd hate to see that everything was driven by learning intentions to stifle creativity. Learning intentions are good. There are times when they have their place, but let's forget about those intentions and go out and enjoy doing the piece yeah and explore and see what happens.

He said

It's important to do assessment but you don't have to do it *all* the time, for example, language yes, look at a piece for assessment, let's do some others too that we're not assessing.

William commented similarly.

I don't think it's necessary to sort of analyse or assess everything, it's something that's intrinsic, it's something that should be expressed and not necessarily judged.

Gemma highlighted the difficulties of assessing creativity.

And there's got to be a bit of freedom with artistic creativity too, you can't put it so prescribed that they can't have their own flair in it as well, yeah, art is very hard to assess.

Having to assess pre-determined outcomes and the difficulties of assessing creativity and problem solving further constructed visual art as 'Developing Practical Knowledge' rather than 'Developing Ideas'. Visual art assessment was predominantly of the products and easily observable skills.

Clay seems reasonably easy to assess because you've got a finished product and it either stands up or it falls down (Gemma).

Because it's visual arts, you've always got their work to look at ...it depends on the learning outcomes you've got and it could be that you assess the elements that they can use the line to create artworks and it might be tone, it depends on the topic (Barbara).

Thus assessment further constructed the visual art curriculum as making artworks using skills and media, with a formalist discourse evident in Barbara's comment.

As Gemma said, assessing skills and art *products* was relatively easy. It seems little has changed since Barry and Townsend (1995) found that teachers relied on art products and easily identifiable skills to assess art. Strategies to assess art *processes* include conferencing and conversations (Ross, Radnor, Mitchell & Bierton, 1993) and portfolios (Langton, 2000). However there are significant barriers to the use and development of alternative assessment strategies including lack of time, lack of resources, and teachers' lack of skills and expertise (Langton, 2000). Furthermore Ross et al. (1993) found that most assessment conversations shut down student responses with most teachers finding it difficult to relinquish their power relationship.

The focus on summative assessment of pre-determined learning outcomes can drive the assessment and teaching of small meaningless chunks of information or skills that are easily assessed. Assessing and teaching to highly specific learning outcomes constructed the goals of teaching and learning as such. Eisner (2002) says the beliefs underpinning discourses of assessing pre-determined learning outcomes are not often examined. "The idea that the goals should be specifiable in advance and that success in teaching consists primarily of bringing about predictable outcomes are themselves what are at issue" (p. 118). He argues for objectives and criteria that allow for problem solving, cognitive flexibility and intellectual exploration.

5.2.5. *Meaningfulness of summative assessment*

Several teachers talked about the meaningfulness of their assessment. William said

When you do get the bigger idea, the big understanding that you want children to have, how the hell do you assess it? How do you check it? How do you check the *understanding* of a child who's six?

The difficulty of assessing rich learning in order to provide summative data was highlighted by Paul, in the context of teaching deeper features in writing.

I know my kids have made great progress in the area but the assessment is very hard to do in a meaningful way.

This dominant discourse of assessment fits within the positivist paradigm in which complex human behaviours and qualities can be broken down into isolated variables and considered independently from context. Summative assessment was reductionist in that children's learning in contexts was reduced to simple systems of symbols or numbers. Owen explained

It's one to five, one is always you know, excellent work habits and that sort of thing, two is a step down and five is they haven't achieved any of their objectives basically.

Recorded assessment information was made in a particular context in a moment of time. Assumptions were made that those fragments of information could be generalised beyond that time and context into meaningful statements about a child's progress and achievement.

The issue of how to assess deep and rich learning is significant. Codd (1997) says the separation of assessment from context lacks real-life meaning and tells nothing of value, and Eisner (2002) says assessment should be authentic to be meaningful. Assumptions were made that checklists of numbers, ticks and slashes provided meaningful information. Lee, O'Neill and McKenzie (2004) believe outcomes-driven models of curriculum "reduce knowledge to information, learning to test scores, and the educative process to a technical-linear formula rather than an intellectual journey of personal growth and discovery" (p. 48).

Several teachers raised concerns about standards-based assessment. The tension between assessing to standards for a class, age-level or cohort and assessing individual children was discussed, including in visual art.

It depends so much. It's such an individual thing in their skills I've got one little boy, for him to produce something which may not look like anything but the fact that he did it, he was confident enough to do it (Barbara).

As Barbara suggested in this comment, the meaningfulness of assessment needed to be considered in the context of individual children. This child was probably never going to attain 'the standard' and a consistent array of dashes or dots for him said nothing about his progress and achievement. The tension between ipsative and standards-based assessment was important. These teachers saw the impossibility of

all children reaching the same standard, but summative assessment checklists required the assessment of the same learning outcomes for all children in the class.

Hill (2000) notes that many of the assessment expectations on teachers are 'top-down', imposed by the Ministry of Education, ERO, school management and school policies. Findings from this research confirmed this.

5.3. Purposes of assessment

A number of the teachers questioned the purpose of the assessment they were required to do. Barbara asked

I mean the only valid assessment is if it makes a difference to what you are teaching those kids. Otherwise it is just being written down on paper for no one to ever look at. So in many ways you would have to say that a lot of assessment you do is a waste of time, you have to, because if no one looks at it what's it being done for?

Paul talked about his increasing cynicism.

I've got a more and more cynical view towards hey why am I doing this? ... The first year of teaching I had a folder that thick with paper with things that I assessed and got to the end of the year and thought why the hell did I do that because nobody wants to look at this?

Several teachers described how much of their assessment information was not used.

Kathy said

We keep our summative assessments in the data-gathering book and hand it in at the end of the year and it sits in a cupboard.

Much of the information collected by Paul, William and Deborah was also not used for any purpose. It seems little has changed since ERO reported in 1999 that large amounts of data were being collected in schools with very little clear understanding of purpose.

Teachers have frequently attempted to meet these requirements without first giving careful considerations of purpose. As a result they gather a great deal of information that is not useful to them and is not used by them. They also gather information without adequate consideration of the quality of the data they record. This leads to the use of information, especially for summative purposes, which does not have adequate quality for that purpose. When teachers' records are made to meet what they perceive to be an external requirement, these tend to be of little educational benefit. (Education Review Office, 1999, p. 34)

Eisner (2002) says different purposes of assessment require different types of data through different means. Some users require information about individual children whereas others utilise aggregated information. Issues of quality, purpose and meaningfulness of assessment information were often not considered or understood by teachers or school managers.

Paul said

I have two folders at school, one folder is on useful assessment ... and the other is a document that arrives in our trays at the start of the year and it has a whole lot of school-wide assessment requirements for us to meet, many of which are quite pointless in my opinion and in many other teachers' opinion.

The useful assessment that he described was his diagnostic and formative assessment. This chapter so far has described discourses and practices of summative assessment which dominated teachers' talk. This research supports Carr et al.'s (2003) conclusions "that summative assessment can dominate in classrooms resulting in fewer opportunities for formative assessment" (p. 44). Hill (2000) says "checking systems are not geared to guide pupils in how to improve their learning nor can they diagnose individual strengths and learning needs" (p. 23). Formative assessment is discussed in the next section.

5.4. Formative assessment

All the teachers described assessment as summative data-gathering as already noted. They talked about formative assessment only in response to a direct question and only some of the teachers were able to clearly articulate their formative assessment practices. Barbara described it thus:

A lot of assessment is not even written down because if it's real you know valid assessment it's going to inform you on what you need to do on the next step and that might be quite informal stuff, because it might be your notes in the back of your plan book or it might be notes somewhere else or it could be in your head, sort of thing, next time I take this child for reading I'm going to do this and it, you might then jot it down on the reading plan, you know, because then it becomes a learning outcome for the next week.

The purpose of formative assessment is to improve teaching and learning (Harlen & James, 1997). Formative assessment is classroom-based and the data are usually not recorded. Paul explained.

Well it's really wandering around talking to kids, listening to kids, having kids reporting back on what their groups come up with, and from that you know thinking oh what's the next step, has that worked?

Energy and commitment are required as Yvonne's comment showed.

I honestly think every minute of the day I feel like I'm assessing but I'm not formally doing these tickboxes and things like that, and it drives my teaching. What I see drives what I do and I think that is how it should be for any teacher.

Other teachers in this research were not so clear. William and Gemma considered that if assessment was not written down it was not important. Uncertainties about formative assessment, its purposes and value were common and reflected the dominance of the discourses of summative assessment in all these schools. Hill (2000) found that many teachers had difficulty dealing with the competing discourses of formative and summative assessment.

The literature is very clear about the benefits and importance of formative assessment. Black and Wiliam (1998) reviewed the literature using Natriello's (1987) and Crooks' (1998) reviews as a baseline. They report

The research reported here shows conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning. The gains in achievement appear to be quite considerable and...among the largest ever reported for educational interventions. (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 36)

Formative assessment requires a high level of content knowledge by teachers in order to understand where children are at and identify next steps for learning. Barry and Townsend (1995) noted that a number of teachers commented that they lacked the knowledge and skills necessary to be able to provide critical instructional feedback in art. Owen confirmed this.

I couldn't observationally draw to save myself so how am I going to turn around and say well look you need a bit of shading here and if you did this here you'd find this would bring this out and that sort of thing because I just haven't got that skill.

Carr et al. (1998) note “the area of progression is one of the least understood areas, yet this is crucial for designing curriculum and enhancing student achievement. This area requires much more research in all curriculum areas” (p. 33) and Harlen and James (1997) discuss how formative assessment needs to be a hybrid of both ipsative and criterion-referenced in order to help learning and encourage the learner. Summative assessment that required all children to be assessed against the same criteria was counter to formative assessment.

Formative assessment also requires good organisation and management in order to be able to observe and question individuals and groups working, particularly at primary level where children often lack the skills to work independently. This was a particular issue in visual art where teachers had to actively manage messy materials and equipment, usually in classrooms not separate art-rooms, and children finished at different times.

Quality feedback is an essential component of formative assessment. William talked about how his feedback to children was compromised by time and school pressures.

Some days we have meetings straight after school, when do you have the energy and the time to sit down and read the kids’ stories and give feedback cos that’s the really strong push in our school at the moment is feedback, as a learning tool and so you’re giving feedback and if the kids are not there it’s got to be written and you have to read it to them, the littlies, so for each piece of work you’re supposed to give feedback and that’s assessment...in our assessments we also need to look for other ways for children to show their understanding and it tends to be one-to-one, with small group work to help, to really keep your understanding of the kids, so interviewing and that’s quite time intensive.

Having time and energy are key factors in effective formative assessment. Teaching for breadth of curriculum coverage also compromised effective formative feedback. All the teachers talked about their lack of time. Unpressured and reflective time is a rare luxury for teachers in primary classrooms. Convery (2001) says “I rarely experience the relative tranquility of a post-mortem in which I am able to act in order to make a difference to the situation. The busyness of the classroom is marked by its continuity and consequences...so teachers are almost always in the ‘action present’” (p. 134). Pressures to meet curriculum and summative assessment requirements also meant that there was little time for children to evaluate and reflect.

Formative assessment requires clear understanding of curriculum goals, teaching and learning processes and integration of assessment (Black, 2000). For effective formative assessment “the changes in classroom practice that are needed are central rather than marginal, and have to be incorporated by each teacher into his or her practice in his or her own way” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 62).

Although most of the schools and teachers had participated in the Ministry of Education assessment contracts, evidence of the continuing dominance of summative assessment and lack of understanding of formative assessment raises questions about their efficacy. This is an area for future research.

Summative assessment provided information mainly for others whereas the users of formative assessment were the teachers themselves and the children. The following section discusses some possible reasons why summative assessment dominated.

5.5. Dominance of summative assessment

In this chapter a culture of ‘over-the-top’ summative assessment and the undervaluing of formative assessment have been discussed. The tension between assessing to provide information for others and assessing to provide information for teachers and children to improve learning and teaching, is central and significant.

Some of the reasons for the dominance of summative assessment emerged from the data. Teachers’ lack of time, some teachers’ lack of content knowledge and skills in visual art and uncertainties about formative assessment have already been discussed. The requirements of summative assessment drove teaching to pre-determined measurable outcomes at the expense of teaching visual art processes, developing ideas and problem-solving and took flexibility and control away from teachers.

Many discourses and practices were hegemonic and not understood, questioned or examined. Schools had considerable power over assessment and their practices and requirements established and maintained a culture of ‘over-the-top’ assessment that was often meaningless and for no purpose. Some school managers including senior

teachers seemed not to understand the purposes and effects of assessment practices and demands. Yvonne's comment demonstrated this.

N.(the DP) came in to do an appraisal and I had to have all that documentation which I did have but I actually said to her about (another) school about the fact that ERO had said we over-assessed and she just said well that's how we do it, sort of thing.

This comment supports Hill's (2000) finding that senior staff through lack of knowledge unintentionally encouraged assessment practices that worked against formative assessment and Dixon and William's (2003) comment that senior staff often did not understand the purposes of assessment.

A key purpose of assessment is accountability (Carr et al., 2003) and this is a strong theme in the New Zealand literature (Dixon & Williams, 2003; Hill, 2000). However although these teachers talked about their experiences of review and appraisal, there was no discussion on accountability. As with political and ideological influences on curriculum discussed in the previous chapter, the silence of teachers on accountability was notable. William saw appraisal and review as reasons for his summative assessment but not any rationale for them.

I talk to other teachers at school and they all say the same thing, you know they see that they're doing all these assessment sheets for ERO or appraisal and basically there's no educational value in doing it, you do it because you have to do it and you know you're not going to get teacher registration if you don't tow the line (William).

The ethos of accountability was embedded in the public sector reforms of the 1980s and 1990s. Although the concept of accountability had long been part of the discourse of business, its widespread application to the public sector was new. Until the 1970s spending on education was seen as an unalienable right with no questioning of its outcomes and little contestability for spending with other public sector needs (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). The call for accountability grew from widespread concerns at the huge amounts of money being gobbled up by the inefficient education bureaucracies. There was to be accountability for spending on education and also for educational outcomes.

Elley (2004) says "diagnostic testing and testing for accountability are rarely good bed-fellows" (p. 100) and McKenzie (1997) argues the discourse of marketisation,

managerialism and efficiency that underpinned the education reforms was about evaluating teacher performance and accountability. However accountability is more complex than this suggests. At the time of the education reforms there was both widespread support and widespread criticism of accountability in education (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998). Accountability is a means of control but also of protecting the disadvantaged and most vulnerable (Dale & Robertson, 1997). It is also a means of development by identifying strengths and weaknesses to implement actions to address these. I consider it is overly simplistic to say that summative assessment dominated because of the demands for accountability from ERO and the Ministry of Education, and to regard accountability and learning as simply “competing demands” (Hill, 2000). They exist in a complex tension. The Education Review Office acknowledges the “tensions between ERO’s improvement and accountability functions” (Education Review Office, 2002, p. 4). This tension between assessment for improving teaching and learning and assessment for accountability underpins the construction of assessment yet was not recognised by the teachers.

5.6. Summary

Although the relationship between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy is complex (Carr et al, 2003), the construction of assessment as primarily summative and as a separate event from teaching and learning impacted on curricula. Summative assessment dominated teachers’ talk. They described gathering large amounts of information often for no clear purpose or benefit. They talked about a number of issues including teaching to the assessment requirements, the effects of assessment demands and difficulties of assessing creativity. Summative assessment framed curricula and the goals of schooling in particular ways. Curricula, including visual art, were constructed as pre-determined learning outcomes which had to be taught and assessed, at the expense of unanticipated outcomes and processes. Recording learning as ticks and slashes and assessing to standards were meaningless for many children. The emphasis on summative assessment was another reason why visual art teaching was focused on easily observable skills and artworks, and developing ideas, problem-solving and critical and creative processes were not taught.

School requirements for formal summative information drove assessment discourses and practices. The schools interpreted the legal requirements differently and were powerful influences on the construction of assessment. Despite the overwhelming significance and benefits of formative assessment in the research literature, I conclude that in these schools it was not highly valued. Meeting summative assessment requirements took time and energy and lack of time was an ongoing and huge issue for these teachers. Formative assessment processes are highly complex, require high-level knowledge, confidence, energy and skills, and were not always understood. Teachers who were not confident or knowledgeable about visual art found it difficult to formatively assess it. Possible reasons why summative assessment was so dominant included the hegemony of current practices and lack of understanding by school managers and leaders. The tension between assessing *of* learning and assessing *for* learning was fundamental.

There is an old saying ‘measuring the pig every day won’t fatten it’. The national assessment strategy states goals of developing teachers’ assessment literacies and notes the importance of formative assessment (Chamberlain, 2000) but some fundamental changes in assessment understandings and practices are needed for formative assessment to be effective. The supposed aim to improve children’s learning is being undermined compromised and negated by the ongoing demands of a culture of over-the-top summative assessment. High quality formative assessment is a process by which children’s learning can be improved but considerable change is needed for effective formative assessment to occur.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate the positioning, construction and assessment of visual art by a group of primary teachers. The perspectives of nine teachers from different primary schools were explored through informal interviews. Some complex issues and tensions emerged from the data.

The initial research purpose was to understand and explore primary teachers' assessment of visual art. After data collection and analysis began it became clear that the question of visual art assessment could not be considered in isolation from the wider context of curriculum. I found that the stories being told and the emergent themes were about how visual art curricula were constructed and the influences on this, of which assessment was one. Thus the research question became: How is primary visual art positioned, constructed and assessed at the operational level and what are some of the influences on these?

This thesis is a bricolage of the stories of the nine teachers, voices from the literature and my own ideas. In this chapter I draw together the complex collage of the previous chapters and explore some implications. My voice has been largely absent from the discussion so far. However, as the bricoleur my voice predominates in the interpreting, connecting and creating of this final chapter. In the first section I summarise the findings. I then explore the implications of the findings for the 'subject' of visual art, for school managers and for teacher agency and efficacy. Finally the limitations and generalisability of the study are considered.

6.2. Summary of findings

The initial finding that influenced the direction and framing of the study was that these teachers and schools actively constructed curricula. They did not passively receive and deliver a given central curriculum.

Woven through the findings chapters were key themes of complexity and context. Differences and similarities between the schools and the teachers illuminated the significance of context. Constructed visual art curricula were a complex interaction of influences and some significant tensions emerged including the tension between teaching 'subjects' and 'child-centred teaching'. The tension between summative and formative assessment was also evident. The relationships between assessment and curricula were complex.

The teachers in this study constructed visual art as making and doing artworks using a range of media and skills, mostly in isolation from social, cultural or historical contexts. Their visual art was non-controversial and predominantly Pākehā/Eurocentric. Because visual art was practical and non-academic, it was seen as important and beneficial for children. At the same time however the academic subjects, particularly numeracy and literacy, were seen as more important.

The positioning of visual art within wider operational curricula varied between the teachers and the schools. In some of the schools visual art was positioned at the margins of the operational curricula. In all of the schools literacy and numeracy were prioritised. This was hegemonic and questions were not asked about their construction or what their priority meant for other subjects. As Eisner (1994) said subjects that are important are considered non-problematic. In all of these nine schools curricula were constructed as separate subjects with some integration of visual art in only two. Breadth of curriculum coverage was occurring at the expense of depth. The increasingly overcrowded curricula, requirements for summative assessment, constant time pressures and teachers' workload were very significant issues.

I looked closely at the influences on the construction of operational visual arts curricula. *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* was only one influence and the teachers used it very selectively. If used at all, it was at the end of a unit, and then only the strands and the achievement objectives were used. The PK (Practical Knowledge) strand dominated, consistent with visual arts curricula constructed as making and doing. Both teachers' personal experiences and the schools were also influences on the construction of operational curricula. An unexpected finding was the significant role and power of the schools through long-term overviews and

curriculum programmes, assessment requirements, timetables and organisational structures. This is an area for further research.

The current literature on curriculum in New Zealand is dominated by analysis and critiques of political and ideological influences particularly New Right thinking (Lee et al., 2004). However there was almost no evidence of this in these teachers' discourses, which is consistent with anecdotal evidence from colleagues who teach advanced curriculum theory courses. The teachers in this study were very concerned about their workload and the overcrowded curriculum, but did not relate these to the larger political context.

In the area of assessment however, the teachers did ask critical questions, but again only in the context of their own practices, classrooms and schools. I found that assessment was dominated by discourses and practices of summative assessment, which is consistent with the literature. Assessment was constructed as a separate event to teaching and learning, of pre-determined learning outcomes and about providing information for others, not for themselves or for children. All of the teachers told of collecting much more assessment information than was needed for reporting to school managers and parents and caregivers. Assumptions were made about the meaningfulness of the information collected and assessment of creativity and processes in visual art was problematic.

The teachers considered much of the assessment they had to do had no purpose, added to their workloads and did not benefit children. Despite the importance placed on formative assessment in the literature and the stated commitment to developing formative assessment in the Ministry of Education's assessment strategy, it was often not understood or valued. The schools were key influences on the construction of assessment.

I explored reasons for the continued dominance of summative assessment. Some possibilities included the underlying but often unstated importance of the accountability function, supported by the political ideology of the New Right and mixed messages from ERO and the Ministry of Education. Other explanations are school managers and leaders who imposed the requirements but did not understand

assessment, teachers being unable or unprepared to question the requirements and hegemonies of accepted practice.

The focus of this research has been on the teachers' perspectives and there was no evidence of the co-construction of operational curricula with children. This is an area for future research.

There is a tension between a reproductive and a creative view of curriculum. Goodson (1995) said "we are bound by previous forms of reproduction even as we become creators of new ones" (p. 13). Teachers and schools created operational visual art curricula in action but they were bounded by hegemonic practices of the past and to a lesser extent written curriculum documents. Within the boundaries of national curricula and school organisation and curriculum decisions, teachers did exercise flexibility and autonomy. However this varied according to a number of factors. Curriculum was a dynamic and complex process in action in a multi-faceted context.

6.3. Implications

In this section some implications of the findings are discussed. I go beyond the evidence from the study and explore possibilities and my ideas. The implications for visual art as a 'subject', for the managers and leaders in primary schools and for the efficacy and agency of teachers are considered.

6.3.1. Implications for the subject

In some of the schools it appeared that visual art was very marginalised. Some of these teachers described teaching occasional one-off lessons, if that. Others told of teaching visual art more regularly, although usually in the afternoons. It seems that it was not the central curriculum that provided the boundaries and limitations for operational curricula but rather the schools and the teachers themselves. For visual art to flourish a teacher needed to be committed but also the school's organisational structures and requirements had to allow it.

Some implications for visual art of the 'overcrowded curriculum' and the construction and dominance of literacy and assessment, were discussed. Anecdotal evidence from

outside of this study suggests that it is not only the arts that are becoming marginalised in some classrooms and schools. My pre-service students on professional practice and colleagues report seeing very little visual art, social studies and practical science being taught. With whole mornings devoted to literacy and numeracy, all the other subjects are squeezed into afternoons, and with less and less time available, subjects that require managing 'mess', setting and packing up are less likely to happen.

The construction of literacy as reading and writing and as a separate subject, isolated from meaningful contexts such as provided by social studies and science, can be seen partly as a consequence of New Right ideology. Where education is designed to produce economic workers and consumers rather than socially able, critical and creative thinkers, subjects such as visual art are seen as peripheral frills. Because visual art was constructed as non-academic, and academic subjects were prioritised and hegemonic, it is likely that visual art will become increasingly marginalised. In an 'overcrowded' curriculum time for visual art will continue to be squeezed.

The marginalisation of visual art has been considered here in relation to the amount of visual art being taught. This is appropriate in part. However Duncum (2001) argues that marginalisation of visual art is not the result of an overcrowded curriculum but of a modernist art education that privileges fine art over popular taste, decorative arts, crafts and the traditional arts of minority cultures. He argues that in the increasingly diverse classrooms of the 21st century, visual art as fine art is increasingly irrelevant to the lives of the majority. Throughout this study I have not considered the quality of visual art teaching or programmes. I was not able to make judgements on this from the evidence and I did not want to. However I have commented on the 'narrowness' of the constructed visual art. The construction of visual art as making and doing artworks isolated from cultural, social and political contexts, and as predominantly non-controversial and Eurocentric leaves it vulnerable in a changing and increasingly multicultural world. At the same time however its practicality differentiates it from the academic subjects and is one of its strengths in providing variety and meeting students' needs.

All the teachers described their operational curricula of separate subjects prescribed by the *New Zealand Curriculum*. Whereas in the past primary schools had different syllabuses to secondary schools, now the same documents cover all the years of compulsory schooling. The separate subjects and the structure of levels, achievement objectives and strands are assumed to be appropriate for both five year olds and seventeen year olds. Over the last ten years the discourses and practices of separate subject teaching seem to me to have become increasingly pervasive in primary schools with less holistic and integrated teaching. This is an area for further research.

In this research there was a significant tension between ‘teaching subjects’ as bodies of knowledge to *all* children, and ‘teaching children’, that is differentiated teaching to children’s needs and interests. The dominance of summative assessment over formative further constructed and prioritised teaching of ‘subjects’ over teaching to ‘children’s needs’. Underpinning the different discourses of ‘teaching subjects’ and ‘teaching to needs’ are assumptions about the purpose and goals of schooling and implicit theories of teaching and learning. Irwin (1994, cited in Lee et al, 2004), a policy writer for the Business Roundtable, considers placing students at the centre of their learning and teaching is counter to children learning the wisdom, knowledge and skills to take their place in society. A view that “knowledge existed outside any one mind, that it could be conveyed into the empty chamber of mind and placed in an orderly arrangement” (Stankiewicz, 2000, p. 304) constructs the teacher’s role differently to ‘progressive’ theorists such as Dewey (1902) who “argued that subject matter should grow organically out of the child’s interests or respond to current social needs” (as cited in Stankiewicz, 2000, p. 308). Teaching to children’s needs and interests was significantly compromised by the requirements of both summative assessment and a broad curriculum of separate subjects as well as by some school influences.

Goodson (1994) discusses how in the early twentieth century, school subjects emerged and were enshrined in secondary exam regulations, closely linked to university subjects, and received priority in resources and finances. Teachers’ material interests – pay, promotion and conditions – were linked to the fate of their specialist subjects. He says subjects are contested and do change over time through changes in ideas, interest groups and technological changes. ICT for example has

emerged as a subject and the separate subject of 'literacy' is accompanied by mushrooming numbers of specialist teachers, advisors and researchers. Expertise in teaching literacy is seen as an essential requirement for all primary teachers. The future for teachers with strengths in visual art is less certain.

A curriculum review process, *The Curriculum Project*, is underway to revise and simplify the national curriculum framework. Key competencies will be central and the number of achievement objectives reduced. However, given the way that the teachers in this study used *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* selectively to fit with what they wanted to do, and the complexity of influences on operational curriculum construction, I consider the central curriculum changes will make little difference to constructed operational visual arts curricula.

The future of visual art as a subject in primary schools seems uncertain. Given the evidence in this research, I am both fearful and optimistic. I am optimistic because all the teachers thought it was really important. However I am dismayed at the pressures on teachers from their workload and the over-powering influence of some schools on assessment and curriculum construction. I am optimistic about the commitment and enthusiasm of some teachers to teaching visual art, but pessimistic about the narrowness of the visual art programmes in the schools. Above all I am concerned at the effects on visual art of the particular and narrow construction of literacy, the fragmentation of subject teaching, the limited holistic and integrated teaching and the overcrowded curriculum.

6.3.2. Implication for school leaders and managers

Decisions made at school level and school organisation and structures were found to be key influences on the way assessment and curricula were constructed. The significant role and power of the schools was an unexpected finding. Thus there are important implications for the curriculum decision-makers in schools.

A key rationale for the educational reforms of the 1980s was a greater role for schools and communities. "The key changes at the school level...were based on a model of decentralization in which control over educational decisions was ostensibly shifted from a central bureaucracy with a supporting regional network of education boards to

the school communities” (Roberts, 2003, p. 497). However he asserts that considerable control has remained at the centre rather than been devolved to schools and that the devolution of power to schools was largely rhetoric. Prideaux (1993) and Smyth (1992) agree. The findings from this study however, suggest otherwise.

The vast majority of the literature on school-based curriculum development refers to planned curriculum innovations and deliberate developments by schools (Bolstad, 2004). This study found however that the significant influence and effects of schools on ‘everyday’ operational curricula construction were often unintended, through their day-to-day organisation, structures and decisions.

The significant differences between the schools in the construction of assessment and curricula indicated that the operational roles and decisions made by principals and other school managers were highly influential. Many school practices and discourses were hegemonic. Some of the principals and senior teachers seemed to have little understanding of the purposes of assessment for example. Vast quantities of assessment data that sat in folders and were never used were evidence of this. Improving children’s learning was undermined by the demands of a culture of over-the-top summative assessment demanded in part by school managers and leaders. Constant interruptions, meetings, school events, excessive assessment requirements and rigid long-term overviews were all school-based decisions that impacted significantly on operational curricula, and were within the locus of control of principals and senior staff.

In this study some of the teachers were highly critical of many school-based decisions and practices. These were viewed by many of the teachers as peripheral and not purposeful, yet as generating significant workload pressures.

McGee (1997) says “self-managing schools have also been provided with the opportunity of empowering teachers by putting them at the forefront of curriculum-decision-making and allowing them to develop a stronger sense of ownership of their own decisions rather than imposed ones from outside” (p. 266). The evidence from this research however was that some schools acted, whether deliberately or not, to disempower some teachers by reducing their curriculum decision-making. Rigid long-

term overviews, timetables and syndicate interchanges limited teachers' power and autonomy.

Thus there are significant implications for the understandings, professional development and practices of senior teachers and school managers including principals. They need to understand the purpose and rationale for their decisions and the impacts of their decisions on teachers. In these schools there did not seem to be evidence of 'powerful elites' serving their own interests. Although there were hierarchical power structures in every school, all the curriculum leaders, senior teachers, syndicate leaders and deputy and assistant principals were also classroom teachers. They were extremely busy and perhaps did not have leadership and management skills. Harker (2002) said that principals need to be instructional leaders, not just managers of processes. The changing role of school leaders and managers is an area for ongoing research.

6.3.3. Implications for teacher agency

The teachers in this research actively constructed curricula. McGee (1997) quotes research by Ball and Bowe (1992) showing

... how secondary schools and teachers in England and Wales have reshaped and 'recreated' the new national curriculum. Teachers have certainly not reproduced or produced it to achieve consistency with the official documents, which caused the authors to estimate that while the government had *some* power over curriculum implementation, this power was strongly modified by schools. (as cited in McGee, 1997, p. 289)

This research supports Ball and Bowes' findings. The evidence presented in chapter four showed the teachers in this study did not simply carry out the intentions of the national visual arts curriculum. Although Print (1993) says as a result of the 1990s' emphasis on centrally constructed curriculum documents and the official curriculum, teachers are bound by this framework and "their role is primarily refining and fine-tuning centralised curriculum initiatives in the specific contexts of their schools" (as cited in McGee, 1997, p. 275), this research found teacher autonomy and constraints were much more complex.

Teacher agency is a complex concept with a number of meanings. Brunner (1994) conceptualises it as a struggle between limitations and possibilities. She says "We

position ourselves with and against broader social structures as well as local structures and understand that teacher agency implies a relationship somewhere in between the limitations that such structures erect and the individual capabilities they enable” (p. 47).

In this study the tension between agency and structure played out in the construction of curricula and assessment. These teachers had considerable autonomy to use the central visual art curriculum selectively and flexibly, but for some the structures of long-term overviews severely restricted their teaching. Similarly formative assessment of and teaching to children’s learning needs were compromised by oppressive structures of summative assessment requirements. The changing roles of schools in educational decision-making in changing political contexts raised issues of power and autonomy. The tension between having autonomy to teach to children’s needs and the considerable power of some of the schools over operational curricula was evident.

O’Neill (2004) says “structures or frameworks of compliance, regulation, assessment and evaluation are pivotal in determining what teachers do in their teaching” (p. 27). Many authors have described how the education reforms eroded teachers’ professional role and agency. Teachers lost ownership of curriculum, outcomes models of education deprofessionalised and deskilled teachers and accountability came to dominate and shape classroom work. Teachers were the marginalised victims of reform with little part in drawing up the agenda for change and saw benefits to politicians not children from the education reforms (Hancock, 2001; O’Neill, Clark & Openshaw, 2004; Peters & Marshall, 2004).

The ability to make curriculum decisions depends on not being overly constrained by structural limitations, but also having the desire, skills and confidence. Agency is related to how one sees one’s self, one’s sphere of influence and efficacy. Teachers’ beliefs about themselves and their own power or capability to contribute to successful outcomes for all students are vital, say Harker (2002) and Lee, O’Neill, & McKenzie (2004). The idea of the teacher as a professional who is constantly making decisions in action is contrasted with a technicist view of teachers whose role is to pass on received knowledge (Schon, 1983).

McGee (1997) agrees.

Teachers have to have a particular view of themselves as professionals. They have to *want* to take on the responsibility for making decisions and actually go ahead and do so. They have to want to involve the other people with a vested interest in curriculum outcomes – the students, the students’ parents, and the community at large. At the same time there has to be realism about what is possible. (p. 276)

I agree that teachers have to see themselves as able to make a difference but it is naïve to think that a positive optimistic and hard-working outlook is enough. The questions of power and control must be considered. Kliebard (2002) notes educational reforms regularly fail because of direct conflicts with institutional realities. “Good intentions and even competence notwithstanding, teachers are required to maintain a precarious order, and only the very courageous are willing to risk its loss” (Kliebard, 2002, p. 132, as cited in Harker, 2002, p. 4).

It cannot be assumed that all teachers want autonomy. The concept of agency is contextual and needs to be grounded in teachers’ own lives (Brunner, 1994). In my study these teachers varied in their apparent satisfaction with or criticisms of the school structures within which they worked. A range of opinions about their control over curricula was expressed by and inferred from teachers’ talk. Some felt constrained and frustrated. Others were positive or indifferent.

Teacher agency is important for a number of reasons. Elley (2004, p. 101) reports research on teacher morale showed “disheartening levels of stress and lower job satisfaction than we would expect in a group of professionals” due to task overload from frequent changes in curriculum, lack of time for preparation and organisation, and lack of direction and support for implementing curriculum change. Job interest and satisfaction are important for high levels of productivity and motivation (Smith, 2006).

Brunner (1994) says that in order to be other than functionaries in the system teachers need to see themselves as transformative intellectuals in charge of their own destinies, capable of creating change and making a contribution to society. For this to happen teachers need to have the theoretical and analytical tools to interrogate changes “so

they do not become the mere instrumental implementers of and responders to policy agendas set elsewhere. That is, so that they do not merely implement, as bureaucrats or technocrats, the know-how, methodology or values of people who claim to know what is best in education, and who preclude teachers from discussions on what is best” (Peters and Marshall, 2004, p. 110). I agree. The lack of political and critical awareness surprised and concerned me. As an ex-primary teacher I understand the teachers’ commitment and passion for ‘their’ children. However this focus on their classrooms leaves them vulnerable to agendas set by others with particular ideologies and little understanding of primary classrooms.

Although the central visual art curriculum had limited impact, the macro-level influences of the ‘overcrowded curriculum’ and the construction and prioritisation of literacy and numeracy had major impact on teachers’ agency. Likewise requirements for, dominant discourses and hegemonic practices of assessment were hugely significant. McGee (1997) says there is a “long-standing tension over who really controls the curriculum” (p. 289) and that central authorities “ought to remember that they depend upon teachers to implement curriculum. In this sense teachers hold the ultimate power” (p. 66). However this research found operational curricula and teacher agency were contextual and very complex.

6.4. Limitations, generalisability and trustworthiness

There are several limitations of this study, arising from the choice of methodology, my position and the time available. Although I do not assume a single ‘reality’ or ‘truth’ which this research sought to reveal, readers need to be able to conclude that the findings were trustworthy and the procedures robust. Miles and Huberman (1994) ask “how can we increase our – and our readers’ – confidence in what we’ve found?” (p. 263). The transferability, credibility and dependability (validity and reliability) of the findings can be judged against whether the findings and conclusions make sense, are credible to readers and the researched and if they enable a vicarious presence for the reader.

The generalisability of this study is limited by the sampling techniques. These findings were based on a small sample of primary teachers in a particular geographic area in New Zealand. The sampled group was not representative of primary teachers

or schools. It is possible and likely that there are teachers and schools who are constructing very different curricula to those described. Purposive sampling and a small sample size meant that the findings are about this group of teachers and schools only. Davidson and Tolich (1999) note questions such as ‘how many people?’ and ‘where are they?’ “need to be played off against the reality principle of social research – the question of how much time and money you have available to do the research!” (p. 118). The study represents a ‘snapshot in time.’

Patton (1990) says “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p. 169). Within my sample I included a variety of participants, not just those who were enthusiastic about visual art or with visual art curriculum leadership roles, and I increased the number of participants from the original seven to nine. The small size had the advantage of gaining in-depth information. The information-richness of the selected cases and the analytical qualities of the researcher generate meaningfulness, insights and validity rather than the sample size (Patton, 1990).

A limitation of the study was including only one teacher from each school. This decision was made in order to sample a range of schools, and school factors did emerge as very significant. Investigating school influences in more depth by looking at several teachers in one or two schools is a suggestion for future research.

Triangulation is the combination of data sources, data types, methods and/or researchers in a single study to compare, contrast and increase dependability of findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argue that the term confuses more than it clarifies and for researchers to describe fully what they did. This study was limited by the use of one type and source of data. Although I was the single researcher I used a number of strategies to increase the trustworthiness of my findings. I tried to stand back, question and critically review the findings. I shared ideas and emerging themes with colleagues, my supervisors and critical friends, and I constantly related my results to other studies.

The selection of an open-ended interview as a research method followed from my research purpose. Informal interviews have particular strengths. They are flexible

and dynamic and provide in-depth information that may not have been considered by the researcher (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Interviews can give voice to “the hidden, to the silent, to the noisy, to the unspoken obvious, to the hurt, to the joy” (Millar & Crabtree, 2004, p. 201). In this study interviews enabled the views of these very busy teachers to be heard.

However the interview has a number of limitations. The experiences and understandings of interviewer and participants are foregrounded rather than the context. I was careful therefore to situate my findings and discussion within the literature, while at the same time being open to the emergent themes. This study confirmed the relevance and importance of contextual factors. Although general themes emerged there were significant differences between schools and teachers and the data made sense within their contexts. Findings about teachers’ practices were based on what they said they did rather than their actions.

An interview is a particular event at a particular point in time. In conversations contradictions are to be expected. Through their discourses, people make connections with others, take up positions and are positioned in ideological fields, seek to justify themselves and influence others, and in interaction construct the self, their actions and the world (Potter & Wetherall, 1994). The need to justify their actions and to present themselves in the best light was evident in the teachers’ responses to findings they saw as negative or critical.

I shared ideas and emerging themes informally with the participants and asked them to formally comment on a short summary of initial findings, which seven of the participants did. Miles and Huberman (1994) say “feeding findings back to informants is a venerated, but not always executed, practice in qualitative research” (p. 275). Informants may disagree with the findings because tensions, conflicts and differences in interpretation are part of social life. Information may not be understood, may conflict with their self-image or threaten their self-interest. This issue of internal validity was highlighted by one of the participants’ responses to the written summary of findings. She challenged the dominance of summative assessment saying she and her school were actively developing strong formative assessment. When I checked back on the transcript there were several instances

where she described her assessment and it was most definitely summative. The interviews were long and most issues and areas of interest were referred to several times.

All the participants knew that I am passionate about visual art. I tried not to express any evaluation of their views. I was pleased that the perspectives of the teachers who were not into visual art at all did seem to be freely expressed. My position as a teacher educator also meant that I may have been regarded as an 'expert', particularly by the two teachers who were ex-students. However this did not seem to be the case. The teachers were all very confident and animated when talking about their classes, schools and issues. Of course my position may also have meant that I was considered out of touch with classroom realities and needed bringing up to speed with the 'real world'!

In qualitative research the researcher is the main research instrument (Davidson & Tolich, 1999) and necessarily shapes and creates all stages of the research process. "Every researcher brings preconceptions and interpretations to the problem being studied, regardless of methods used" (Patton, 1990, p. 476). The concepts of 'objectivity' and being 'bias-free' are meaningless within qualitative and social constructionist approaches. My own assumptions and background, my role, and theory, concepts and methods were fully described. I was careful in drawing conclusions from the data.

Dependability requires that the research questions are clear and the research design congruent. The significance and centrality of the research question/s only became clear to me once the research was well underway. The themes that emerged were about the construction of visual arts curricula at the operational level, and at that point I had not included any recent general curriculum theory. The whole notion of 'construction' of curricula and assessment and social constructionist theory emerged from the findings and were central to the research.

I carefully considered issues in representing the findings. I included quotations from all the participants and I was also careful to report whether the findings were from all, some, or one or two of the teachers or schools. Had I not done this, the reader could

easily assume that particular views were shared by all of the teachers. In the findings chapters I included enough ‘thick description’ through the extensive use of direct quotes from the teachers in this study for you, the reader, to assess the appropriateness to your own settings. I have also made links to the literature throughout and noted where my findings diverge.

I have reported the findings in language accessible to teachers with minimal use of technical terms. The research process and the outcomes have and will benefit teachers and perhaps children as well as myself. I have learnt skills for sustained research at this level and have used this to work with colleagues engaged in research. As well I have applied my greater understandings of the literature and the findings into my practice to benefit the pre-service teachers with whom I work. I intend to disseminate the findings more widely through publications and perhaps conferences.

6.5. Summary

This study has explored the perspectives of a small group of primary teachers at the top of the South Island of Aotearoa at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Their positioning and construction of visual art, operational curricula and assessment were contextual, very complex and underpinned by significant tensions. Issues of power, autonomy and control were also significant. Although primarily focused on the micro-level of the nine teachers and their schools, macro-level influences impacted and were considered.

Some implications of this study were explored: School managers and leaders in primary schools have key roles in the positioning and constructing of visual art in particular and operational curricula in general, as well as in constructing assessment. Their roles and decisions significantly impact on teachers’ work and agency. Teacher agency is complex with implications for teachers’ well-being, efficacy and influence. The future of visual art in primary schools appears uncertain due to the complex and contextual influences on its positioning, construction and assessment.

This bricolage of the voices within this study is a small part of the mosaic of curriculum studies in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This study contributes to

understandings about primary visual art education, teachers' issues and experiences and the construction of operational curricula in primary schools.

Bibliography

- Alton-Lee, A. (2001). Research ethics, classroom research and educational practice. In M. Tolich, (Ed.). *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand*. (pp. 87-111). Auckland: Longman.
- Anderson, K. (1998, February). *Newsletter: The New Zealand Association of Art Educators*, p.14.
- Anderson, K. (2003). *Making their mark: Teachers' understandings of art assessment at year 11*. Unpublished masters thesis, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Barry, C., & Townsend, M. (1995). Teachers' judgements about the teaching of art in primary schools. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 30(1), 51-63.
- Beane, J., Toepfer, C. & Alessi, S. (1986). *Curriculum planning and development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Black, P. (2000). Research and the development of educational assessment. *Oxford Review of Education*, 26(3&4), 407-419.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), pp7+. Retrieved March 18th, 2004 from Professional Development Collection database.url
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80(2), 139-148.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolstad, R. (2004). *School-based curriculum development: principles, processes and practices*. Retrieved November 15, 2005, from http://www.tki.org.nz/r/nzcurriculum/whats_happening_e.php
- Boyask, R. (2004). Rubbing out the bodies of the artist, the teacher and the student: The visual arts in the New Zealand curriculum. In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 245-263). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

- Bracey, T. (2001). What does it mean to know art? An institutional account. In P. Duncum. & T. Bracey (Eds.), *On knowing art and visual culture*. (pp. 47-65). Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Brady, L. (1995). *Curriculum development*. Australia: Prentice Hall.
- Brunner, D. (1994). *Inquiry and reflection: framing narrative practice in education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). East Sussex: Routledge.
- Butterworth, G., & Butterworth, S. (1998). *Reforming education: The New Zealand experience 1984-1996*. Palmerston North: Ministry of Education and Dunmore Press.
- Carr, M., McGee, C., Jones, A., Mckinley, E., Bell, B., Barr, H. & Simpson, T. (2003). *The effects of curricula and assessment on pedagogical approaches and on educational outcomes*. Retrieved March 10, 2004 from www.moe.govt.nz
- Cassie, F. (1999, May 14). Arts curriculum ignites debate. *NZ Education Review*, p.3.
- Chamberlain, M. (2000). *The national assessment strategy and the relationships between teaching, learning and student achievement*. Retrieved June 8, 2004 from <http://www.tki.org.nz>
- Clarke, S., Timperley, H., & Hattie, J. (2003). *Unlocking formative assessment: New Zealand edition*. Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett.
- Codd, J. (1997). Knowledge, qualifications and higher education: A critical view. In M. Olssen, & K.M. Matthews (Eds.), *Education policy in New Zealand: The 1990s and beyond*. (pp. 130-144). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Convery, A. (2001). A teacher's response to 'reflection-in-action'. In J. Soler, A. Craft, & A. Burgess (Eds.), *Teacher development: Exploring our own practice*. (pp. 133-140). London: Paul Chapman.
- Crooks, T. (2002). Educational assessment in New Zealand schools. *Assessment in Education*, 9(2), 237-253.
- Dale, R. & Robertson, S. (1997). Resiting the nation, 'reshaping' the state: Globalisation effects on education policy in New Zealand. In M. Olssen & K.M. Matthews (Eds.), *Education policy in New Zealand: the 1990s and beyond*. (pp. 209-227). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Davidson, C., & Tolich, M. (1999). *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding*. Auckland: Longman.

- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Department of Education. (1978). *Art in schools: The New Zealand experience*. Wellington: School Publications Branch.
- Dixon, H. & Williams, R. (2003). Formative assessment and the professional development of teachers: Are we focusing on what is important? *Set*, 2, 35-39.
- Duncum, P. (2001). How are we to understand art at the beginning of the 21st century? In P. Duncum, & T. Bracey (Eds.), *On knowing art and visual culture*. (pp. 15-33). Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Education Review Office. (1999). *Student assessment: Practices in primary schools*. Wellington: Author.
- Education Review Office. (2002). *Framework for reviews*. Wellington: Author.
- Eisner, E. (1994). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Eisner, E. (1998). Does experience in the arts boost academic achievement? *Art Education*, January, 7-15.
- Eisner, E. (1999). The national assessment in the visual arts. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 100(6), 16-20.
- Eisner, E. (2000). Arts education policy? *Arts Education Policy Review*, 101(3), 4-6.
- Eisner, E. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press and National Art Education Association.
- Elley, W. (2004). Curriculum reform in retrospect: Was it forward or backward? In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 91-108). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Fehr, D., Fehr, K., & Keifer-Boyd, K. (Eds.). (2000). *Real-world readings in art education*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Fine, M., Weis, L., Weseen, S., & Wong, L. (2003). For whom? Qualitative research, representations, and social responsibilities. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.). (pp. 167-207). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.

- Flockton, L., & Crooks, T. (2000). *Art assessment results 1999: National Education Monitoring Report 14*, Dunedin: Education Assessment Research Unit.
- Foley, S., Hong, T., & Thwaites, T. (1999). *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum: A background paper*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Freedman, K. (2001). How do we understand art? Aesthetics and the problem of meaning in the curriculum. In P. Duncum, & T. Bracey. (Eds.), *On knowing art and visual culture*. (pp. 34-46). Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Freedman, K. & Wood, J. (1999). Reconsidering critical response: Student judgments of purpose, interpretation, and relationships in visual culture. *Studies in Art Education*, 40(2), 128-142.
- Freud, S. (1953). *The interpretation of dreams*. London: Penguin Books.
- Garber, E. (2001). How can theory inform knowing and teaching about art? In P. Duncum, & T. Bracey (Eds.), *On knowing art and visual culture*. (pp. 99-114). Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Gergen, M. & Gergen, K. (2003). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformations. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research theories and issues* (2nd ed.). (pp. 575-610). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Gilmore, A. (2003). Exercising teachers' choice of NEMP tasks: Bringing assessment resources into the classroom. *Set*, 2, 23-27.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers*. London: Longman.
- Goodson, I. (1994). *Studying curriculum*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Goodson, I. (1995). *The making of curriculum: Collected essays* (2nd ed.). London: Falmer Press.
- Grundy, S. (1994). The curriculum and teaching. In E. Halton (Ed.), *Understanding teaching: Curriculum and the social context of teaching*. (pp. 27-39). Sydney: Harcourt Brace.
- Hanley, B. (2003). Policy issues in arts assessment in Canada: "Let's get real". *Arts Education Policy Review*, 105(3), 35-38.

- Harker, R. (1985). Schooling and cultural reproduction. In J. Codd, R.Harker, & R. Nash (Eds.), *Political issues in New Zealand education*. (pp. 57-72). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Harker, R. (2002). *System wide reform: The role of professional development for instructional improvement*. Paper presented at the TEFANZ Conference, Wellington, 28-31 August.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). Critical introduction. In I. Goodson. *Studying curriculum*. (pp. i-ix). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Harlen, W., & James, M. (1997). Assessment and learning: Differences and relationships. *Assessment in education: Principles, policy and practice*, 4(3), pp365+. Retrieved March 10th, 2004 from World Magazine Bank database.
- Henderson, C. (1998) The impact of recent national curriculum reforms on arts education in New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Unpublished dissertation for the MEd. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
- Herne, S. (2000). Breadth and balance? The impact of the national literacy and numeracy strategies on art in the primary school. *NSAED*, 217-223.
- Hibberd, F. (2005). *Unfolding social constructionism*. New York: Springer Science+Business Media.
- Hill, M. (2000). Dot, slash, cross: How assessment can drive teachers to ticking instead of teaching. *Set*, 1, 21-25.
- Hughes, C. (Ed.). (2003). *Disseminating qualitative research in educational settings: A critical introduction*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Hunt, A.M. (2006). *Non-Māori beginning teachers' perspectives on meeting the needs of Māori children within the mainstream classroom: A case study*. Unpublished masters research project report, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Jones, V. (2002). Identity and the environment. *Curriculum Journal*, 13(3), 279-288. Retrieved July 17, 2005 from Professional Development Collection database.
- Kamhi, M. (2003). Where's the *art* in today's art education? *Arts Education Policy Review*, 104(4), 9-12.
- Langton, K. (2000). A visual arts curriculum requires vision. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 9, 157-171.
- Langton, K. (2001). Assessment in the visual arts. Retrieved January 30, 2004 from http://www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/artspd/research/updates2_e.php

- Le Compte, M., & Priessle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2nd ed.). New York: Academic Press.
- Lee, G., Hill, D., & Lee, H. (2004). The New Zealand national curriculum framework: Something new, something borrowed, something 'blue'. In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 71-89). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Lee, H., O'Neill, A., & McKenzie, D. (2004). "To market, to market..." The mirage of certainty: An outcomes-based curriculum. In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 47-70). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Lincoln, Y., & Denzin, N. (2003). The seventh moment: Out of the past. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.). (pp. 611-640). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (2003). Paradigmatic controversies: Contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln. (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd ed.). (pp. 253-291). Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage.
- MacNeill, B. (2005, June 19). Duchamp's wee joke. *Sunday Star Times*, Letter to the Editor.
- Mansfield, J. (1999). Beyond modernism: The arts in New Zealand education. *ACCESS Critical Perspectives on Cultural and Policy Studies in Education*, 18(1), 16-36.
- Manzo, K. (1998). NAEP paints poor picture of arts savvy. *Education Week*, 18(12), 1-2.
- McGee, C. (1997). *Teachers and curriculum decision-making*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- McKenzie, D. (1997). The cult of efficiency and miseducation: Issues of assessment in New Zealand schools. In M. Olssen & K.M. Matthews (Eds.), *Education policy in New Zealand: the 1990s and beyond*. (pp. 47-64). Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Metge, J. (1990). *Te kohao o te ngira culture and learning: Education for a multicultural society*. Wellington: Learning Media.

- Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miller, W.L., & Crabtree, B.F. (2004). Depth interviewing. In S.N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy. (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice*. (pp. 185-202). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ministry of Education. (1993). *The New Zealand curriculum framework*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (1994). *Assessment: Policy to practice*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2000). *The arts in the New Zealand curriculum*. Wellington: Learning Media.
- Ministry of Education. (2003). *The New Zealand curriculum exemplars*. Retrieved March 20, 2004 from www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/exemplars/arts/
- Moko Mead, S. (Ed.). (1984). *Te Māori: Māori art from New Zealand collections*. Auckland: Heineman.
- Munford, R., & Sanders, J. (2001). Interviewing children and their parents. In M. Tolich (Ed.), *Research ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand: Concept, practice, critique*. (pp. 99-111). Auckland: Longman.
- Mutch, C. (1997). *Educational policy as a social field – a model for examining the influences on curriculum change*. Paper presented to the Pacific Circle Consortium Conference. Oregon, USA.
- Mutch, C. (2003). *Context, complexity, and contestation in curriculum construction: developing social studies in the New Zealand curriculum*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.
- Neuman, W.L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Olssen, M., & Matthews, K. (Eds.). (1997). *Education policy in New Zealand: The 1990s and beyond*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- O'Neill, A. (2004). The technology curriculum: Commercialising education for mindless consumption. In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 177-201). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.

- O'Neill, A., Clark, J., & Openshaw, R. (Eds.), (2004). *Reshaping culture, knowledge and learning: Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Pearson, P. (2001). How can we know art? The purple haze of epistemology in art education. In P. Duncum & T. Bracey (Eds.), *On knowing art and visual culture*. (pp. 66-85). Christchurch: Canterbury University Press.
- Peters, M., & Marshall, J. (2004). The politics of curriculum: Autonomous choosers and enterprise culture. In A. O'Neill, J. Clark & R. Openshaw (Eds.), *Reshaping culture knowledge and learning? Policy and content in the New Zealand curriculum framework*. (pp. 109-125). Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Pinar, W. (Ed.). (2003). *International handbook of curriculum research*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Potter, J., & Wetherall, M. (1994). Some practical issues in analyzing discourse. In J. Smith, R. Harre & L. van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking psychology, Vol. 2: Alternative methodologies*. London: Sage.
- Prideaux, D. (1993). School-based curriculum development: partial, paradoxical and piecemeal. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 25(2), 169-178.
- Print, M. (1993). *Curriculum development and design*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Reinharz, S. (1994). *Feminist methods in social research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Richards, C. (2005). What are standards? *Education Journal*, 88, p.6.
- Roberts, P. (2003). Contemporary curriculum research in New Zealand. In W. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research*. (pp. 495-516). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ross, M., Radnor, H., Mitchell, S., & Bierton, C. (1993). *Assessing achievement in the arts*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Schon, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. London: Temple Smith.
- Smith, F. (2006, June 24-25). Wanting more than a pay deal. *The Press*, p. G1.
- Smyth, J. (1992). Teachers' work and the politics of reflection. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(2). 267-300.
- Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In N.K. Denzin, & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). (pp. 435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Stankiewicz, M.(1999). Spinning the Arts NAEP. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 101(1), 29-32.
- Stankiewicz, M. (2000). Discipline and the future of art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 41(4), 301-313.
- Starzecka, D. (1996). *Māori art and culture*. Auckland: David Bateman.
- Taylor, S.J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Thrupp, M. (1997). Shaping a crisis: the Education Review Office and South Auckland schools. In M. Olssen & K.M. Matthews (Eds.), *Education policy in New Zealand: The 1990s and beyond* (pp. 145-161). Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Tolich, M., & Davidson, C. (1999). *Starting fieldwork: An introduction to qualitative research in New Zealand*. New Zealand: Oxford University Press.
- Torrance, H., & Pryor, J. (2001). Developing formative assessment in the classroom: Using action research to explore and modify theory. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(5), 615-631.
- Tunstall, P., & Gipps, C. (1996). Teacher feedback to young children in formative assessment: A typology. *British Educational Research Journal*, 22(4), 389-406.
- Wright, H.K. (2000). Nailing jell-O to the wall: pinpointing aspects of state-of-the-art curriculum theorizing. *Educational Researcher*, 29(5), 4-13.
- Wylie, C. (1999). *Ten years on: How schools view educational reform*. Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Appendix 1

Letter to participants and Declaration of consent



Teacher Education Nelson Campus
Primary Programme
319 Hardy Street, PO Box 1012
Nelson 7015, New Zealand
Telephone: Co-ordinator (64) (3) 546 0585
Office (64) (3) 548 3106
Facsimile: (64) (3) 546 9207

1 October 2004

Dear

As part of my Master in Teaching and Learning degree through the Christchurch College of Education, I am conducting research into the assessment of visual art by primary teachers.

As discussed by phone, the involvement required will consist initially of an interview of about one to one and a half hours. During the interview I will make notes. If you are willing it would be helpful if I could record the interview on tape. This tape would be destroyed on completion of my thesis requirements. At a later stage after some recording of the data, I will discuss my findings with you. This could be in person or by phone at a time convenient to you.

People involved in my thesis will be protected by an assurance that names, places and other identifiable information will not be included in the written research. The protection of the privacy of individuals and organizations, including schools, discussed or participating in this research will be paramount.

All typed and written material will remain anonymous and confidential. Material associated with this study will be stored safely and securely. The information will be used for my thesis and any related follow-up reports, journal articles and conference papers.

Participation in the research project is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the project at any stage without penalty.

My research will be monitored and evaluated by my supervisors and examiners from the Christchurch college of Education. It will be assessed by two academics. All of these people will work within a strict ethical code.

The Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.

If you have any complaints concerning the conduct of the research you are encouraged to discuss it with me, or if an independent person is preferred:

The Chair

Ethical Clearance Committee

Christchurch College of Education

Box 31 065

Christchurch

Ph 03 348 2059

If you agree to be part of this research please sign the consent. A copy will be provided for you.

Thank you.

Kind regards.

Jan Byres

Ph 03 3471 343

Email janbyres@hotmail.com

Declaration of Consent

I consent to participate in the project *Assessment of Visual Art by Primary Teachers*.

I have read and understood the information provided to me concerning the research project and what will be required of me if I participate in the project.

I understand that the information I provide to the researcher will be treated as confidential and that no findings that could identify me or my school will be published.

I understand that my participation in the project is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without incurring any penalty.

Participant's name: _____

Signed: _____ (Participant) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Researcher) Date: _____

Appendix 2

Interview guide

~~Interview~~
Interview

Interview Guide

- School, class level? How long at that level? How long teaching?

Your VA

• I would like to get a picture of what happens in a visual art lesson. Can you tell me about your last lesson in visual art?

• Tell me about your visual art programme.

(What/how have you taught this term/year?)

Tell me about any assessment in that lesson. I'm particularly interested in the assessment throughout or during the lesson.

- How do you feel about teaching visual art?
- Tell me about your own experiences with art.

The currcz

• How do you find the visual art curriculum?

(Tell me how you use it. Strands? Learning examples? What about concepts such as visual literacy, biculturalism, multiculturalism?)

Assessment in general

• Tell me about assessment in your school.

• I want to ask you about assessment in general and then assessing visual art in particular. So firstly could you tell me about assessment in your classroom.

(What are you assessing this term? How? Why? When? What records?)

Assessment of VA

• What about assessing visual art? — last term

(formal/informal, summative/formative. What? — skills, knowledge, attitudes. Doing, understanding, appreciating. How? Exemplars? School requirements? School demands/support? ~~NETP~~ material Visual culture)

Beliefs about VA

• I'm interested in what your beliefs or philosophy about education are.

(like what do you think is most important, not so important, teacher's role, changes in education, chn...)

• How does visual art fit into this? What ~~do~~ is the place of VA do you think?

Prompts

- I'm not clear about that...
- What do you mean/by...?
- Tell me more..
- Did I get you correctly (and summarise)?
- Can you give me another example of that.
- How? Why? Really.

* What happens in a VA lesson?

• What did you assess? How did you assess?

I'm constantly assessing what in VA

Silence

LISTEN

Probe 104